



MESSAGES OF THE PRESIDENT

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO

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Official Month in Review

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DOE energizes 53 villages in Zamboanga

The Department of Energy (DOE) has energized some 53 villages in the Zamboanga peninsula since President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was sworn in as Chief Executive on Jan. 20, 2001.

In a report to Malacanang, the DOE said that as of end-April this year, it has provided electricity to 30 barangays in Zamboanga del Norte, 20 in Zamboanga del Sur, and three in Zamboanga Sibugay.

Citing the agency's accomplishment vis-à-vis the President's pledges in her July 2001 State of the Nation Address, the DOE named the "energized" barangays as follows:

Zamboanga del Norte – Diwaan and Carang in Dapitan City; Diwan, Dipolog City; Buenavista, Gutalac; D. Maring and San Jose, Kalawit; Sto. Niño, Katipunan; San Jose and La Victoria, La Libertad; Mabuhay, San Roque and La Libertad, Liloy; Upper Minang, Villahermosa, Tanayan and Pinamar, M. Roxas;

Sto. Tomas, Mutia; Sikitan and Lower Gumay, Pinan; Linabo, Polanco; Nilabo and Mabuhay, Rizal; Bagong Baguio, Buenavista and Tinindungan, Sergio Osmeña; Litolet, Siayan; and Dumalogdog, Imelda, Sto. Rosario and J. Macias, in Sindangan.

Zamboanga del Sur – Bulawan in Pagadian City; Baluno, Lumayang, Sibulao, Busay, Pasmanta and Panubigan in Zamboanga City; Acad, Aurora; Guintolo-an, Buug; Dalapan, Guipos; Sapang Pinales, Lakewood; Tuburan, Mahayag; Tubong, Midsalip; Colojo, Pitogo; Calube, San Miguel; Culasian, Miasin and Tanlapan, San Pablo; San Miguel, Sominot; and Libato in Tambulig.

Zamboanga Sibugay – Doña Josefa in Ipil; Kigay in Malangas; and San Jose in RT Lim.

POEA implements new recruitment rules for land-based OFWs

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) has started implementing its revised recruitment rules and regulations that would favor actual and would-be land-based overseas Filipino workers (OFW).

POEA Administrator Rosalinda Baldoz said the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Order No. 10 is facing "no more legal impediments" after the Supreme Court sped the effectivity of injunctions directed at the implementing rules issued by the POEA.

A DOLE report reaching Malacañang said the recruitment rules would highly favor overseas performing artists whose training, assessment and certification could proceed under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

The DOLE said the POEA rules would bring about “a higher standard of protection” for land-based OFWs who have been getting speedier, higher-quality and friendlier services.

The high court, through Associate Justice Vicente Mendoza, issued last May 23 its decision on the POEA rules and DOLE order and rendered inoperative the March 12 and March 20 decisions of two lower courts that prevented the rules from being carried out.

On March 12 this year, Judge Jose Paneda of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 220 restrained the implementation of the rules in response to a civil case filed by the Asian Recruitment Council Philippine Chapter, Inc.

Eight days later, Judge Lucas Bersamin of the Quezon City RTC Branch 96 issued a similar order in a civil case filed by Rey Salac et. al.

Later, the Office of the Solicitor General filed – on behalf of the DOLE, POEA and TESDA — with the high court a petition for certiorari assailing the lower courts’ orders.

SONA targets and accomplishments tackled in joint RDC-RPOC meeting in Dipolog City

DIPOLOG CITY—The targets set by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) and the accomplishments of concerned government agencies were tackled Friday during the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) held at the Zamboanga del Norte Convention and Exhibition Center here.

Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo, who reported about the status of SONA targets, said that a total of 157,400 urban poor households have already been provided with shelter security.

Saludo also reported that the number of signatories for housing permits has significantly been reduced after the implementation of Executive Order No. 45 prescribing time-period for issuance of housing related permits and clearances.

Under E.O No. 45, the number of days within which the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) should issue housing-related permits is reduced from 90 to 45 days; Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), from 45 to 30 days; Department of Interior and Local Government, from 2-3 months to 30 days; Department of Agriculture, from 2-6 months to 30 days; and Department of Agrarian Reform, from 110 days to 70 days.

Saludo also reported that a total of 1,531,446 beneficiaries, or 306 percent of the SONA target of 500,000, have been enrolled in the government’s national health insurance program (NHIP). A total of 1,722,364 rural poor beneficiaries from 374,427 families have also been enrolled in the NHIP, Saludo said.

At the RDC-RPOC meeting, Saludo also reported that all 73 Department of Health-retained hospitals are now stocked with selected low-cost quality drugs. Another 61 hospitals operated by local government units are now selling some of the low-cost medicines, he added.

Saludo further said that P6.22 million worth of medicines have been sold nationwide while P15.31 million worth are now available in the DOH-retained hospitals.

On the SONA target of distributing of 200,000 hectares to the landless, Saludo said that a total of 104,261 hectares have been distributed by the Department of Agrarian Reform in 2001 and an additional 14,219 hectares have been distributed from January to April, 2002.

According to Saludo, from July 2001 to April 2002, the DENR has signed land patents covering 12,000 hectares while certificates of allocation covering 99,312 hectares were also issued.

GMA turns over checks, other gov't assistance to qualified beneficiaries in Zambo del Norte

DIPOLOG CITY (via PLDT)—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today distributed checks, certificates of land ownership awards (CLOAs), health cards, lot awards, agricultural products and farm implements to qualified beneficiaries of Zamboanga del Norte and its nearby towns and cities.

The Chief Executive, who arrived here Friday as part of her continuing consultation with the people, especially those in the countryside, personally presented the government assistance to the beneficiaries in ceremonies held this morning at the Zamboanga del Norte Convention and Exhibition Center here.

Assisted by representatives of concerned agencies, the President turned over checks from Quedancor totaling P406,000 for various urban and rural poor livelihood projects in the province of Zamboanga del Norte.

Governor Isagani Amatong, and two individuals, Adelina Ogor and Cesar Gerona, representing the beneficiaries, received the checks from the President.

From the President's Social Fund, the Chief Executive turned over a fund check worth P600,000 as scholarship assistance for Abu Sayyaf victims for fiscal year 2002-2003. The check was received by Assistant Regional Director Dr. Portia Gesilva of the Department of Education.

The President also turned over from the Department of Agriculture the Certificate of Completion for the rehabilitation of the Kalawit Marcelo Road Expansion Project worth P2,498,490.87. The certificate was received by Governor Amatong.

She also distributed through Governor Amatong Certificate of Awards for 10 units of portable global positioning system or GPS for the implementation of the nationwide Bantay Dagat program from the Bureau of Fisheries and Agricultural Resources (BFAR).

Two units of marine sea cages worth P3,223,800 were also turned over by the President to the municipalities of Leon Postigo and Sindangan, and another two units of stilt dryers worth P390,416 for Sindangan.

Another three units of marine sea cages worth P214,625.91 and one unit of stilt dryer worth P369,120.00 for Dapitan City were turned over by the President.

From the National Irrigation Administration, President Macapagal-Arroyo presented the Certificate of Completion for the Dipolog City Communal Irrigation System worth P2,376,880.00. The certificate was received by Ildefonso Jimenez, president of the Irrigators Association of Zamboanga del Norte.

Other government assistance distributed by the President were the following:

- Checks worth P346,632 for various projects in the municipality of Leon Postigo;
- Checks amounting to P160,000 for projects in Bethlehem, particularly the Polanco Water System;
- Checks amounting to P350,000 for various projects in the municipality of Pinan;
- Checks worth P200,000 for various projects in Katipunan
- Checks amounting to P232,000 for projects in Roxas;
- Checks amounting to P220,000 for projects in La Libertad;
- A check amounting to P120,000 for the Multi-Purpose Hall of Bitugan, Sirawai;
- Checks worth P487,030 for various projects in Manukan;
- Checks amounting to P195,549 for various projects in Jose Dalman;

- Checks amounting to P67,000 for various projects in Rizal;
- A check amounting to P44,618 for the Day Care Center in Godod;
- A check worth P140,000 for the Self Employment Assistance-Kaunlaran (SEA-K) Livelihood Project in Baliguian;
- A check amounting to P160,000 for the Mutia Spring Development Project; and
- A check amounting to P120,000 for the Day Care Center in Barangay Cogon, Dipolog City.

From Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the President presented a notice of scholarship awards to 80 deserving students from the province of Zamboanga del Norte.

The President also led the distribution of Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs) to 137 beneficiaries from the Department of Agrarian Reform.

She turned over a check worth P534,295.31 for the Rizal Mangrove Sub-Project of the Rizal Federation for Coastal Resources Management Inc. and distributed land patents to some 101 beneficiaries from the province of Zamboanga del Norte, all from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

From the Department of Labor and Employment, President Macapagal-Arroyo awarded the following:

- Checks amounting to P675,000 for the Rural Workers Association of Sindangan, Dipolog City and Dapitan City for the promotion of rural employment through the Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship Development (PRESSED); and
- Checks amounting to P400,234 for the 437 grantees of the Special Program for Employment of Students (SPES).

The President also turned over Certificates of Lot Awards from the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) to 279 beneficiaries of the Dipolog Resettlement Project-Phase II.

From PAG-Ibig, she gave out Certificates of Lot Awards to 76 beneficiaries in the Holy Rosary Subdivision.

A total of 500 PhilHealth cards were likewise distributed by the President to indigent beneficiaries in Dapitan City.

From Philrice, the President turned-over 200 bags of hybrid rice seeds for the province of Zamboanga del Norte.

From the Department of Agriculture, the President turned over two units of farm tractor worth P2,574,000 and P1,474,540 respectively, to Governor Amatong on behalf of the farmer beneficiaries in the province.

GMA urges Zamboanga Peninsula residents to reach out and support gov't search for peace in the region

DIPOLOG CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the people of Zamboanga Peninsula to continue to reach out and support her administration's quest for an honorable and just peace in Mindanao based on tolerance, understanding and a common sense of nationhood.

Speaking in fluent Cebuano in a program commemorating the 50th founding anniversary of the province of Zamboanga del Norte held at the Dipolog City Gymnasium and Sports Center here, the President emphasized that only through peace can the region expect to achieve development and progress.

“Peace will bring us security and a brighter future for our children,” the President pointed out.

Relative to this, the President asked the help of the people, especially the local government officials down to the barangay level, to support the soldiers in the ongoing operation against terrorists and other lawless elements in what she called the SSSB area of Zamboanga del Norte.

SSSB is composed of the municipalities of Sibuco, Sirawai, Siocon and Baliguian, all in the western part of Zamboanga del Norte.

“Let’s all help in flushing out the bandits and terrorists from their lairs in the barangays or in the cities,” the President said.

The President urged the people to support the military in the war against terrorism so that peace can be achieved and development can be speeded up.

For the many coconut farmers in the Zamboanga Peninsula region, which is composed of Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga Sibugay, the President said that on Independence Day on June 12 she will announce the priority projects that will be funded from the Coconut Levy Fund.

The President indicated that one of the projects to be funded will be the Integrated Coconut Processing Plant in the province of Zamboanga del Norte.

“I gave instructions to the Philippine Coconut Authority through Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor that you will given support in the construction of the processing plant from the coconut levy fund which may come out on June 12,” the President said to the big applause of the listeners, mostly Cebuano-speaking.

With the President during the program were Secretary Montemayor, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Presidential Adviser on Jobs Creation Luis Lorenzo and Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita.

Zamboanga del Norte Governor Isagani Amatong, Dipolog City Mayor Roberto Uy and Zamboanga del Norte Congressman Angel Carloto led local officials in welcoming the President.

Carloto joined the President in singing two favorite Cebuano ditties, “*Matud Nila*” and “*Usahay*,” to the delight of the crowd.

GMA extols tricycle drivers and operators for their contribution to country’s economy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today extolled the country’s tricycle operators and drivers for what she described as their “immense contribution” to the economy.

In her brief remarks at the first-ever summit of the Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association (TODA) held this afternoon at the Amoranto Multi-Purpose Hall in Quezon City, the President said the lowly tricycle is a fitting example of the saying “small is beautiful.”

“*Kasi di ba maliit ang traysikel, kasing liit ko ngunit malaki naman ang naiaambag sa ekonomiya pati na rin sa ikabubuti ng mamamayan* (Isn’t it that tricycles are small, just like me? But they contribute immensely to the economy and to the welfare of the people),” the President said.

The President arrived at the summit venue just a few minutes after her arrival from Dipolog City where she was the guest of honor in the 50th founding anniversary of the province of Zamboanga del Norte.

She was welcomed at the summit by Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte and Metro Manila Development Authority Chairman Benjamin Abalos.

The President said tricycles have become part of the people’s daily lives, from going to schools and offices, distributing wares to and from the market places, and especially during emergencies.

“Dito natin makikita kung gaano kahalaga ang inyong binibigay na serbisyo sa publiko (It is here where we can appreciate the things that you do for the public),” she added.

Later, the President tried her hand behind the wheel of a tricycle and reeved up its engine to the delight of the crowd.

The theme of the summit is “*Tinig ng Toda, Laban sa Kahirapan.*” Approximately 5,000 tricycle operators and drivers attended the summit.

To assist TODA dependents, the President distributed scholarship programs to some 500 beneficiaries.

Among those who attended the summit were Quezon City 4th district Representative Nanette Daza, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, National Anti-Poverty Commission Lead Convenor Teresita Quintos-Deles, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina Jr., Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Transportation and Communications Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez and National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez.

Officials from TODA who attended the summit included Adolfo Quiming, overall chairman of the NCR-TODA Council; Art Cagadas, TODAPHIL (*Tinig ng Organisadong Drayber at Operator sa Pilipinas*) South Sector representative; Severino del Rosario, TODAPHIL North Sector representative; Luther Estrada, TODAPHIL East Sector Representative; Ace Sevilla, TODAPHIL West Sector Representative; and June dela Cruz, TODAPHIL Quezon City Representative.

Together with five council leaders of the TODAPHIL, Quiming presented to the President the output of the TODA workshops on the following sector: health and safety, organizational development, policy advocacy, national cooperation and community service and economic and livelihood.

Considering the poor man’s transportation, tricycles abound in the country with more than 800,000 registered units plying numerous routes.

GMA condoles with parents of Dexter Balala

SAN FERNANDO CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today condoled with the parents of four-year-old Dexter Balala who died yesterday after a hostage-taking incident at the Philtranco Bus Terminal in Pasay City.

The President cancelled her scheduled visit to a housing project of the Couples for Christ in Payatas, Quezon City and motored straight to this city after keynoting the summit of the Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association (TODA) held at the Amoranto Multi-Purpose Hall in Quezon City.

The President was not able to hold back her tears upon seeing the boy’s mother, Salvacion, who was weeping all throughout during her visit.

Aside from extending her condolences, the President also gave financial assistance to the bereaved family.

The boy’s father, Darius, was beside his wife during the visit of the President at the family’s residence in San Vicente Street, Barangay Quebiawan in this city.

Dexter and his mother were waiting for a bus at the terminal for their journey back to this city when he was grabbed by drug-crazed Diomedes Talbo and held at knifepoint for two hours.

A police attempt to rescue Dexter failed. Talbo was later killed by Pasay policemen.

San Fernando City Mayor Reynaldo Aquino, who accompanied the President during the visit, said that the city government would provide a burial lot for the boy.

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman also accompanied the President during her visit here.

The President, along with Soliman and other government officials, has just flown in from Dipolog City where she distributed checks for livelihood assistance, land patents and farm implements to beneficiaries in Zamboanga del Norte during the 50th founding anniversary of the province.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 1, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514031846/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june1.htm#POEA>

The President's Day: June 2, 2002

02 JUNE 2002

- **GMA to open Palaro in Naga City Monday**
- **Poor thank GMA for cheaper medicines, health insurance program, rolling stores**

GMA to open Palaro in Naga City Monday

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will keynote the opening rites of the *Palarong Pambansa* (National Games) 2002 at the Metro Naga Sports Complex (MNSC) in Barangay Pacol, Naga City on Monday (June 3) morning.

The President's attendance at the *Palaro* speaks well of her administration's commitment to help develop the youth physically and, at the same time, mentally and spiritually.

The President is expected to extol the gains the country's youth expect to get from the annual sports event and from succeeding sports tournaments the government has lined up nationwide.

"The games should go on," the President earlier declared when she approved the holding of the *Palaro* last month.

The *Palaro* underwent some funding problems but these were immediately resolved.

After gracing the opening ceremonies, the President will attend the joint meeting of the Bicol Regional Development Council and Regional Peace and Order Council.

Meanwhile, Philippine Sports Commission Chairman Eric Buhain and host Naga City Mayor Jesse Robredo said everything was in place for the National Games to be played at the refurbished MNSC.

Some 8,000 athletes and officials, to be billeted in 18 city schools including the Camarines Sur National High School and the Naga Central School, are expected to participate in the *Palaro*.

Of the number, some 6,000 are athletes who will participate in 17 events, namely archery, athletics, badminton, baseball, basketball, little league baseball, boxing, chess, football, gymnastics, sepak takraw, sipa, softball, swimming, table tennis, taekwando and volleyball.

The athletes and officials represent the country's 16 regions.

Poor thank GMA for cheaper medicines, health insurance program, rolling stores

"The medicine I have to buy regularly for my sick husband is readily available at the government-run hospital. It's less expensive. I can buy seven (capsules) for the price of one sold at the drug store."

"Thanks to the Philhealth Plan of President GMA, my family not only saved money. We saved the life of my baby boy."

"Thanks to the Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera Rolling Stores, my family now eats better quality rice – and at a cheaper price, too."

These are only a few of the testimonials made by ordinary people who have benefited from the programs pursued by the administration as part of the commitments made by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during her State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July last year.

Milagros Caramansion, 53, of 1083 Pilar Corregidor St., Tondo, Manila, now goes regularly to the nearby Department of Health-run hospital to buy Adalat (nifedipine), an antianginal drug, for her husband.

“Malaki ang diperensiya ng presyo sa labas, Mga P35 yata pero dito, P5.75 lang. Malaking katipiran sa aming mahihirap (The price difference is very big. It costs about P35 elsewhere. Here (at government hospital), it’s only P5.75. A big savings, especially for us poor,” said the housewife.

Mrs. Caramansion said she hopes more medicines, particularly those needed by the poor like her, will be included soon in the list of low-priced drugs under the Presyong Tama, Gamot Pampamilya (Right Price, Family’s Medicine) of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Health.

Hereculani P. Lepasana, pharmacist at the Jose R. Reyes Memorial Medical Center, said: *“Nasisiyahan ang mga pasyente dahil sa laki ng baba ng presyo dito kumpara sa mga botika sa labas ng ospital* (The patients are happy about the low cost of medicines here compared to the prices in the drug stores outside the hospital).”

Maryjane O. Boac, 23, of Purok K4, Barangay Menzi, Santiago City, Isabela, has more to be thankful for.

“Ang laki ng tuwa at pasasalamat ko sa Philhealth Plan dahil wala akong binayaran noong nagkasakit ang anak kong si Wilmer (I’m so happy and thankful for the Philhealth Plan because I didn’t have to spend a single centavo when my son Wilmer got sick),” she said.

“Hindi ko akalain na dahil sa ID na ito,” she said, showing her Philhealth insurance plan identification card, *“nailigtas ang aking anak na wala ni isang kusing na ginastos. Salamat sa gobyerno at sa Medicare* (I never realized this ID would help save the life of my son without me having to spend a centavo. Thanks to the government and Medicare),” she added.

Nick Martinez of Zone 79, Barangay 3 in Muñoz, Vito Cruz, Manila, for his part, brought up another matter that was *“mas malapit sa sikmura.”*

“Dahil sa Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera Rolling Stores, nabibiyayaan ang pamilya ko ng bigas na hindi lamang mura ang halaga. Maganda pa ang kalidad at madaling mapuntahan. (Because of the TGL Rolling Stores, my family can now afford to buy rice that is not only less expensive but of good quality and is available anytime),” Martinez said.

The “Presyong Tama, Gamit Pampamilya,” Philhealth medical insurance and rolling stores are part of the SONA pledges made by the President to win the war against poverty within the decade, improve the quality of life of the people, particularly the poor, and stimulate the economy.

According to the President, almost all of the targets she set out to accomplish are on schedule or even ahead of schedule.

In her weekly radio program last Monday, the President informed the nation that there will be no letup in pursuit and accomplishment of these targets.

More hospitals are now dispensing medicines at cheaper prices and more brands and types of medicines are now available in these hospitals, according to the monitoring report of the Presidential Management Staff, which is headed in a concurrent capacity by Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr.

According to the President, more than three million people, most of them poor residents in the urban areas and countryside, have been enrolled in the National Health Insurance Program.

She also said more than 1,400 rolling stores have been mobilized nationwide to give the poor the opportunity to buy food and medicines, which eat up the biggest portion of the household budget, at much lower prices.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 2, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514031903/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june2.htm>

The President's Day: June 3, 2002

03 JUNE 2002

- **GMA vows swift justice for slain Pasay hostage**
- **Development first before final accord with MILF, says GMA**
- **GMA stresses need to push 'new politics'**
- **GMA to newlyweds: be responsible parents**
- **GMA lauds public school teacher's honesty**
- **GMA pushes micro-financing for poor**
- **GMA orders repatriation of non-essential Philippine Embassy personnel in Pakistan**
- **GMA issues checks worth P4.3-M for projects in Camarines Sur**
- **GMA thanks Congress for quick action Power Franchise Bill**
- **Let's develop true champions – GMA**
- **GMA orders Kyamko to stop communist rebs in Bicol**
- **RP asks for more security assistance in GMA-Wolfowitz meeting**
- **GMA bares plan for Energy Summit in Bicol**

GMA vows swift justice for slain Pasay hostage

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reassured the mother of slain hostage victim Dexter Balala, 4, of swift justice, as she ordered the police to file administrative and criminal cases, if warranted, against responding policemen who might have killed the boy in last week's failed rescue try at the Philtranco terminal in Pasay City.

During her regular weekly radio interview aired nationwide, the President noted the relief of Pasay City Chief of Police Superintendent Eduardo de la Cerna following the botched rescue and killing of Balala, who was held hostage by Diomedes Talvo, 35.

The President also urged the retraining — on hostage management, negotiation and rescue — of the police group who figured in the incident that also led to the killing of Talvo, who stabbed Balala several times before sustaining at least 56 gunshot wounds following a hail of police gunfire.

She cited the move of the police command to subject to ballistics test the policemen involved in the hostage drama "*para malaman kung sino talaga iyong nagbaril lalo na iyong bala na kung iyon nga ang nagpatay doon sa bata* (so we will know who fired their guns and if a bullet from those guns really killed the boy)," she said.

There have been at least 50 hostage-taking situations in recent years, but this was the only time that the hostage was killed, she said.

"*Kaya malaking kapalpakan noong Pasay City team* (the Pasay City police team bungled)," she added.

In the same radio interview, the President again condoled with the family of Balala, particularly the boy's mother Sally and his grandmother.

"*Gusto kong siguraduhin sa iyo na bibigyan natin ng katarungan ang iyong anak at mapaparusahan iyong pinanggalingan ng kanyang pagkamatay* (I want to assure you that your son will get justice; those responsible for his death will be punished)," she told Sally and Dexter's grandmother over radio.

She recalled that after being informed on the incident, she immediately went to condole with the Balala family.

She asked Sally, who is pregnant, to take good care of herself and of her upcoming baby.

Development first before final accord with MILF, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that before the government and the mainstream Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) sign a final peace agreement, development programs in the former conflict areas in Mindanao should already be in place.

In her weekly radio interview aired nationwide every Monday, the President also reiterated that there is no hidden agenda in the agreement signed by representatives of the government and the MILF in Kuala Lumpur early last month.

“I have always been saying that I want development to take place in the conflict areas before we sign a final agreement,” the President said.

According to the President, if the former conflict areas would be developed, then the signing of the final peace accord would be a *fait accompli* or done deal.

Actually, the President said, the Department of Public Works and Highways and the Department of Agriculture have already implemented a lot of projects in Camp Abubakar, the former main camp of the MILF.

She said that thousands of evacuees have now returned to the different barangays that comprise Camp Abubakar and the other former MILF camps.

Earlier, the President assured the nation, especially those who tried to twist the facts for political reasons, that the Kuala Lumpur accord never mentioned about the return of their former armed camps to the MILF.

She also said that all the development efforts in the former conflict areas would have to be coursed through the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and the Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA).

GMA stresses need to push ‘new politics’

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said it was imperative for the country’s foremost political party to indulge in “new politics.”

The President said “the new politics must be the politics of party platforms and institutional consultation with the people.”

“A political party should exist between elections,” not only for elections, the President said during her regular weekly radio interview aired nationwide.

She stressed that the “old politics (or) the politics of patronage and personality” should be done away with.

The President was formally named as the chairperson of the Lakas-National Union of Christian Democrats (NUCD)-United Muslim Democrats of the Philippines (UMDP) ruling party in its national directorate meeting last Saturday.

The President said the presence of Press Secretary on-leave Rigoberto Tiglao in Japan was very timely.

“*Ang kanyang* research fellowship *ay iyong* Christian democratic ideology *sa ating administrasyon* (His research fellowship is on the Christian democratic ideology in my administration),” she said.

This is the very basic philosophy of the Lakas-NUCD-UMDP party that should be translated into the ground ideology of this government, she added.

She stressed that she wanted to make Lakas “a genuine political party.”

She also suggested that the party be renamed as Lakas ng Christian Democracy and Moslem Democracy from Lakas-NUCD-UMDP.

GMA to newlyweds: be responsible parents

“Be responsible parents,” this is the motherly advice of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to couples who are going to tie the knot this month.

In her weekly radio interview aired nationwide every Monday, the President said that under our Constitution, the family is the basic unit of Philippine society.

“*So, dapat ay patatagin natin ang pamilya* (So, we should strengthen the family),” the President said, adding that responsible parenthood is also one of the principles enshrined in our Constitution.

“*Kaya dapat iyong magpakasal siguruhin nila na magiging matatag ang pamilya nila at dapat ay makamtan nila ang katangian ng responsible parents* (So, those who are going to get married should make sure to strengthen their family and that they should possess the qualities of good parents),” the President said.

The President also said that she does not personally attend to the nitty-gritty of the preparations for the upcoming wedding of her son, Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel “Mikey” Arroyo, and Angela Montenegro.

“*Ako, bilang Pangulo, bilang ina ng bayan, iyon ang mas malaking focus ko* (As president, and mother of the nation, that is my main focus,” the President said when asked what she felt about the wedding of Vice Governor Arroyo this month.

The President said she has entrusted the details of the preparations for the wedding to her social secretary, Ms. Betina Aboitiz, although from time to time, when she had the chance to see Ms. Aboitiz, she would inquire about the arrangements made for the wedding.

When asked if she is looking forward to having grandchildren, the President replied: “*Of course, kasi ang aking mga kaibigan, mga classmates ko, mga pinsan kong contemporary, halos lahat sila ay mga lolo at lola na* (Of course, because my friends, my classmates and my cousins who are my contemporaries are now *lolos* and *lolas*).

GMA lauds public school teacher’s honesty

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the people to emulate the honesty, selflessness and dedication to duty demonstrated by teacher Marilyn Bien-Bongiadi, of Calabanga, Camarines Sur, who returned some P6 million erroneously credited to her bank account.

The President cited Bien-Bongiadi’s honest deed as she called to mind the opening of classes next week and the deep commitment of public school mentors to hone their students and pupils academically and morally.

“*Bigyang-pansin natin ang magandang halimbawang pinamana ni Marilyn* (Let us cite Marilyn’s good example),” she said during her weekly radio program.

“*Ang ganitong pangyayari ay parang sariwang hangin na nagbibigay ng panibagong sigla sa bawat isa sa atin* (This deed comes like a fresh gust of wind that reinvigorates everyone),” particularly those in public service.

“*Ito ay patunay lamang na hindi basta nasihilaw sa salapi ang mga lingkod-bayan. Ang nakararami sa kanila ay nananatiling tapat sa tungkulin at matibay ang paniningdigan at sumusunod sa code of ethics* (This proves that

public servants are not easily tempted by the glitter of money. Many of them remain true to their duties, firm in their convictions, and faithful to the code of ethics),” she said.

She hoped that Marilyn’s act would inspire government officials and workers to help clean the bureaucracy of graft and corruption that had stalled the country’s economic growth.

Replicating the teacher’s honesty in the public service would mean the eventual return of the people’s faith in good government, leading to faster social development and economic progress and the attainment of the collective national goal.

Good and clean governance has been the President’s commitment since she was installed as President on January 30, 2001 following EDSA People Power II that ousted former President Joseph Estrada.

She urged public school teachers — having been one of them at one time — to instill in the minds and hearts of their students and pupils the value of honesty.

The President, who opened later this morning the *Palarong Pambansa* (National Games) in Naga City, reiterated her praises for Marilyn and other public servants who showed the same brand of honesty.

“*Nawa’y magsilbing inspirasyon sa ating lahat ang ipinamalas na katapatan ni Marilyn at marami pang katulad niya* (May we be inspired by what Marilyn and others like her did),” she told more than 8,000 officials and athletes gathered in the Naga City sports complex.

Honesty and other good values should unite the people in their campaign to overcome the various challenges being faced by the Filipino nation, she added

“*Sana’y magsilbi ring paraan ang Palarong Pambansa na ipasanay ang ating mga kabataan sa katapatan habang magkukumpetensiya* (We should turn the *Palaro* into a venue for the youth to learn the best Filipino values while competing.

GMA pushes micro-financing for poor

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today underscored the importance of micro-finance in providing livelihood opportunities for the poorest of the poor.

In her weekly interview program over the radio, the President also outlined the achievements of her administration in connection with the poverty alleviation targets she spelled out during her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July last year.

According to her, the center of her administration’s livelihood program lies in the People’s Credit and Finance Corporation (PCFC) together with its conduit banks, financing agencies, the various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), cooperative rural banks, as well as micro-finance replicators.

The micro-finance scheme involves loans of up to P5,000 as capital funding to enable the poor to put up a source of livelihood.

“It (micro-finance) is a very effective system called Grameen bank which started in Bangladesh. It became well-known in the world as an effective tool of livelihood for the poorest of the poor,” the President said.

With regards to her SONA target, the President noted that her administration was able to achieve its goal of providing some 150,000 urban poor families the right to buy their own land.

She added that the government had been able to drastically reduce the signatories in housing permits from the previous 108 to 41.

The President likewise announced that some 1.5-million urban poor and 1.7-million rural poor folk have already benefited from the government's health insurance program.

As spelled out in her SONA, the President said half-price medicines are now available in 73 hospitals under the Department of Health (DOH).

In the agriculture sector, she said the government has already generated 852,000 jobs from its original target of 1 million in three and a half years.

On top of that is the completion of the Mal-Mar dam project in Cotabato, providing irrigation to some 5,000 hectares of farmlands in the area.

As promised, the President said her administration has succeeded in controlling the budget deficit and sustained a 3.8 percent gross national product (GNP) after more than a year in office.

Also in the interview, the President called on the various sectors in the society to help the government in achieving its goal of providing 100,000 housing units for the working class as well as the construction of school buildings in every barangay throughout the archipelago.

In the case of the housing for the working class, she said what is needed at the moment is the support of conduit banks and the private sector.

GMA orders repatriation of non-essential Philippine Embassy personnel in Pakistan

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the repatriation of non-essential personnel in the Philippine Embassy in Pakistan and their families.

In her weekly nationwide radio interview this morning, the President also said Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) stationed in Pakistan were also enjoined to coordinate with Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas to ensure their safety and return to the country.

The President asked National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, who briefed her on the India-Pakistan situation, to inform Vice President and Foreign Affairs Secretary Teofisto Guingona, Jr. about her decision to return home the non-essential staff in the Philippine Embassy.

The President said the United Nations took a similar action and ordered the evacuation of their non-essential staff with their families in Pakistan.

Around 300 families of UN staff are expected to begin evacuating Pakistan as fear of war mounted between the nuclear foes, according to UN Information Center Director Eric Falt.

The President also noted that OFWs in Pakistan have already been asked earlier by the government to evacuate because of the escalating feud between India and Pakistan.

GMA issues checks worth P4.3-M for projects in Camarines Sur

NAGA CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded some P4.3 million worth of checks for various social programs and infrastructure projects in the province of Camarines Sur.

After her speech during the opening of the *Palarong Pambansa* (National Games) at the Metro Naga Sports Complex here, the President issued checks totaling P1.9 million for 1,065 student-beneficiaries of the Special Program for Employment of Students implemented by the Department of Labor and Employment this summer.

The President also awarded P1.95 million in checks to the towns of Magarao, Lupi and Bombon for the concreting of farm-to-market roads. Magarao Mayor Lourdes Sanar, Lupi Mayor Roberto Matamrosa and Bombon Mayor Vicente Asido received the checks.

A separate check for P154,000 was issued to 40 family- beneficiaries in San Rafael, Pamplona for the installation of septic tanks in their respective houses. The President gave the check to Allan Llamado, chairman of San Rafael's committee on health and sanitation, and Barangay Captain Maria Rebutiaco.

She awarded a P200,000 check also to finance the construction of a day-care center in Barangay Palangon, Libmanan and P140,000 for the improvement of a water system in Barangay Magais, Del Gallego.

Besides this, the President awarded seven carabao to the Regional Gawad Saka Outstanding Achievers of 2002, namely, Carlos Anmado of Taysan, Legazpi City; Tito Urbano of San Vicente, Camarines Norte; Avelina Miranda of Camarines Norte; Ric Antipolo of Minalaba, Camarines Sur, Leonardo Libreja of Ocampo, Camarines Sur, Bangkilingan 4 H Club Young Farmer Organization from Bangkilingan, Tobacco City and Liberato Navarro Sr. of maguisoc, Mercedes, Camarines Norte.

She likewise distributed 10 sacks of hybrid rice to Manuel Morano, Leonido Oberos, Neslie Jemeria, Delia Esperida, Salud Boragay, Luzviminda Quizon, Noe Mira, Pelagio Constantino, Romegio Guevalondo and Ernesto Betabara, all small farmers of Naga City.

She also led the distribution of 594 Certificates of Land Ownership Awards covering 1,293 hectares to 894 farmer-beneficiaries from Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Masbate and Sorsogon.

Meanwhile, the Land Registration Authority and Department of Environment and Natural Resources, under the "Pamamahagi ng Titulo Program," distributed 533 land titles to beneficiaries from the towns of Canaman, Camaligan, Gamza, Magarao, Bombon, Minalabac, San Fernando, and Calabanga, all in Camarines Sur.

The Philippine Health Insurance also issued 1,000 health cards under the 'Medicare Para sa Masa Program' to indigent families in San Jose and Lupi, Camarines Sur.

GMA thanks Congress for quick action Power Franchise Bill

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked members of the House of Representatives for their speedy action on the 50-year franchise application of the National Transmission Corp. (Transco), the entity that will handle the transmission lines of the National Power Corporation (Napocor).

In her weekly radio interview aired nationwide every Monday, the President said no private firm would buy the Transco if the franchise bill would not be approved.

Over the weekend, the House committee on legislative franchises chaired by Bukidnon Congressman Miguel Zubiri approved the bill containing the Transco franchise.

The bill is expected to be approved by the entire House before it adjourns its regular session this coming Thursday. It will, however, still have to go through the Senate.

The President said that with the passage of the franchise bill, the government could now bid out Transco, adding that this would translate into some \$1.5-billion to \$2-billion new capital infusion that could be used to pay for the debts of Napocor.

She said that selling the transmission facilities of Napocor is in line with the government's privatization policy as she stressed that frequent power failure is caused by tripping in the transmission lines.

So, it is necessary to allow the private sector to run these transmission lines because it has been proven that the government is not good in managing businesses, the President said.

According to the President, depending on the amount that the government could get out of the sale of Transco, the transaction may even result in the lowering of the controversial purchased power adjustment (PPA).

The President said that not only is there a need for continuous power supply but the cost of electricity in the country should also be competitive enough so that existing industries could be able to sustain their growth.

Let's develop true champions – GMA

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GMA orders Kyamko to stop communist rebs in Bicol

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RP asks for more security assistance in GMA-Wolfowitz meeting

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night sought additional United States security assistance for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) aimed at paving the way for the AFP to be self reliant through the development of more defense industries in the future.

Briefing the media on President's meeting Sunday night with US Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and California Rep. Dana Rohrabacker in Malacanang, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said that one of the topics discussed was the strategic alliance of the Philippines and the United States in the fight against terrorism.

On the status of the joint US-RP military training exercises in Basilan, Afable said that both sides expressed satisfaction that the *Balikatan* exercises have been successful in terms of the training benefits for both the Filipino and American soldiers.

"There was consensus of cooperation in intelligence activities," Afable said, pointing out that the US delegation was satisfied on the manner the Philippine government is organizing the anti-terrorism efforts in Mindanao.

According to Afable, President Macapagal-Arroyo briefed the US officials on the constitution of the joint unified task forces under which all the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) units in Mindanao will be placed under the operational control and supervision of the Secretaries of National Defense and Interior and Local Governments.

The US delegation was likewise briefed on the status of the government's peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP-NDF).

Afable also said that changes in the *Balikatan's* Term of Reference were not discussed during the meeting. "The *Balikatan* exercises will take its course until its termination in July," he said.

According to Afable, there was a consensus that the training exercises would be intensified and pushed forward to the company level, instead of the battalion level.

“Any US involvement in offensive operation was not discussed,” Afable stressed.

GMA bares plan for Energy Summit in Bicol

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Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: June 3, 2002]. Retrieved from [https://web.archive.org/web/20100514031915/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june3.htm#GMA lauds](https://web.archive.org/web/20100514031915/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june3.htm#GMA%20lauds)

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- **Most S.O.N.A. projects in Bicol accomplished, GMA told**
- **GMA creates Anti-Professional Squatting Task Force**
- **GMA pledges full budgetary support for projects in Bicol Region**
- **Palace won't intervene in Senate developments**
- **GMA cites importance of shelter security to country's economic development**

Most S.O.N.A. projects in Bicol accomplished, GMA told

NAGA CITY – Most of the programs and projects in Region 5 (Bicol) covered by the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo have been accomplished.

This is based on the report submitted to the President by Presidential Management Staff Undersecretary Ricardo L. Saludo during the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council (RDC) and Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) yesterday held at the Magic Splash Resort in Barangay Carolina here.

In his report, Saludo revealed that as of May 31, 2002, some 2,062 households in Region 5 have been provided housing assistance through slum upgrading, resettlement, sites and services, cooperative housing, Community Land Acquisition Program and other socialized housing programs from January 2001 to February 2002.

As of February 28 this year, a total of 4,700 households have also been provided security of land tenure in Legaspi City, Albay.

Since May 15, 2002, a total of 93 rolling stores have been deployed to 115 cities and municipalities and 3,537 barangays in the six provinces of the region and were patronized by 3,939,603 consumers, the PMS report said.

Saludo also reported that some 8,007 women borrowers in Region 5 have been provided micro-finance and livelihood assistance from July 2001 to March 2002.

Also, a total of 104,029 beneficiaries from 22,615 rural poor households in the region were provided health insurance and some 65,683 beneficiaries from 14,279 urban poor families have been enrolled under the National Health Insurance Program.

At least 60,000 jobs were created in the agriculture sector in the region last year, including 13,473 jobs generated in credit and 626 jobs in irrigation.

He added that under the implementation of Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA), a total of P96.95 million was allocated for Bicol region. Of this amount, P90.34 million has been utilized for the GMA rice and corn, high value crops and livestock programs.

He also said that from January to March this year, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) distributed 1,319 hectares of land. Last year, a total of 9,874 hectares were also distributed by the DAR.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, meanwhile, issued Certificates of Allocation covering 8,106 hectares from July 2001 to May 2002 to farmers beneficiaries from Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate and Sorsogon.

As of May 14, 2002, exactly 1,614,383 textbooks were delivered to the region.

The Department of Public Works and Highways and Department of Education are also constructing school building in 15 barangays in the six provinces in the region.

As of the end of April this year, almost 91 remote barangays in the region have been provided electricity by the Department of Energy.

GMA creates Anti-Professional Squatting Task Force

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the creation of a an Anti-Professional Squatting Task Force which would identify the genuine landless individuals from the professional squatters who make use of squatting for business purposes.

The Chief Executive made the announcement in her speech before some 1,000 urban poor leaders during the celebration of the Third Social Housing Week initiated by the Social Housing Movement, Inc. (SHMI) at the Amoranto Stadium on Roces Avenue, Quezon City.

The President appointed Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Michael Defensor as chairman of the task force.

She said that some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been reporting about noted professional squatters. “We have already apprehended and filed charges against some of them,” the President said.

According to the President, professional squatters are making it difficult for the administration to give the genuine landless individuals shelter security for their families.

The President said that she formed the Anti-Professional Squatting Task Force in response to the proposal of the SHMI, an NGO, which has been an active advocate of the social housing program. The SHMI has also been the proponent of more than 120 housing and livelihood projects in the urban poor communities.

She said that her decision to create the task force is part of the government’s institutionalized consultations with the Filipino citizenry.

“Ito ay ginagawa ko dahil kayo at iba pang mga NGO ay nagpapanukala na dapat ihwalay iyong genuine na naghahanap ng lupa sa mga professional squatters (I decide to create the task force because the SHMI and other NGOs made the proposal that would separate the genuine landless individuals to the professional squatters),” the President said.

The President asked the SHMI to be part of the task force and work with Defensor in arresting and filing charges against the members of the professional squatting syndicates.

When she was not yet president, the Chief Executive said, whenever she moved around, the urban poor used to tell her about their primary concern, which is to have shelter security.

It is for this reason, the President added, that she wants 150,000 families to have shelter security every year.

“Natupad natin ito noong nakaraang taon (We achieved this last year),” the President stressed, as she asked the NGOs to support her administration in giving shelter security to another 150,000 families this year.

GMA pledges full budgetary support for projects in Bicol Region

NAGA CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said that her administration would extend full budgetary support to projects and programs in the Bicol Region, especially on energy generation and agriculture.

The President, who made the announcement during the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council (RDC) and the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) held Monday at the Magic Splash Resort here, noted that Bicol is one of the poorest regions in the country.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary-General Dante Canlas, in his briefing to the President and the joint meeting, said that poverty incidence in the region was 55.4 percent in the year 2000, making Bicol the second poorest region in the country.

In terms of magnitude, the region has the most number of poor families with 608,000, more than 60 percent of whom live in the rural areas. Canlas said these areas where poverty is most prevalent are also the most vulnerable to the influence of communist insurgents.

Unemployment in the region was 10.2 percent in 2000 and 9.2 percent in 2001, lower than the country's unemployment rate of 11.2 and 11.3 percent in the two respective years.

However, Bicol has the highest unemployment rate in the country with 38.9 percent in 2000. Labor productivity in the same year was 53,340, second to the lowest (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) in the country and far below the national average of P116,752.

Gross regional domestic product (GDP) in the region in 2000 was about P89.7 billion, or 2.7 percent of the national GDP. The regional economy contracted by 0.1 percent during the year, primarily due to the slump in agriculture.

To confront these, Canlas said the Bicol region should focus on improving labor productivity, employment generation, local governance and its peace and order condition.

The government, he said, will address poverty through the provision of basic services. "Areas with high poverty incidence and peace and order problems shall be given priority in the delivery of these services," Canlas added.

The region's endowments in the agriculture, mining and tourism sectors shall be harnessed to enhance the region's growth, he said.

In agriculture, the NEDA secretary general said key agribusiness commodity systems shall be developed for strategic commodities such as pili, abaca, coconut, rice, queen pineapple, tiger grass, mango, livestock and fisheries.

Canlas said these will be provided with technical support, microfinancing assistance and infrastructure.

The government will also further develop the region's mineral industry, especially its major resources such as gold, marble, clay, perlite, limestone, bentonite and diatomite.

In tourism, historical sites and cultural activities shall be aggressively promoted, and areas of outstanding natural beauty such as the Mayon View Park, Catanduanes Canopy Walk, Malabsay Falls, Bulusan and Mt. Isarog will be developed for eco-tourism.

The President checked the status of government and official development aid projects in the region, including those that involved other regions as well.

At present, there are 42 projects in the region that mostly involved infrastructure, agriculture and energy generation, including technical and livelihood projects.

The President was also briefed on the major projects with a total cost of P3.047 billion that the national government is implementing.

These are the Catanduanes Agricultural Resource Development Program, Tiwi Geothermal Plant Complex Rehabilitation Project, River Basin Management Program and the Partido Water Supply Sanitation Project.

Palace won't intervene in Senate developments

Malacañang today said that the realignment of forces in the Senate that resulted in the so-called reorganization last Monday is an internal affair of that legislative body and the Executive Department would not interfere.

“This is really, and we do emphasize this, this is an internal matter affecting the organization and membership of the Senate, which in due time, we hope and we know, they will be able to resolve among themselves,” Chief Presidential Legislative Liaison Officer Gabriel Claudio said in a press conference in Malacañang.

Claudio also said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who was in Naga City Monday where she opened the *Palarong Pambansa*, took the developments in the Senate “very calmly and matter-of-factly.”

“There was no sign whatsoever of any agitation of any anxiety on her part,” Claudio said.

Aside from opening the *Palarong Pambansa*, the President also presided over the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) for the Bicol Region.

Claudio said that Malacañang will continue to monitor the developments in the Senate “as closely as we can” although he stressed that the position of Senate President Franklin Drilon remains intact and which the opposition is not even contesting.

“For all intents and purposes, as far as we are concerned, as far as the nation is concerned, Senate President Drilon continues to be the Senate president, the leader of the Senate,” Claudio said.

He said that Malacañang and the nation will have to be guided by the pronouncements by the Senate President Drilon on the matter of interpreting the meaning of what happened last Monday and the efforts to reorganize the Senate.

Claudio also described as “not such a bad day” the first regular session of the 12th Congress, saying that at least five important measures have been approved by the first regular session.

These are the 2002 Appropriations Act, the Anti-Money Laundering Act, the Rent Control Law, the National Service Training Program or the ROTC alternative law, and the synchronized *barangay* and *Sangguniang Kabataan* elections next month.

Claudio also said that among the major bills that have been passed by the first regular session and are ready for signature by the President are the Dangerous Drugs Act, the AFP Salary Base Pay, the Plant Variety Act, and the bill creating the Council of the Philippines.

“So it has not been such a bad day for Congress, whether in the Senate or the House of Representatives,” Claudio said.

Claudio admitted, however, said that there will be a “slight delay” on several measures that the administration would have wanted the two houses of Congress to approve, notably the franchise bill for the National Transmission Corp. (Transco) and the Special Purpose Assets Vehicle.

He said that Malacañang will just have to wait until the resumption of the Congress for its second regular session on July 22 for the passage of such bills.

GMA cites importance of shelter security to country's economic development

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the importance of shelter security not only as a component of her administration's massive housing program but also to the country's economic development in general.

Speaking before some 1,000 urban poor leaders during the celebration of the Third Social Housing Week organized by the Social Housing Movement, Inc. (SHMI) at the Amoranto Stadium in Quezon City, the Chief Executive said the acquisition of shelter security by an individual could be used as collateral for loans for livelihood projects.

The President said that this practice has been proven a success in many countries all over the world based from studies made by Hernando de Soto, a noted proponent of empowerment of the ordinary people so that they can improve their living conditions.

De Soto, a Peruvian economist and author of the best-selling book, "The Other Path," holds that the problem of underdeveloped countries is not that their poor, who make up most of the population, have no estates. "The poor," de Soto said, "have their little business and living spaces somewhere in our blighted land."

"Gusto nating lumawak itong sistema para iyong mga maralita na taga-lungsod ay magamit ang lupang tinitirikan hindi lamang para makatira doon kung hindi para maging kolateral para magkaroon ng puhunang pangkabuhayan (We want to promote this system so that the urban poor will not only be able to use the house and lot but also to use it as collateral for loans to be used as seed capital for livelihood projects)," the President stressed.

According to the President, this system will also help improve the country's unemployment rate. "This is one of the reasons why our government is giving importance to the need for our urban poor to have shelter security," she stressed.

The President also expressed confidence that if the government can provide shelter security to 150,000 families every year as she pledged in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA), then it will serve as a testimony to the entire Filipino citizenry about her administration's sincerity in implementing a really socialized housing program.

As part of the government's move to provide socialized housing affordable by the poor, the President also directed the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) through its chairman Michael Defensor to collaborate with the SHMI in disposing of the thousands of vacant housing units inherited from the previous administration.

The President particularly asked SHMI president Rozel Alex Santos to make an inventory of these vacant houses in order for the housing agency to look for beneficiaries who can afford to buy them on lease-to- own or long term lease or on easy installment basis.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 4, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514031931/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june4.htm>

The President's Day: June 5, 2002

05 JUNE 2002

- **More people patronizing TGL rolling stores**
- **Malacañang to keep its 'institutional distance' from Senate**
- **Reported abolition of O.W.W.A. still not tackled at policy level, says Palace**
- **Palace says no Balikatan option presented yet**
- **GMA completes Pinatubo trek**

More people patronizing TGL rolling stores

The number of Filipinos availing themselves of cheaper rice and other food products, basic goods and medicine sold in *Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera* (TGL) rolling stores deployed nationwide is increasing.

This was noted in a series of weekly reports covering the period April 16 to May 15 which Secretary Angelito Sarmiento, Presidential Adviser on Agricultural Modernization, submitted to Malacañang.

Sarmiento said TGL customers have grown to some 874,000 from May 8 to 15, an increase of about 121,000 customers from 753,000 customers per week in the preceding three weeks reported.

In Luzon, the number of customers reached 2.613 million during the four weeks in review. There were 161,648 and 359,284 TGL rolling stores patrons in the Visayas and Mindanao, respectively.

This showed that more consumers have come to realize the benefits of getting more and better value for their hard-earned money from TGL rolling stores, a program the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has carried out for the country's poor.

Citing statistics from lead agency National Food Authority (NFA), Sarmiento added that TGL sales totaled some P530.119 million during the four-week period, or an average of about P132.53 million per week.

Sales totaling P428.9 million were posted in Luzon while sales amounting to P46.6 million and P54.6 million were registered in the Visayas and Mindanao during the same period in review.

The increasing number of customers and the growing sales have prompted the NFA to deploy more rolling stores, particularly in the countryside and in poor communities in urban centers.

As of May 15, a total of 693 TGL rolling stores have been operating in Luzon. About 350 of these were in the National Capital Region (NCR) serving areas designated by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The areas included Del Pan in Tondo, Parola, Moriones, Commonwealth, the PUP in Sta. Mesa, Road 10, the National Government Center, North Triangle, Pleasant Hills, 9 de Pebrero, C-5 in Taguig, Maricaban, Malibay, Dagat-Dagatan and Manggahan.

There were also 58 rolling stores deployed to 97 barangays named as depressed areas and hotspots in the NCR.

In the Visayas and Mindanao, the NFA has deployed 220 and 358 TGL rolling stores, respectively.

"Thanks to the Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera Rolling Stores, my family now eats better quality rice – and at a cheaper price, too."

This was the testimonial of Nick Martinez of Zone 79, Barangay 3 in Muñoz, Vito Cruz, Manila, who said the TGL rolling stores brought up a matter that was “*mas malapit sa sikhura.*”

“*Dahil sa TGL rolling stores, nabibiyayaan ang pamilya ko ng bigas na hindi lamang mura ang halaga. Maganda pa ang kalidad at madaling mapuntahan.* (Because of the TGL rolling stores, my family can now afford to buy rice that is not only less expensive but of good quality and is available anytime),” Martinez said.

The deployment of TGL rolling stores was part of the commitments made by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during her State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July last year.

The President earlier said that almost all of the targets she set out to accomplish were carried out on schedule or even ahead of schedule.

In her weekly radio program last Monday, the President informed the nation that there would be no letup in pursuing and accomplishing these targets.

She said more than 1,400 rolling stores have been mobilized nationwide to give the poor the opportunity to buy food and medicines, which eat up the biggest portion of the household budget, at much lower prices.

Malacañang to keep its ‘institutional distance’ from Senate

Malacañang today said that because of the separation of powers of the legislature and the executive, it would continue to keep its “institutional distance” from the ongoing developments in the Senate.

In his press briefing this afternoon, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said an “institutional interference” by the presidency on the Senate would not be good for the country’s democratic system.

“The Senate is a very powerful institution composed of nationally-elected officials and it has its own rules by which it can repair these controversies,” Afable said.

According to Afable, there have been suggestions for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to intervene but she has not done this because “this would create the impression of a weakened Senate.”

The President, Afable said, is really preoccupied with a lot of work that has to do with the basic government reforms and in pushing her anti-poverty program, both in the urban and rural areas.

Afable said that the President does not have to engage in partisan activities since she has trust in the members of the coalition in the Senate to carry out the programs and reforms that she has introduced.

“The President is not the kind of leader who will spend her time or most of her time in partisan activity. When she wakes up in the morning, she takes off, she’s out in her work,” Afable said.

Early today, the President traveled to Barangay Santa Juliana, in Capas, Tarlac, where she led government officials in a three-hour trek to the Mount Pinatubo crater as part of promoting the country’s tourist spots.

On Monday when the Senate leadership problem occurred, the President was in Naga City where she opened the 2002 Palarong Pambansa and presided over the joint Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) of the Bicol Region. Like in most of her provincial visits, she stayed overnight in Naga City.

Reported abolition of O.W.W.A. still not tackled at policy level, says Palace

Malacañang today said the reported abolition of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) has not yet been officially discussed in the highest decision-making body of the government.

In a press briefing at Malacanang this afternoon, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said there is “no basis for that worry because I have not seen this up at policy level yet.”

Afable was reacting to reports that OWWA employees have expressed their apprehension over the reported merger of their office to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA).

He said that he has not seen the planned abolition of OWWA calendared in the agenda of the Cabinet.

“I’m sure that such a move would require a wide range of consultation within the Cabinet and with other agencies involved,” he stressed, adding that there is no movement yet as far the Cabinet is concerned on the matter.

Palace says no Balikatan option presented yet

Even as more Mindanao residents have urged government to prolong the stay of American troops in southern Philippines, Malacañang has stressed that no option (on the joint RP-US *Balikatan* 02-1 military exercises) has yet been presented.

Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said in today’s media briefing, that several options were being mulled over the *Balikatan*.

Afable said that “under present arrangements, you can seek an extension (of the military exercises) in Basilan; you can seek an extension of training exercises elsewhere in the Philippines; and you can seek, not necessarily an extension, but the opening of another bilateral exercise.”

He said that if the US government had either contemplated or discussed any of these moves, “there is a procedure by which these options can be considered.”

“It will be suggested at the operational level and then decided all the way up to the political level,” he added.

He said none of the options on the *Balikatan* was discussed during the recent visit of US Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz to the Philippines, particularly Basilan where the military exercises are being conducted.

“What was discussed during the meeting (between Wolfowitz and US and Philippine commanders on the ground) were more on strategic issues,” he added.

Afable also said officials considered the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) as “important to our strategic relationship with the United States (in fighting terrorism in the Asian region) and important to our national security.”

But certain controversies on the implementation of the MLSA have to be resolved at the proper military command and diplomatic levels of both countries.

If the Americans considered the MLSA urgent, then it would immediately be processed within the system.

“This urgency can always be expressed to the government through the proper channels and the process can be undertaken to resolve the issue,” he said.

Afable likewise cited the gains Philippine soldiers have been getting from the ongoing *Balikatan* exercises.

“The continuous training of our troops by the American armed forces has benefited our troops. And I think these training exercises will really improve our long term capacity to fight terrorism,” he said.

He noted the sentiments of the people of Basilan and said these “are an important political concern.”

Lately, Basilan residents have appealed to Malacañang to have the *Balikatan* extended in the province, where the notorious kidnap-for-ransom and terrorist group Abu Sayyaf had sown fear and terror.

“(The people of Basilan) are important for the success of any (Philippine) military operation in the area,” he said.

GMA completes Pinatubo trek

STA. JULIANA, CAPAS, Tarlac — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today showed her sincerity to promote eco-tourism in the country by completing a rigorous two-and-a-half hour trek to the crater of Mt. Pinatubo.

The President arrived here at around 6:30 a.m. and was immediately ushered to the Department of Tourism (DOT) information center for a briefing on the rules and regulations about the trekking.

She came with First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, son Dato, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon and other officials in the government and private sectors.

Shortly thereafter, the President and her party — composed of some 150 trekkers — boarded their separate 4×4 vehicles for an hour off-road drive on wide barren land that was devastated by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in June 1991.

From Sitio Dapili, the President and her party started the trek to the volcano’s crater.

She reached the crater to the applause of her party. Afterwards, a Mass for world peace officiated by Fr. Cris Cadiang was held at the crater area.

The President also administered the oath-taking rites of the Presidential Photojournalists Association led by Edwin Bacasmas of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.

Later, the President was feted with a *salo-salo* of rice wrapped in banana leaves with chicken *adobo*, salted eggs and tomato toppings.

She received a certificate of conquest from Secretary Gordon for completing the road trek to Mt. Pinatubo.

She also thanked a communications firm that donated two satellite phones for the use of the local tourism office to promote trekking on the volcano.

The President returned to Sitio Dapili at around 4:30 p.m.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: June 5, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514031946/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june5.htm>

The President's Day: June 6, 2002

06 JUNE 2002

- **GMA's Pinatubo trek to spur tourism activities in Tarlac, adjoining provinces**
- **Jobs, stable prices of goods remain GMA's priorities**
- **MA inspects waste composting facility in Pasig City**
- **Take advantage of rolling stores, jobs fairs, GMA tells QC, Pasig residents**

GMA's Pinatubo trek to spur tourism activities in Tarlac, adjoining provinces

President Gloria Mapacagal-Arroyo's trek to the crater of Mt. Pinatubo will spur tourism activities and bring livelihood opportunities to the people of Barangay Sta. Juliana in Capas, Tarlac and other areas that were greatly affected by the eruption of the volcano more than a decade ago.

This was the assessment made by Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon of the Department of Tourism (DOT) even as he assured that the trek to Mt. Pinatubo is safe, adding that the DOT will promote mountain trekking as part of its eco-tourism campaign.

Gordon thanked the residents of Barangay Sta. Juliana for their efforts in bringing out the possibility of making Mt. Pinatubo as one of the major points of interest for eco-tourism.

He added that the Mt. Pinatubo trekking has already won a gold award for eco-tourism from the prestigious Pacific Air Travel Association (PATA) during a ceremony held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia last year.

"We should give credit to the poor folks from Sta. Juliana who have suffered from Pinatubo because they themselves created the opportunity for themselves. And now the government is recognizing their efforts apart from the international tourism organizations," Gordon told reporters.

Barangay Sta. Juliana, in the western side of Tarlac, is some 20 kilometers from the main highway of Capas.

The village figured prominently during the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in June 1991 when the precarious O' Donnel River channel endangered the lives of the local populace.

It was in April 2000 when the barangay council of Sta. Juliana observed a growing influx of foreign and local tourists to the village who were using the area as a jump-off point for the three-hour trek to the crater of Mt. Pinatubo.

Realizing the potential influx of tourists, the village council transformed itself into a tourism council, which they now called the Sta. Juliana Tourism Council, Inc.

It was formed to handle the management and operation of the eco-tourism project.

Last Wednesday, no less than the President led some 150 trekkers in conquering the crater of the world-famous volcano.

She was accompanied by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, son Dato, Secretary Gordon, and other officials from the government and private sector.

From Barangay St. Juliana, the President took a 4x4 vehicle off-road travel a rough and rocky path for more than an hour.

The President and her party successfully completed the two and a half conquest of Mt. Pinatubo after finishing a 10-kilometer walk along and fast streams of the O'Donnell riverbed to the crater under the sweltering heat of the sun and sporadic downpour.

At the crater site, the President received a certificate of conquest from Secretary Gordon for being the 6,659th climber of the Mount Pinatubo.

Jobs, stable prices of goods remain GMA's priorities

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she would stay focused on creating jobs and keeping the prices of basic goods stable.

Speaking before a crowd at the launch of GMA-CARES Para sa Kababaihan (for Women) in Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City, the President shrugged off negative media reports and said giving work to millions of Filipinos and making food, basic goods and medicine accessible at low prices remained priorities in her mind.

GMA-CARES means Ginintuang Makamasang Ani (Poor's Golden Harvest) — Countrywide Assistance for Rural Employment and Services.

“Kung maiitindihan ng taong bayan na iyon talaga ang aking parating iniisip, mas magkakaintindihan tayo (Things would be easier to comprehend if people would know and understand that they have a caring President who always thinks of their needs),” she said.

Despite unfavorable developments the media have been reporting lately, she hinted she remained committed to uplifting the lives of the people, particularly the poor, the women and the youth.

During the launching of GMA Cares (for Women), she awarded some P20 million as working capital for the operation and expansion of agri-fishery projects for women in the National Capital Region (NCR).

She said the livelihood loan would provide productive employment to some 50,000 women in the NCR, adding that the success of their projects would redound to more jobs and in deterring upticks in the prices of vital food commodities.

An initial 2,000 women-beneficiaries received their checks, each worth P10,000.

Quedancor, the government's credit and guarantee firm, and the AHON Movement conceived the GMA-CARES (for Women).

The program aims to generate more employment opportunities for Filipino women, enhance the entrepreneurial skills of women and provide funds for start-up and expansion of agri-fishery related businesses for women.

Eligible borrower-clients are women farmers, fisherfolk, rural workers, housewives, processors, traders and their cooperatives, associations and small businesses engaged or will engage in agri-fishery related projects or any project eligible under the program.

Meanwhile, the President also inspected four rolling stores and jobs fair booths at the National Government Center, West Side in Sto. Domingo St., Doa Juana Homes, Holy Spirit, Quezon City.

Presidential Adviser on Job Creation Luis Lorenzo, National Food Administrator Anthony Abad, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte and Metro Manila Development Authority Chairman Benjamin Abalos joined the President in the inspection tour.

The President said she visited the rolling stores to check on the prices of commodities and to monitor the progress of the government-sponsored job fairs.

Jobs and stable prices remained the two lifelines most needed by the people, especially in Metro Manila, where the unemployment rate is the highest in the whole country, she stressed.

The President said more than a thousand rolling stores were deployed nationwide to sell cheaper rice, other basic goods, medicine and school supplies.

She also later inspected the National Food Authority (NFA)-run rolling stores and jobs fairs in Litex Road, Barangay Commonwealth, Quezon City and in Barangay Manggahan, Pasig City.

A report from Secretary Angelito Sarmiento, Presidential Adviser on Agricultural Modernization, submitted to Malacañang showed that the number of Filipinos availing of goods sold in Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera (TGL) rolling stores is increasing.

In a series of weekly reports covering the period April 16 to May 15, Sarmiento said TGL customers have grown to some 874,000 from May 8 to 15, an increase of about 121,000 customers from 753,000 customers per week in the preceding three weeks reported.

This showed that more consumers have come to realize the benefits of getting more and better value for their hard-earned money from TGL-rolling stores, a program the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has carried out for the country's poor.

GMA inspects waste composting facility in Pasig City

Bent on working out an immediate solution to Metro Manila's garbage problem, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today inspected the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Materials, Recovery and Composting facility in Manggahan, Pasig City.

The President motored to the facility after gracing the jobs fair and inspecting the government's rolling stores deployed in the area.

The MMDA project, spearheaded and conceptualized by MMDA Chairman Benjamin Abalos, was put up in line with the President's call to implement the newly approved National Solid Waste Management Act or Republic Act 9003.

The facility is designed to handle 200 tons of solid waste daily in Pasig City, and eventually its environs. The facility has also provided jobs.

Abalos said the process "utilizes local low-cost and low-level but effective Filipino technology that will segregate and reclassify recyclable materials and do rapid composting of bio-degradable waste under a static pile method using open top recycled 40-foot container vans."

He said the successful operation of the facility would be replicated not only in Metro Manila but also in other parts of the country.

Take advantage of rolling stores, jobs fairs, GMA tells QC, Pasig residents

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the residents of Quezon City and Pasig City, particularly the poor, to take advantage of the low prices being offered by the administration's Rolling Stores for their basic needs.

She also asked them to find jobs that would match them from among the vacant positions being offered by participating private companies and offices at the jobs fair also being conducted in the area.

The President made this call during visits this afternoon to Litex Road in Barangay Commonwealth in Quezon City and Manggahan in Pasig City where Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera Rolling Stores were deployed and jobs fairs were being held.

“Alam niyo ba kung bakit ako naririto? Dahil ang dalawang inaasikaso natin pareho ay trabaho at saka presyo (Do you know why I am here with you today? It’s because we are attending to the tasks of providing jobs to the people and keeping prices down),” the President said in brief remarks upon arrival at Litex Road in Barangay Commonwealth, Quezon City.

Shortly after her arrival at 12:20 p.m., the President, accompanied by Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, Jr. and Presidential Adviser on Job Creation Luis Lorenzo, inspected the Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera Rolling Stores deployed by the National Food Authority (NFA) in the area.

According to NFA Director Edgar Bintulan, there are three rolling stores that operate in Barangay Commonwealth which serve 11,135 people daily.

He said these rolling stores sell rice, coffee, sugar, noodles, milk, cooking oil and canned sardines at very low prices compared to those in the groceries and other retail outlets.

Bintulan stressed that a kilo of rice is sold at P14 while sugar is retailed at P26 per kilogram.

The President also announced to the Quezon City residents that more than 400 vacant positions were being offered at the jobs fair in their locality.

“Kung kayo’y walang hanapbuhay, pumunta na kayo doon at tingnan ninyo (If you are looking for a job, go to the jobs fair and find out where you can apply),” she said.

For those who want to start a small business, the President said the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC) is “ready to train” them on how to start their own small business.

During her visit to Manggahan in Pasig City, the President was presented the five successful students who qualified for the scholarship program of TESDA. They are Jan Michael Rivera, Rea Locsin, Ryan Taller, Grace Diolata and Ma. Wilsannie Bacang.

While there, the President inspected the activities of the Rolling Stores deployed in the area as well as the jobs fair which was participated in by seven private companies, including Triple V, SM Supermart, Tiger Inc and Burger Machine.

The President told the people of Pasig about the 685 vacant positions waiting to be filled up by qualified applicants in the jobs fair this morning.

She said that out of the 685 vacant positions, 32 individuals who applied this morning at the jobs fair were hired on the spot. She added that 46 applicants were waiting for further interview.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: June 6, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032006/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june6.htm>

The President's Day: June 7, 2002

07 JUNE 2002

- **GMA signs RA 9165, strengthens gov't drive against dangerous drugs**
- **GMA signs RA 9166 raising soldiers' pay, benefits**
- **Senate can resolve its own internal problem — GMA**
- **GMA presents awards to outstanding OFIs**
- **GMA cites migrant Filipino workers for spurring economy, improving RP image abroad**
- **GMA awards commemorative medallions to Filipino Olympians**
- **GMA approves law creating NPVPB to protect plant varieties**
- **GMA signs law creating the Film Development Council of the Philippines**

GMA signs RA 9165, strengthens gov't drive against dangerous drugs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today signed an act that would give more teeth to the government's drive against illegal drug trade and addiction.

In approving the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 or Republic Act (RA) 9165, the President repealed the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1972 or RA 6425.

The new law, as contained in Senate Bill 1858 and House Bill 4433, provides stiffer penalties for illegal drug possession and pushing but, at the same time, seeks protection of the country's youth from the dangers of drugs.

RA 9165 imposes capital punishment on those convicted for selling, trading, trafficking, importing and cultivating dangerous drugs and their controlled precursors.

The same penalty is also imposed on those who possessed 50 grams or more of shabu, 500 grams of marijuana, 10 grams of opium, morphine, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy and other dangerous drugs as listed in the annex of the law.

It also provides life imprisonment for the possession of lesser quantities of the same drugs listed above.

But persons found guilty of possessing less than five grams of the drugs listed in the annex would be meted a 12-year prison term.

Stiff penalties are also been imposed on convicted dangerous drug financiers, protectors, coddlers and traders who use cellular phones and the Internet in making illegal deals.

The new law seeks the speedy destruction of seized dangerous drugs as it provides punishment for policemen and prosecutors who delay or bungle drug cases.

To protect the people from the bad effects of dangerous drugs, the new law provides mandatory drug tests for drivers and firearms holders, random drug tests for students and workers in the government and private sectors, and compulsory education on dangerous drugs in all school levels.

RA 9165 also gives Congress oversight functions over drug cases, while providing funds to fully implement the law.

GMA signs RA 9166 raising soldiers' pay, benefits

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today effectively raised the rate of base pay of officers and enlisted men in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

In simple rites at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall, the President signed into law Republic Act (RA) 9166 that also provides other benefits for the country's soldiers.

RA 9166 was one of four bills that the President signed. The others were RA 9167 creating the Film Development Council of the Philippines, RA 9168 or the Philippine Plant Variety Protection Act of 2002, and RA 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

RA 9166 is aimed at rectifying the disparity in the salary of soldiers by making their pay scale at par with their counterparts in the Philippine National Police (PNP).

The new law was initiated by Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes when he was still the AFP Chief of Staff.

The new law provides a salary grade of 30 to the chief of staff while a private is given a salary grade of 10, comparable to that of an Officer 1 in the second level in the Civil Service.

The new pay scale for soldiers would be carried out on a staggered basis, but not to exceed two years.

The Department of the Budget and Management (DBM) would review the AFP pay scale every five years.

RA 9166 also provides a merit system that would govern the selection, hiring, appointment, transfer, promotion or dismissal of AFP officers and personnel.

The merit system covers incentives to deserving soldiers in the form of scholarship grants for their deserving children, hospital care, social services and other non-cash benefits that would strengthen professionalism and excellence in the military.

Besides the above, the new law also mandates the formulation of continuing education programs for all officers and enlisted personnel.

It also calls for the establishment of a special housing assistance program to enable and ensure that every soldier would have an affordable home in a wholesome community.

Senate can resolve its own internal problem — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said Thursday night that the ongoing problem in the Senate is purely an internal matter and that the members of the chamber can resolve it among themselves.

In her keynote speech at the 50th anniversary of the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines at Manila Hotel, the President reiterated that her concentration is on the economy.

"On my part, without neglecting my political obligations as head of the administration, head of my party and head of my coalition, I treat the Senate struggle as largely a matter internal to itself, internal to the Senate," the President said.

"My focus is on the economy — how to create more jobs, how to keep prices stable," she added.

The President noted that she is happy to see that the rural banking industry today is very vibrant and alive and has kept many farmers and industries alive as well.

She said she is confident that there will be another productive half a century ahead. "In the overall environment today, we have a list of positives and some negatives. But I think that this is better than the stagnation of the situation a year and half ago, when everything seems to be negative," she added.

Citing the latest exports figures, which show a 22 percent growth rate, the President said overall confidence in the economy has increased.

She noted that during her trek to Mount Pinatubo the other day, she was briefed by Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon that tourist resorts are now bursting at the seams “because domestic tourism is very active.”

The President said the key factors behind this confidence are first of all, the containment of the 1991 fiscal deficit, second, the United States presence and the peaceful commemoration of January 20th and May 1st.

The President said the containment of the 1991 fiscal deficit is the macroeconomic litmus test for capital market and we passed the test.

GMA presents awards to outstanding OFIs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded this year’s outstanding overseas Filipino investors (OFIs) for their successful livelihood endeavors and for their contributions to the country’s economy.

The Chief Executive, assisted by Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Administrator Wilhelm Soriano of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, Administrator Rosalinda Baldoz of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and Presidential Adviser for Job Creation Luis Lorenzo, presented plaques to four OFIs in ceremonies held this morning at Malacanang’s Ceremonial Hall as part of celebration of the Migrant Workers’ Day.

The awardees are the following:

- Joel Abao, is a veterinarian by profession and a philanthropist by vocation and a former overseas Filipino worker employed as a farm supervisor in Libya. He was cited for making full use of his intelligence and wisdom to make a difference in the lives of his kinfolk in his hometown in Bukidnon. He graciously shared his skills and acquired knowledge to improve the condition of his townmates by providing them with a reliable source of livelihood and increasing the productivity of the entire region. In 1992, he availed of some P50,000 from OWWA as an additional capital to his agri-business. Two years later, as the business progresses, he borrowed from the agency an additional P50,000. To date, the total asset of his enterprise is worth P3 million.
- Automotive Workers Cooperative (AWC) was cited for its combined talents and expertise in automotive industry that created a remarkable space in the establishment of a cooperative among the very talented overseas Filipino workers in the city of Doha, State of Qatar in the Middle East. The cooperative became the communities’ by-word for good quality and service par excellence. The group made full use of their 18 years of actual experience and learning in the industry of automotive servicing that specializes on European cars like Porsche, Audi, Volkswagen, Mercedes Benz, BMW, and all types of Japanese and Korean vehicles. After a thorough study of their business plan, an initial monthly contribution from each of the member reached a total of P800,000. At present the cooperative has assets worth P3 million.
- Anabel Dulliyao was cited for her hard work and perseverance – the sure ticket to success. Her being an OFW-dependent gave her the chance to be an OWWA scholar. The privilege paid off and she is now a full-time teacher in her hometown in Cordillera Administrative Region.
- Baguio Beekeepers Group of Overseas Workers and Dependents was cited for its combined resources and world-acclaimed ingenuity to create an impact in the local economy. Their continuous training and skills enhancement under OWWA’s Training Assistance Program for food assistance served as the group’s guiding force in realizing its dreams. From an initial capital of P10,000 in 2000, the project is now worth P40,000. The project proponents have also put up a credit facility for its members with a revolving fund of P22,000.

GMA cites migrant Filipino workers for spurring economy, improving RP image abroad

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today paid tribute to seven million Filipino migrant workers all over the world for taking part in propelling the national economy and for showing off their unparalleled skills and talents that helped improve the country's image abroad.

In a speech during the celebration of Migrant Workers' Day at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall, the President said that June 7 marked the day when the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act was approved.

The President said that aside from the good reputation they have gained for the Philippines as home to the great Filipino worker, the OFWs have also helped millions of young Filipinos go to school and complete their education.

She added that thousands of new homes have also been put up and those who acquired these homes have developed better lives as well.

The President stressed that the remittances of migrant workers have further led to the establishment of new businesses by their loved ones.

"Ang matagumpay na negosyo na naipatayo sa ating bansa dahil sa inyong remittances ay isang malaking haligi ng ating ekonomiya (Successful businesses put up because of your remittances have served as an economic pillar)," she said.

The countryside has become vibrant and a beehive of economic activity because of OFW contributions that have reached some \$6 billion, which was bigger than the biggest investment made by foreign investors to the Philippines, the President said.

She branded the OFWs as Overseas Filipino Investors (OFI) because "you are major investors in the country."

"Kayo ang mga OFI na araw-araw ay namumuhunan sa kaunlaran ng ating bansa. Ang puhunan ninyo ay ang productive years alang-alang sa ating bayan. Saludo ako sa inyo, dapat lamang na suklian ng bansa ang inyong tulong (As OFIs, you invest more capital to develop our country. Your productive years serve as your capital. I salute you. It is just right for the government and the nation to return this favor)," she said.

The Chief Executive also cited government gains in line with her commitments as enunciated in her July 2001 State of the Nation Address.

Among others, she said she had certified as an urgent administration measures the Absentee Voting Bill and the Bill on Dual Citizenship.

She added that the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council has been fast-tracking efforts to build some 100,000 housing units yearly for workers.

"So far, we have only built about 60,000 houses. So we have 40,000 houses more to go under our targets," she said, as she advised OFWs to go to the embassies and apply for the housing benefits.

The President directed the Department of Labor and Employment to inform the public on the many benefits that they would obtain from the Further Liberalization of Foreign Investments law she sponsored when she was still a senator.

She also ordered Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas to formulate a program that would strengthen the reintegration program for OFWs.

The President further tasked officials overseeing the Overseas Workers Welfare Fund to separate the contributions of seamen and land-based workers from those of doctors and social workers being sent to various overseas posts.

The President noted that the country's economy would continue to rely heavily on OFW remittances.

“On the basis of this realization, this reality, and on the basis of the nation's humanitarian responsibilities to its people wherever they are, our government is working hard to strengthen OFW protection,” she said.

The government would also strengthen its bilateral relations with countries that host a large number of Filipinos, the President said.

During the program, Isidro Aligado, OFI spokesman, pledged the group's unwavering support to the programs and projects, as well as the leadership, of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

GMA awards commemorative medallions to Filipino Olympians

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded commemorative medallions to a number of Filipino Olympians who have participated in Summer Olympiads from the 14th Summer Olympiads in 1948 in London up to the 27th Summer Olympiad in Sydney in 2000.

The awardees were members of the Philippine Olympians Association (POA), an organization representing all Filipino Olympians. Celso Dayrit, president of the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC), initiated the establishment of the POA in 2002 following the examples in many countries.

There are now more than 100 countries with National Olympians Associations.

One of those presented with a commemorative medallion by the President was Rafael Hechanova, chairman of the POA, who was a member of the Philippine basketball team to the Helsinki Summer Olympiad in 1952.

The President also handed a medallion to her brother, Arturo Macapagal, the president of the POA, who participated in the shooting event in the Munich Summer Olympiad in 1972 and in the 1976 Montreal Summer Olympiad.

The other awardees include Mansueto “Onyok” Velasco, Jr., silver medalist in boxing in the 26th Summer Olympiad in Atlanta in 1996; Beatriz Lucero Lhuiller, bronze medalist in taekwondo in the 25th Summer Olympiad in Barcelona in 1992; Gillian Akiko Thomson, who competed in swimming in Barcelona Summer Olympiad in 1992, Atlanta Summer Olympiad in 1996, and in Seoul in 1988; Fred Elizalde, also in swimming, in the 17th Summer Olympiad in Rome in 1960; and Joseph Eric Buhain, the present Philippines Sports Commission chairman, who competed in swimming in Barcelona in 1992 and in Seoul in 1988.

The POA, aside from being officially recognized by the Philippine Olympic Committee as the organization of Filipino Olympians, is affiliated with the World Olympians Association.

GMA approves law creating NPVPB to protect plant varieties

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today approved the law that would establish a body that would oversee and implement the protection of plant varieties in the country.

In simple rites at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall, the President formally signed Republic Act 9168, also known as the Philippine Plant Variety Protection Act of 2002.

Under the new law, the National Plant Variety Protection Board (NPVPPB) would manage the implementation of the Plant Variety Protection (PVP) system that would determine ownership over new plant varieties.

The new law also established the Gene Trust Fund that would support the preservation of germplasm by government and private sector groups.

RA 9168 is aimed at protecting and securing the exclusive rights of plant breeders with respect to their new plant variety, particularly when beneficial to people, through an effective intellectual property system.

Under the PVP system, a plant breeder could apply for a PVP certificate over a new plant variety from the board.

A certificate and all attendant ownership rights would be given to the plant breeder if the plant variety has passed the test of distinctness, uniformity, stability, and newness.

Holders of a certificate of plant variety would have the right to authorize the production or reproduction, conditioning for the purpose of propagation, offering to sale, selling or other marketing strategies, exporting, importing and stocking of the plant variety.

A provision on exemption to plant variety protection has acknowledged the traditional right of the farmer to save, use, replant and sell his produce from a protected variety, provided that propagation is not being done for commercial purposes.

GMA signs law creating the Film Development Council of the Philippines

True to her word that she would work for the improvement of the Philippine movie industry, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today signed Republic Act 9167, the law creating the Film Development Council of the Philippines.

The President signed the bill in simple rites at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang attended by leaders of the two legislative chambers and prominent personalities in the movie industry.

According to the law, the primary task of the Film Development Council of the Philippines would be to establish and implement a Cinema Evaluation System, which is an incentive reward system for movie producers.

A Cinema Evaluation Board, on the other hand, shall evaluate and grade films that are submitted to the council.

Movie industry personalities present at the occasion included Dona Nena Vera Perez, Marichu Maceda, Atty. Espiridion Laxa, Jose Romero, Boots Plata, Vic del Rosario, Laurice Guillen, Marilou Diaz-Abaya, Bhen Cervantes, German Moreno, Johnny Delgado, Al Tantay, Joel Torre, Caridad Sanchez, Dina Bonnevie, Bong Revilla, Carmina Villaroel and Joyce Jimenez.

The Board, in grading the films, would not, however, be authorized to delete, shorten or modify the films being graded nor suggest cuts, deletions or any form of modification.

The law also said that the Movie Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) and the Videogram Regulatory Board (VRB) would give due weight and consideration for the graded film's viewing, reproduction, exportation and other purposes.

The evaluation system would be formulated by the Board based on degree of excellence in direction, screenplay, cinematography, editing, production design, music scoring, sound and acting performances.

Among the senators present at the signing ceremonies were Senate President Franklin Drilon, Senators Loren Legarda-Leviste, Manuel Villar Jr., Ralph Recto, Ramon Magsaysay, Renato Cayetano and Vicente Sotto III, the principal author of the bill.

Among those who attended from the House of Representatives were Speaker Jose de Venecia, Representatives Cynthia Villar, Imee Marcos, Gilbert Remulla, Ted Failon, Robert Ace Barbers, and Gerardo Espina.

For years now, the Filipino film industry and its supporters in Congress have been working hard to have the Film Development Council of the Philippines bill passed into law.

But it was only during the term of President Macapagal-Arroyo that the bill was finally signed into law.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 7, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032020/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june7.htm>

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- **GMA to military : end Abu Sayyaf terrorism**
- **GMA cites Filipino-Chinese groups' support to gov't programs**
- **GMA lauds Koreans' work on RP mango packaging**
- **GMA says gov't committed to eliminate kidnapping, criminality**
- **GMA makes NFA rice accessible to jeepney drivers**
- **GMA satisfied over RP economic rebound, hails support of Filipino-Chinese community**

GMA to military : end Abu Sayyaf terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the military to “forge on with greater fervor and tenacity” the all out campaign to finish off the notorious kidnap-for-ransom Abu Sayyaf Group in Mindanao.

In a press conference at the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, the President said “the days of offensive operations (against the Abu Sayyaf) are unrelenting.”

She cited the high spirits of the military as they intensively pursued the remnants of the bandit group along the boundary of Siraway and Sibuco towns in Zamboanga del Norte.

“Intensive military operations are ongoing in the area where the rescue took place yesterday,” she said.

The President had a meeting with key AFP commanders who reported that seven soldiers and a paramilitaryman were wounded in a gallant fight against the bandit-terrorists.

“I pray for their recovery and I wish their families well,” she said.

She gave tribute to the soldiers and all those who are continuing the fight against the Abu Sayyaf and terrorism.

“I would like to convey to the soldiers that I feel that they have done well and that they should carry on,” she said.

During the meeting, the Chief Executive named Undersecretary Melchor Rosales, Administrator of the Office of Civil Defense, as the civilian spokesperson on matters related to the operation against the Abu Sayyaf.

“(Rosales) will give regular briefings to the press,” she added.

The President also reiterated her “deep sadness” over the demise of American missionary Martin Burnham and Filipino nurse Ediborah Yap who were killed in fierce firefight between the military and the Abu Sayyaf Friday afternoon in Zamboanga del Norte.

Martin’s wife, Gracia, was later rescued by the military; but she sustained a gunshot wound in the right leg.

The Abu Sayyaf seized the vacationing Burnham couple on May 27 last year from the Dos Palmas Resort in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.

Yap was snatched on June 2, 2001 from the Lamitan hospital that was taken over by the bandits in a bid to have their wounded treated.

In the press conference, the President said she would visit Gracia Burnham today “to comfort her and to convey our condolences on the death of her husband.”

The President also disclosed that United States President George W. Bush called her up.

“I expressed my sense of bereavement for the Burnham family and the American people. And President Bush also condoled with us on the death of Ediborah Yap and the many soldiers who have lost their lives during all this period that we have been fighting the Abu Sayyaf and rescuing the hostages,” she said.

“President Bush assured us on the continuing help of the United States in pushing our operations forward,” she added.

The President also made plans to visit the family of Yap in Basilan on Tuesday and to bring to them “the condolences of our people.”

“Ediborah is the symbol of the plight of the poor doubly victimized by terrorism. We shall fight poverty and terrorism not only in Basilan, not only in the Sibuco, Siraway, Siocon and Baliguian complex in Zamboanga del Norte, an area as poor as Basilan where the rescue finally happened,” she said.

“But we will bring this fight against poverty and terrorism in the entire country,” she vowed.

GMA cites Filipino-Chinese groups’ support to gov’t programs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Friday night expressed her appreciation to the Filipino-Chinese community for helping her administration provide better services to and in uplifting the lives of the poor in Metro Manila and elsewhere in the country.

In a speech during the 1st Filipino-Chinese Friendship Day celebration in Binondo, Manila, the President cited the initiatives of various Filipino-Chinese groups that supported government in addressing shortages in school buildings and educational facilities.

“Your plan to donate school buildings in various barangays and your book donation program for the poor in the countryside deserve our appreciation and acknowledgement,” she said.

The President also cited the initiative of the Chinese-Filipino Business Club, Inc. (CFBCI) to gather together officials of over 100 different organizations involved in business brotherhood and firefighting.

“I am confident this will result in the unification and solidarity of the various groups in the Chinese community,” she said.

The celebration of the Filipino-Chinese Friendship Day is in accordance with Presidential Proclamation No. 148, which the President issued last January.

She said the celebration also coincided with the first year anniversary of the signing of Republic Act 9139 or the Administrative Naturalization Act.

The President said she is hoping that the CFBCI would help propagate the law and invite many of the Chinese living in the Philippines for a long time to apply for Filipino citizenship.

The occasion also marked the naming of two bridges in Binondo, Manila as the Filipino-Chinese Friendship Bridge and the Manila-Beijing Friendship Bridge.

“May the two bridges serve as monuments to the enduring friendship and historical ties between the Chinese and Filipinos,” she said.

The CFBCI spent some P1 million to repaint, refurbish and put up lights at the two bridges located north and south of Ongpin Street.

Among those who graced the occasion were Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez and Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza.

GMA lauds Koreans' work on RP mango packaging

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today acknowledged four Korean scientists who worked on a packaging bag that would extend the shelf life of Philippine Super Mangoes by weeks instead of days.

In simple rites at Malacañang's Reception Hall, the President awarded plaques of appreciation to Doctors Suki Kang, Dongman Kim and Hyung Woo Park of the Korea Food Research Institute (KFRI) and Soon Woo Geun of Korea's Ministry of Science and Technology.

The Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) earlier tapped the KFRI to develop technology that would effectively address the need to delay the ripening of Philippine Super Mangoes.

CITEM Executive Director Felicidad Tan-Co said the new zeolite-coated film bag called Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP) would enable exporters to transport the mangoes to distant markets like the United States and Europe by sea freight.

Air freight would cost more than the products, Tan-Co said.

She noted that the breakthrough technology was good news for mango exporters, particularly after the United States government allowed the importation of Philippine mangoes into the country.

"Spoilage is a thing of the past. Exporters are worried about the short shelf life of mangoes. With the use of this bag, the mangoes could now be stored for 33 days instead of the usual seven days," she said.

Tan-Co explained that the packaging is specifically designed for the Philippine local carabao mango variety that has relatively thin skin.

"The fruits are simply enclosed in the plastic bag, packed in the standard export box and shipped under refrigerated conditions," she said.

The mangoes are stored at 10 degrees Celsius for 22 days with the MAP film and they ripen after seven to eight days at room temperature without MAP.

Their total shelf life can be extended to 33 days or more if the ripening takes place during cold conditions.

The development of the MAP film was a painstaking and laborious process.

Through CITEM's initiation and coordination, KFRI and the Food Development Center (FDC) conducted joint experiments, funded by Korea's Ministry of Science and Technology, from 1996 to 1998 before the zeolite-coated film was finally declared suitable for Philippine mangoes.

Carlito Soon of United Polyresin, the firm that would produce the packaging bag commercially, said the product could be used not only for mangoes, but also for vegetables, fruits and even cutflowers.

"Cutflower suppliers and florists would have more time to sell their blooms. Reduced overhead expenses would translate to lower prices for consumers," Soon said.

“It is expected to not only boost mango exports, but also help local farmers expand their markets and transport their produce at lower prices with little fear of spoilage,” he added.

The cost of using MAP is minimal. Producing a zeolite-bag costs only 20 percent more than an ordinary plastic bag of the same size.

GMA says gov’t committed to eliminate kidnapping, criminality

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Friday night assured the Filipino-Chinese community of the government’s resolve in meeting the problem of kidnapping with more focus and counterforce.

Speaking before a gathering celebrating the 1st Filipino-Chinese Friendship Day in Binondo, Manila, the President said she has been motivating the incoming leadership of the Philippine National Police (PNP) to eliminate kidnapping cases in Metro Manila.

“We will improve the on-the-ground capability of the PNP. We will have a more disciplined processing of intelligence,” the President said.

In explaining the government’s resolve against criminality, the President cited the agreement forged between the Philippines and the United Kingdom that would provide skills and capacity-building training for Filipino policemen to fight kidnapping and other organized crimes.

She added that a similar arrangement is being worked out with the Hong Kong police.

The President further acknowledged that the government’s poverty alleviation programs would not succeed if crime continued to threaten the well being of citizens.

She expressed her appreciation to officials and members of the Chinese-Filipino Business Club, Inc. (CFBCI) for doing their best to help government in crime prevention and control.

Aside from working closely with the National Anti-Crime Commission in addressing kidnapping, the CFBCI has also donated 30 patrol cars to the PNP in previous years, she noted.

This was on top of the Club’s determined efforts to establish tighter links between the government and the Filipino-Chinese businessmen, she added.

The Chief Executive also lauded the efforts of the Filipino-Chinese to rally Metro Manila against drugs with their recent launching of one of the biggest anti-drug rallies participated in by non-governmental organizations, students and youth groups in various Chinese schools.

The President thanked the CFBCI for supporting the government’s anti-terrorism drive and for donating P1 million for the families of soldiers killed in Mindanao.

“Such commitments and actions are what we need to gain the momentum to move forward,” she said.

GMA makes NFA rice accessible to jeepney drivers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that the government would make available National Food Authority (NFA) rice at jeepney terminals to make the staple easily accessible to jeepney drivers.

The President made the announcement during the launching of the Driver’s License Renewal Mobile Kiosks at Malacañang’s Heroes Hall.

In return, representatives of several jeepney and bus drivers groups said they would give senior citizens a P2 fare discount for the first five kilometers.

The discount is on top of the 20 percent reduction on succeeding kilometers provided by law for senior citizens.

The President expressed delight on the development.

The President, who broke bread with transport leaders, also witnessed the demonstration of a prototype of the license renewal facility.

She was joined by Transportation Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez, Land Transportation Office chief Roberto Lastimoso, Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board chairman Dante Lantin and Office of Transportation Cooperatives chairman Jaime Domdom.

Several transport leaders, including those from operators' and drivers' associations, attended the occasion.

The President was presented a copy of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) of the different transport leaders and the Department of Transportation and Communication.

The MOA called for support to the President's agenda of good governance.

The President also awarded the OKSnayan Citation to members of the transportation industry for their willingness to cooperate with the administration by not increasing their fares during the last rounds of oil price increases.

She also gave away certificates of housing entitlement to 27 beneficiaries in the land transport sector.

GMA satisfied over RP economic rebound, hails support of Filipino-Chinese community

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Friday night expressed satisfaction that the country's economy ably pulled through difficulties in the last one and a half years despite the problem of terrorism in Southern Philippines.

In her speech during the 1st Filipino-Chinese Friendship Day celebration in Binondo, Manila, the President attributed the economic gains to the support of the different private organizations including those of the large Filipino-Chinese community.

"While the economies of many of our neighbors and trading partners suffered declines last year, ours posted a 3.7-percent growth in gross national product (GNP)," she said.

This growth, according to her, was one of the highest output growths in East and Southeast Asia.

During the first quarter of this year, the Philippine GNP grew by 4.9 percent, the President noted.

She called on all sectors of society to set aside political differences and instead concentrate on common aspirations for peace, public order, good governance and national development.

"The Philippines will be bright and secure for us and for our children if we remain united," she stressed.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 8, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032037/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june8.htm>

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- **GMA tells nation of gov't initiatives in radio interview every Monday**
- **GMA grateful Gracia Burnham rescued alive by soldiers**
- **GMA asks Chinese-Filipino businessmen to help gov't build schools in Zambo Norte barangays**
- **GMA meets Ediborah Yap's children, mother**

Canlas swears in 4 new NSO directors

Socio-Economic Development Planning Secretary Dante Canlas has sworn into office four newly appointed regional directors of the National Statistics Office (NSO) in simple rites at the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) office in Pasig City.

Canlas named the four presidential appointees as Olivia Gulla for the Cordillera Administrative Region (Baguio City); Rolando Dimaunahan for Eastern Visayas (Tacloban City); Victor Baugbog for Western Mindanao (Zamboanga City); and Jaime Paller for Central Mindanao (Cotabato City).

In a report to Malacañang, Canlas said the appointees were former Provincial Statistics Officers who rose from the ranks and have served the government service for more than 25 years.

They are among the best in field operations, both in statistics and civil registration, as their respective areas have been consistent leaders in the NSO Field Awards.

NSO officials headed by Administrator Carmelita Ericta witnessed the oath-taking ceremony.

GMA seeks ASEAN help in apprehending Abu Sayyaf

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Saturday night sought the assistance of fellow-members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, in apprehending members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) who would attempt to flee the country.

The President, in a press briefing shortly after she visited American missionary Gracia Burnham at the United States Chancery in Pasay City, said "I am concerned that the Abu Sayyaf leaders may try to flee the country. So I have asked the Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Franklin Ebdalin, to seek the assistance of our ASEAN neighbors, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia who are with us in this trilateral agreement to fight terrorism."

The Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia signed a Trilateral Agreement on Terrorism and Transnational Crimes last month, vowing to cooperate in preventing the utilization of any one of their land-air-sea territories for the purpose of committing or furthering terrorism, money laundering, smuggling, piracy or robbery at sea, hijacking, illegal entry, drug trafficking, marine pollution and illicit trafficking of arms.

Aside from the three signatories to the Trilateral Agreement, the other members of Asean are Thailand, Singapore, Myanmar, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Thailand, through Prime Minister Thaksin Shinwatra, has signified its intention to join the Trilateral Agreement.

The trilateral agreement was proposed by the Philippines during the Seventh ASEAN Summit held in Brunei Darussalam in November 2001.

It was signed by Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. for the Philippines, Foreign Minister N. Hassan Wirajuda of Indonesia and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur last May 7.

The President's statement, in effect, asked other members of the 10-nation regional group to deny refuge to the members of the kidnapping and terrorist gang and help the Philippine government capture and bring them to justice for their crimes against humanity.

At the same time, the President asked Ebdalin to seek the assistance of the International Police Organization and other international law enforcement agencies and send a similar message to the United States Department of Justice.

She noted that the Philippines joined the global effort against terrorism from Day One after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks in the United States.

"We know from our experience in Southwestern Philippines that terrorism is a scourge that causes great pain and suffering and many casualties. This has happened to us in Southwestern Philippines and it has been happening around the world," she said.

The President likewise reiterated that the Philippine government has stood firm and would continue to stand firm in the fight against terrorism.

"We will not back down. There will be no negotiation, there will be no compromise. Kidnappers are the lowest form of life and taking hostages is a crime against all humanity and must not be allowed to proliferate," she declared.

The Philippine government, she added, regrets the loss of life of innocent victims as well as military personnel who are pursuing the terrorists.

"I realize what the painful price we and all the peace-loving nations have to pay to make the world safer for law-abiding citizens," she said.

According to the President, the eradication of terrorism in the Philippines is another step towards strengthening the rule of law in areas of terrorist presence and refocusing the energy of government on addressing social ills with the overall objective of eliminating poverty that confronts so many of the people.

GMA tells nation of gov't initiatives in radio interview every Monday

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will continue to expound on current national issues and concerns as she communicates with the people in her regular "*Lingguhang Interbyu sa Pangulo*" weekly radio program aired nationwide.

The President goes on-air from 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. every Monday.

Tomorrow, June 10, the President will be interviewed by radio anchormen Rey Langit, Christy Dailo, Caloy Castro and Ely Aligora over radio station DWIZ.

In the next three Mondays, she will go live over radio stations DZRH (June 17), DZMM (June 24) and DZBB (July 1).

In past interviews, the President had candid interaction with the people over local and national concerns, particularly those that relate to social and economic development.

She also talked about government initiatives for national growth, especially her administration's anti-poverty thrusts.

GMA grateful Gracia Burnham rescued alive by soldiers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Saturday night visited American missionary Gracia Burnham at her hospital bed inside the United States Chancery in Pasay City and expressed her deepest sympathy over the death of Gracia's husband Martin.

"I am grateful to the Lord, I am grateful to the soldiers that Gracia was rescued alive," the President told reporters shortly after the visit.

During the visit, the President told Gracia how deeply saddened she was over the death of Martin, over the death of Filipino nurse Ediborah Yap and over the death of soldiers who stood their ground throughout the whole year of trying to rescue the Burnhams, Yap and other hostages held by the notorious kidnap-for-ransom and terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group.

She relayed Gracia's appreciation to the Filipino soldiers for their effort in rescuing her from the hands of the Abu Sayyaf.

"She told me many, many times that I should be proud of them," the President said.

She added that she has arranged for the arrival of the family of slain Ediborah to Manila today so that Gracia could see them before she leaves for the United States.

"She's been with their mother for one year and Gracia is sure that the children want to know many details about how their mother has been throughout this past year," the President said.

She stressed that what should be done right now is to make sure that what Martin, Ediborah, the soldiers and innocent civilians sacrificed for will not be in vain, as she vowed to work to bring the terrorists to justice.

Now that there are no more hostages in the hands of the Abu Sayyaf, the President stressed that the incident should be considered a milestone in the effort to fight terrorism and criminality in the Philippines.

"And also it is a milestone in our global fight, which is the fight against terrorism and still which is the fight against poverty," she said.

GMA asks Chinese-Filipino businessmen to help gov't build schools in Zambo Norte barangays

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night asked the Chinese- Filipino businessmen to help her administration build school buildings in barangays in the towns of Siraway, Sibuco, Siocon and Baliguian or the SSSB Complex of Zamboanga del Norte.

In her speech during the celebration of the Filipino-Chinese Friendship Day at the Century Seafood Restaurant on Vito Cruz, Manila, the President noted that the SSSB Complex is as poor as Basilan where many barangays have no schools at all.

"No wonder many of the barrio folk, uneducated therefore, earn their living only by harboring terrorists who are on the run," she said.

She said it was in those areas where the Abu Sayyaf fled after their atrocities in Ipil, Zamboanga del Sur in 1995.

It was also in that same area where American hostages Martin and Gracia Burnham and Filipina nurse Ediborah Yap were found.

“We are winning the military battle in the SSSB complex. But you must help me win the battle for their hearts and mind. Help me win their battle against poverty,” the President told the Chinese-Filipino businessmen.

Also in her speech, the President thanked the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (FFCCCII) for helping the government in narrowing the gap in classroom needs through their “Operation Barrio Schools.”

Since the FFCCCII can build classrooms at half the cost of government-built houses, the President said she challenged the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to try to match that costing.

In her speech, the President also lauded Senate President Franklin Drilon for turning over to the FFCCCII P100 million of his own development fund for the construction of 571 classrooms.

This, she said, is a clear acceptance by the government of the status of the Federation not just as a leading organization in the Chinese-Filipino community but also as a key partner in socio-economic development.

The President pointed out that what made her happy about the Drilon-FFCCCII initiative is that she was allowed to choose the area where the schools will be built.

“I chose 571 barangays where no school exists,” she said, adding that it is now part of her administration’s school-for-every-barangay program.

She rallied all the members of the FFCCCII to help the government build more school buildings especially for the early grades, so that little children will not end up dropping out of school so early because they have to walk long distances just to go to first grade.

“If we can work like this, like one big family, we can secure a bright future for our country, for ourselves and for our children,” the President said.

GMA meets Ediborah Yap’s children, mother

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today met with the family of slain Filipina nurse Ediborah Yap in Malacanang prior to the family’s meeting with recovering Abu Sayyaf hostage victim Gracia Burnham.

The President, along with First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo, conferred with Ediborah’s mother, Mrs. Fatima Pamaran, brother Dave Pamaran, and children Jonathan, Anthony, Mary Anne, and Lawrence at her office in the Palace.

The President told the family that it was the personal request of Gracia Burnham during their meeting Saturday night that she would like to meet Ediborah’s children before she leaves for the United States.

The President noted that Ediborah died in the line of duty as “even in captivity, she was doing her duty as a nurse.”

“This is why Gracia Burnham asks that before she leaves for the United States, she would like to speak to Ediborah’s children, to know them because understandably, she and Ediborah were together for a year. She wants to tell so many things to the children and I’m sure the children want to ask her many things,” the President said.

Aside from conferring with them, the President extended financial support to the family and assured them of provision for a sustainable livelihood.

The eldest of Ediborah’s children, Jonathan, 24, works in the fishing business of his uncle while Anthony, 20, is set to enlist in the military.

Mary Anne, 16, who declined to be photographed, is a recipient of the President's scholarship program while Lawrence, 7, has just entered elementary school.

Accompanying the family to the Palace was Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano "Dinky" Soliman.

The President made arrangements for the transport of the family to Manila. They would be back in Basilan Monday.

The President, meanwhile, said Gracia Burnham was very gracious when she met her yesterday.

The Chief Executive noted that Gracia kept on telling her how courageous Filipino soldiers were in the fight against the Abu Sayyaf.

"She was very gracious. I was telling her, you know Gracia, what a blessing you are in the work that you do because you can see things through the eyes of God. Because she was very gracious and she kept on repeating that I can be proud of our soldiers," she said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 9, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032051/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june9.htm>

The President's Day: June 10, 2002

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- **GMA presents awards to 34 individuals, institutions for contributions to C.A.R.P.**
- **Palace calls on local communities to be on the alert for possible sightings of Abu Sayyaf**
- **GMA lauds D.A.R. for surpassing land distribution target under C.A.R.P.**
- **Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**
- **Malacanang refutes distortions in reports on President's net worth**
- **Abalos named Comelec Chairman: 2 other poll commissioners, 2 Alvarezes reappointed**
- **GMA okays export development plan for 2002-2004**
- **NBI ordered to coordinate with military police authorities in hunt for ASG members**

GMA presents awards to 34 individuals, institutions for contributions to C.A.R.P.

CLARK FIELD, Pampanga — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led government officials in awarding citations to 34 local and foreign individuals and institutions for their contributions to the successful implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

The President, assisted by Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza, presented the citations to the successful awardees in ceremonies held this morning at the Centennial Expo Filipino during the 14th anniversary of CARP here.

The awarding rites were highlighted by the presentation of the Presidential Golden Plow Awards by President Macapagal-Arroyo to Benjamin Labayen for his accomplishments in the field of government service and to Menachem Lourie for his significant contributions in the field of international service.

The first set of awards was handed over by the President to the CARP Implementing Agencies (CIAs) in recognition of their unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions to the achievement of the program's goals.

The awardees are: Land Bank of the Philippines represented by Atty. Jesus Diaz, Executive Vice President; Land Registration Authority represented by Director Alberto San Miguel, LRA-CARP Coordinator; Department of Trade and Industry (Manuel Abad, Program Manager); Department of Budget and Management (Jane Abella, Chief Budget and Management Specialist); National Irrigation Administration (Engr. Reynaldo Adao, Project Manager); Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Orlando Panganiban, Planning and Technical Unit Head); Department of Public Works and Highways (Ricardo Bamero, Planning Officer V); Department of Labor and Employment (Lauro Villanueva, Labor and Employment Officer III).

She also awarded a citation to the Esperanza Multi-Purpose Cooperative Inc. of Aurora Isabela in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) under the People's Organization partner category. The citation was received by Segundino Antolin on behalf of the cooperative.

Presented the award under the Non-Government Organization Partner category was the Institute of Primary Health Care-Davao Medical School Foundation represented by Executive Director Luz Canave.

The President also presented citations to donor countries and foreign institutions.

Under this category, a special award was presented by President Macapagal-Arroyo to Ambassador Roland Van Remoortele of the Royal Belgian Embassy.

The agency awards went to the following: World Bank (represented by Keith Oblitas, country coordinator for Rural Development and Natural Resources); Embassy of Japan represented by Counselor Tayoshi Hoshiyama, and the delegation of the European Commission in the Philippines represented by Charge d'Affaires Luc Vandemon.

The individual awards went to the following: Ambassador Theo Arnold of the Royal Netherlands Embassy represented by Jann Willem Cools, First Secretary, Forest and Environment Development Cooperation; Ambassador Irit Ben Abba of the Embassy of the State of Israel; Ambassador Herbert Jess of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany represented by Dr. Ute Huebner, GTZ International Adviser; Dr. Sang Mu Lee, resident representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization; Terence Jones, resident representative of the United Nations Development Program represented by Jana Grace Rosario, program coordinator; and Sununtar Setboonsang, Poverty Reduction Specialist of the Asian Development Bank.

The awardees under the National Outstanding Implementors (or Performance Awardees) category follows:

1. Outstanding Gender Advocate:
 - Department of Agrarian Reform Ladies Association (DARLA), Nueva Vizcaya, Region 2 (Group Award) represented by Rogelio Follante, Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer; and
 - Director Lilia Nicolas, DAR Central Office (Individual Award).
2. Outstanding Advocate of the Moral Recovery Program:
 - Bulacan Provincial Agrarian Reform Office-Region 3 (Group Award) represented by Miguel Mendoza, Assistant Regional Director for Administration of Region 3 (Central Luzon); and
 - Ma. Katherine Somera – Region I (Ilocos) (Individual Award)
3. Non-Technical Performance: Basilio Tinio, laborer of Region 12 (Central Mindanao)
4. Technical Performance: Joven Tulang, Agrarian Reform Program Officer II of Region 13 (Caraga)
5. Frontliner Performance : Catalina Diwat, Agrarian Reform Program Technician/ Development Facilitator of Region 4 (Southern Tagalog)
6. Managerial Performance : Marion Abella, Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer II, Region 12 (Central Mindanao).

The President also presented citations to the following outstanding partners:

- Outstanding Landowner : Onofre Grino of Region 9;
- Outstanding Agrarian Reform Community: Upig/Basuit ARC (Agrarian Reform Communities), Bulacan, Region 3 represented by Oscar Sabariaga, ARC Chairman, Perlita Quito, Development Facilitator, and Jesus Lim, cooperative manager; and
- Outstanding Agrarian Reform Beneficiary: Wenefrido Cain of Zamboanga del Sur in Region 9.

Palace calls on local communities to be on the alert for possible sightings of Abu Sayyaf

Malacanang today called on the residents of the vicinity of Sirawai, Sibuco and Baliguian towns in Zamboanga del Norte to alert military authorities on any sightings of the Abu Sayyaf terrorists who are believed to be still in the area after the firefight last Saturday.

In an interview, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said the residents should be on the lookout of any suspicious-looking persons or activities so that they can help protect their communities from any new hostage-taking incident by the Abu Sayyaf bandits.

“Dapat maging alerto din sila para magbigay ng impormasyon kung sakaling may nakikita silang mga kahinahinalang mga kilos ng mga tao doon sa paligid (They should also be on the alert to relay information if they notice some suspicious-looking persons or movements in their locality),” Golez said.

Golez made his appeal in the wake of an unequivocal statement from Gracia Burnharm, the rescued American hostage, that the Abu Sayyaf should be treated as common criminals and should be brought to justice.

In a statement that she read before enplaning for the United States this morning, Burnham said that during their one-year ordeal, they were “repeatedly lied to by the Abu Sayyaf and they are not men of honor.”

“They should be treated like common criminals. We support all efforts of the government in bringing these men to justice,” Burnham said.

Burnham, widow of the slain Martin Burnham, also thanked the people for their prayers and support during their ordeal.

The Burnham family also absolved the Philippine government of any responsibility on the death of Martin.

“The family is not looking to find out the person who pulled the trigger that shot the bullet that killed Martin,” Doug Burnham, Martin’s younger brother, said in an interview last Saturday in Wichita, Kansas.

Doug said that “if Martin was killed by some other than the Abu Sayyaf, that is unfortunate, but we knew that was a risk in the military rescue.”

The younger Burnham also pointed out that the Abu Sayyaf bandits were the enemy and because they were the ones who took Martin and Gracia hostage, they should be brought to justice.

In the interview, Golez also called on the Filipino people to pray so that the country’s armed forces would finally succeed in wiping out the Abu Sayyaf.

“Sana ay magtagumpay sila sapagkat iyong tagumpay nila ay hindi lamang para sa military, kung hindi para sa ating mga Pilipino (I hope that they will succeed since their success would not only be the success of the military but also of the Filipino people),” Golez said.

GMA lauds D.A.R. for surpassing land distribution target under C.A.R.P.

CLARK FIELD, Pampanga — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Department of Agrarian Reform led by Secretary Hernani Braganza for exceeding its target of distributing 104,261 hectares of private agricultural lands to some 72,188 farmer beneficiaries all over the country.

“I would like to congratulate you. I would like to thank our official development assistance partners, because they helped us meet these targets without getting additional budget from the General Appropriations Act,” the President said in her speech at the 14th anniversary of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) this morning at the Expo Filipino here.

“Nilampasan ninyo ang target na ibinigay ko sa inyo (You have exceeded the target I set),” she said, referring to her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July where she set a target of 100,000 hectares of private agricultural lands for distribution under CARP.

As the President called out the name of each province and the corresponding hectarage distributed under CARP, the huge crowd present, which included farmers, landowners, representatives of foreign donor-countries and DAR employees, cheered and applauded.

The President noted that the reason why Secretary Braganza was able to achieve the land distribution goal was because “he was able to have a very high absorption rate for official development assistance.”

The President recalled that during her State of the Nation Address, she cited agricultural modernization founded on social equity as one of the four major components of her administration’s fight against poverty.

According to the President, the social equity that her government worked on under the agricultural modernization program is land reform. “This is why land reform is one of the primary goals of my administration,” she declared.

Even when she was still Vice President, she said, she was articulating the four components of what she believes a program to fight poverty should have.

“I said many times that the promise of land reform, a commitment that spans several presidents, must finally be redeemed,” the President stressed.

“I said that without equity and modernization, we will never win the struggle against poverty in our rural countryside,” she said.

The President also said that other presidents aspired hard to achieve genuine land reform for the country.

She said that her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, considered the initiation of land reform in the country as the primary achievement of his presidency. She added that her father believed that tenancy is against the law.

“It is for this reason that I continue to work on what my father had started – the country’s land reform program,” the President stressed.

During her speech, the President enumerated the various provinces that have contributed their share to the success of CARP.

The President said the administration’s land reform project is two-fold.

“*Ang pinaka*-land reform, *iyong* private agricultural land. So *iyon ay* 100,000 hectares a year, *ang ating* goal. (Actual land reform covers private agricultural land. That’s 100,000 hectares a year, our main goal),” she said.

“There are also lands available owned by the national government or public domain that can be alienable and this is also another 100,000 hectares that we want to distribute every year,” she added.

The President arrived here at exactly 10 a.m. Upon arrival, she led the switch-on ceremonies of the agrarian reform communities already established in the country, including those formed and activated during the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Among those present during the occasion were Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel Arroyo, Angeles City Mayor Carmelo Lazatin and other government officials.

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal – Arroyo

I am very pleased and thrilled by the brilliant masterful defense of the IBF Junior Featherweight crown by Manny Pacquiao Sunday morning in Memphis, Tennessee. For a few anxious moments, millions of his countrymen, from around the world, had nothing else but the powers of their prayers to help him win. His skills, discipline and courage proved to be more than enough to give his country a rare moment of glory.

I cannot but think of it as coming like a ray of sunshine for our nation during a most difficult time. His victory also reinforces our faith in the capacity of the Filipino to rise above adversity to fulfill his most cherished dream.

Millions of our youth who have want of new heroes, find inspiration in his triumph. At his age, physical conditioning, and with the good people around him, Pacquiao will go far and win more laurels. He is now ranked with some of the great Filipino prizefighters of yesteryears like Pancho Villa and Flash Elorde.

His homecoming will be a joyous event for our country.

My congratulations and Godspeed.

Malacañang refutes distortions in reports on President's net worth

Malacañang today took very strong exception to certain distortions and miscalculations of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's net worth as reported in the media.

In a press briefing this afternoon at Malacañang, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said: "I would like to make it of record that her net worth in the year 2000 was about P58.3 million and her net worth in the year 2001 was about P66.7 million for an increase of about just P8.4 million," Afable said.

Reports said the President's net worth more than doubled to P66 million during her first year in office based on her statement of assets and liabilities which she filed as required by law.

Under the law, government officials are required to submit a statement of assets and liabilities each year. This is meant to discourage public officials from acquiring wealth illegally by showing that their wealth was acquired within their means.

The law also stipulates that falsification of financial statements or failure to make a disclosure is punishable by law.

Abalos named Comelec Chairman: 2 other poll commissioners, 2 Alvarezes reappointed

Malacañang announced today that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has appointed Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman Benjamin Abalos as the new chairman of the Commission on Election (Comelec), replacing Alfredo Benipayo.

Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said during an interview after his regular press briefing that the President appointed Abalos to the top Comelec position last June 5.

Afable also announced that the President reappointed on the same date Transportation and Communications Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez, Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Heherson Alvarez, and Comelec Commissioners Florentino Tuazon and Resurreccion Borra.

Afable said that in the meantime, the MMDA chairmanship remains vacant as the President is still evaluating the list of nominees to the position, which include former Marikina City Mayor Bayani Fernando and Muntinlupa Congressman Ignacio Bunye.

GMA okays export development plan for 2002-2004

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today approved the new Export Development Plan, the embodiment of the country's strategy for exports in 2002 to 2004.

The President approved the plan immediately after a briefing on its strategic and operational directions during the quarterly meeting of the Export Development Council at the Heroes Hall in Malacañang.

Under the plan, Philippine exports are projected to grow by 10 percent in 2002, 15 percent in 2003 and 16 percent in 2004, higher than the estimates in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan of zero percent exports growth for 2002 and 10 percent for 2003 and 2004.

In approving the plan, the President noted that the United States, which is the Philippines's main export market, is beginning to recover. "Therefore things should only get better," she said.

She also stressed that China, a giant market, is entering the world trading system and so “we should benefit from that.”

“And then we have all the other markets and we identified the products that we should concentrate on under the Export Development Plan which has been approved and the mode of promoting these new products or improving the competitiveness of the old products,” she added.

The high estimated growth in the succeeding years is expected to come from the so-called 10 Revenue Streams, export products identified to have high growth potentials.

According to the EDC, these revenue streams are projected to post double-digit growth rates in the next three years, led by information technology which is forecast to grow by 95 percent in 2002, 64 percent in 2003 and 42 percent in 2004. Other product groups expected to perform well are marine products, organic and natural products, motor vehicle parts and components, electronics, giftware and holiday décor and food.

The plan will be jointly implemented by the government and private sector, led by the Department of Trade and Industry and Philexport, the country’s accredited umbrella export organization. The export sector contributes 35 percent to the Gross National Product and generates significant employment.

In 2001, Philippine exports decreased to \$32.2 billion from \$38.1 billion the previous year, due mainly to the general downturn in the global economy. The implementation of the PEDP is expected to focus government and private business efforts towards sustained growth.

The approval of the plan comes at a time when the country’s exports posted a 22.4 percent year-on-year increase last April, the first rebound posted in 13 months since the global economic slowdown in the last two years, which was aggravated by the terrorist attacks in the United States.

Among those present at the meeting were EDC chairman Trade Secretary Manuel “Mar” Roxas II and EDC Vice Chairman Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. of the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc.

Representing the government sector in the EDC were Foreign Undersecretary Franklin Ebdalin, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Science and Technology Secretary Estrella Alabastro and Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas.

Those coming from the private sector were Charles Streegan (Cebu Furniture Industries Foundation Inc.) Domingo Teng (General Santos City Chamber of Commerce and Industry), Floro Oliveros (*Kaunlaran ng Manggagawang Pilipino Inc.*), Senen Bacani (Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry), Dr. Emma Teodoro (Philippine Software Association), Luis Sicat (Home Accents Group of the Philippines), Atty. Virgilio Sanchez (Christmas Décor Association of the Philippines) and Jose Pangilinan (Chamber of Furniture Industries of the Philippines).

NBI ordered to coordinate with military police authorities in hunt for ASG members

Justice Secretary Hernando Perez today directed the National Bureau of Investigation to coordinate with all military and police authorities to exert all efforts for the early apprehension of Abu Sayyaf Group members.

Perez also directed the NBI to coordinate with the Bureau of Immigration, International Police Organization, police and investigative agencies in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation for a possible regional or even worldwide manhunt for ASG members who might flee Philippine territory.

The top leaders of the ASG being hunted include:

1. Amir Khadafi Abubakar Janjalani a.k.a. Abu Muktar or Khadafi Monationio or Jihad Manalad

2. Jainal Antel Sali, Jr. a.k.a. Abu Solaiman
3. Aldam Tilao a.k.a. Abu Sabaya
4. Isnilon Toton Hapilon a.k.a. Abu Musab
5. Hamsitaji Marusi Sali a.k.a. Jose Ramirez or Siti Birkis or Tiberkis

Perez also approved the request of the NBI to issue Hold-Departure Orders against these ASG members.

He also directed Justice Undersecretary Merceditas N. Gutierrez to coordinate with the Department of Foreign Affairs and prepare requests for the extradition of any ASG members who may have fled to Indonesia, with whom the Philippines has an existing Extradition Treaty.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 10, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032102/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june10.htm>

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- **GMA's Zamboanga visit shows her resolve to fight terrorism, poverty in Mindanao**
- **GMA lauds gallantry of soldiers, militiaman wounded in clash with Abu Sayyaf**
- **GMA mulls over naming hospital after Ediborah Yap**
- **GMA urges speedy ARMM socio-economic growth**
- **GMA focuses on twin battle against terrorism, poverty**
- **GMA to lead 104th Independence Day celebration with flag-raising rites in Lamitan tomorrow**
- **GMA calls on people to stay united in Independence Day message**
- **GMA calls Ediborah Yap a National Heroine**
- **GMA announces N.E.A. takeover of Baselco**
- **People seeks permanent stay of U.S. troops in Basilan**
- **GMA to raise RP flag in Basilan to open celebration of 104th Independence Day**

GMA's Zamboanga visit shows her resolve to fight terrorism, poverty in Mindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY – In just a week's time after passing through here from nearby Dipolog City where she noted the needs of the people in the Zamboanga peninsula, the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived in this city again today aboard a Lear jet that landed at the Edwin Andrews Air Base shortly before 10:00 a.m.

Military officials said the President's arrival demonstrated her resolve to lead her troops, as Commander-in-Chief, in the "no let-up" fight against the Abu Sayyaf and terrorism in Southern Philippines.

Civilian leaders added that she showed her commitment to rid the country of the scourge of poverty by later presiding over a meeting on socio-economic growth and peace and order in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao's (ARMM).

Upon her arrival, the President was warmly welcomed by Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat, Zamboanga Rep. Celso Lobregat, Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza, ARMM Regional Governor Parouk Hussin, and military officials led by Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu, Southern Command (Southcom) Chief Gen. Ernesto Carolina and Western Mindanao Police Director Simeon Dizon.

Also on hand to welcome the President were leaders and members of the Aguman Kapampangan, the staff of the Department of the Interior and Local Governments regional office and officers of the Public Safety College.

From the air base, the President and her party motored to Camp Navarro, Southcom Hospital to visit soldiers and a military man wounded in gunbattles with the Abu Sayyaf in Siraway, Zamboanga del Norte.

The soldiers were part of the troops that engaged in a search-and-rescue operation to get back American missionaries Martin and Gracia Burnham and Filipino nurse Ediborah Yap from the hands of the Abu Sayyaf.

Following her hospital visit, the President had lunch with members of the local media with whom she shared insights on various topics, including the conduct of the Balikatan 02-1, in an informal conversation.

After an early lunch, at about 11:30, the President was flown by helicopter to Lamitan, Basilan where she immediately went to the wake of slain Abu Sayyaf hostage Filipino nurse Ediborah Yap.

The President is scheduled later today to preside over the joint meeting of the ARMM's Regional Economic Planning and Development Board (REPDB) and the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC).

With the President are Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, Presidential Assistant on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita;

Official Development Assistance Secretary Marita Jimenez, Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo, Presidential Assistant for Jobs Generation Luis Lorenzo, Presidential Assistant on Muslim Affairs Nur Jaafar, Electrification Deputy Administrator Edita Bueno, Local Water Utilities Administrator Lorenzo Jamora and Press Undersecretary Roberto Capco.

Following the ARMM REPDB/RPOC meeting, the President is slated to attend a short program where she would award a Community-Based Forest Management Agreement Utilization Permit to Sarri Bolon, president of the Maligue Multi-Purpose Cooperative.

The permit allowed the extraction of 500 cubic meters of forest products worth some P1.5 million in three barangays of Isabela City.

The President would also give out checks aggregately amounting to P1.285 million for core shelter, potable water, post-harvest, educational, skills training and other projects in different towns of Basilan.

She would also distribute Philhealth insurance cards and turn over medicines to officials of Lamitan.

GMA lauds gallantry of soldiers, militiaman wounded in clash with Abu Sayyaf

ZAMBOANGA CITY — A firm handshake, a steady smile, comforting words, a look at their wounds and an envelope containing P50,000 to start with.

These were the encouraging gestures President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today gave 11 soldiers, most of them Scout Rangers, and a militiaman wounded in separate firefights against Abu Sayyaf terrorists in Siraway, Zamboanga del Norte.

The President extolled the bravery and gallantry of the Filipino soldiers engaged in the battle against terrorism, as she visited one by one the wounded at their hospital beds in Camp Navarro, Southern Command Hospital here.

She showed her admiration for the soldiers and the army-trained militiaman who were ready to give up their lives to protect the people from terrorists and to defend freedom and democracy.

During the visit to the surgical ward of the Southcom Hospital where she was received by hospital chief Col. Joselito Castro, the President personally handed over a special fund assistance of P50,000 to each of the seven wounded.

She was assisted by Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza, Regional Governor Parouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), and Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat.

The fund aid for those airlifted to Manila was given to relatives who represented them.

The recipients of the special fund aid included Sergeants Arsenio Peran, Radney Magbanua; Corporals Carlito San Pablo, Jose Lagadon, Jerry Pulmano and George Labastida; Privates First Class Rogelio Tuazon, Abner Eustaquio, Alvin Maddatu, Ramon Guilingan, Rey Balanay, Jonathan Cacalda and Rene Mabilog; and paramilitary man Elejandro Ebo.

Pulmano is with the Army's 2nd Scout Ranger unit; Labastida, Guilingan and Balanay with the 4th Infantry Battalion; and Cacalda, Peran and Lagadon with the 12th Scout Rangers.

All the others were part of the 15th Scout Ranger unit that shot it out with the Abu Sayyaf during the daring search-and-rescue mission on American hostages Martin and Gracia Burnham and Filipjno nurse Ediborah Yap in Siraway last June 7.

But it was Ebo, who guided the Scout Rangers to the Abu Sayyaf lair, who received the best surprise of his life.

"Welcome to the Armed Forces of the Philippines," the President told him, hinting that Ebo should be enlisted in the military.

Aside, Col. Fredesvindo Covarrubias, head of the Combined Information Bureau for the joint RP-US Balikatan 02-1 military exercise, said Ebo would not find it hard to train as an enlisted army man anymore because of his experience in the field as a paramilitary man.

Ebo is attached with the Army's 44th Infantry brigade, First Infantry Division.

Newly-installed Southern Command (Solcom) chief Major General Ernesto Carolina requested the assistance for the wounded soldiers.

The June 7 gunbattle ensued during a search-and-rescue plan—codenamed "Operation Daybreak"—the military launched to get back the Burnhams and Yap.

The Abu Sayyaf snatched the vacationing Burnham couple in the Dos Palmas Resort in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan on May 27 last year. Yap, on the other hand, was taken hostage when the terrorists stormed the Torres Hospital in Lamitan, Basilan on June 2, 2001 in a bid to have their wounded treated.

The President earlier expressed sadness over the death of Martin Burnham and Yap during the rescue operation, but felt the military did a great job in recovering a wounded Gracia Burnham, who has returned home to Kansas in the United States Monday.

Last Saturday (June 8), the President visited Gracia, who is recuperating from a gunshot wound in the leg, at the US Chancery in Pasay City. The following day (June 9), she received the mother, brother and four children of Yap in Malacañang.

The President, following the hospital visit and lunch with the members of the local media here, flew to Lamitan, Basilan to attend the wake of Yap, at the Lamitan Parish Church early this afternoon.

She will also preside over the joint meeting of the Regional Economic Planning and Development Board and Regional Peace and Order Council of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

GMA mulls over naming hospital after Ediborah Yap

LAMITAN, Basilan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she plans to have a hospital named in honor of slain Abu Sayyaf hostage Ediborah Yap.

Arriving in this small town by helicopter early this afternoon from Zamboanga City, the President lauded the bravery and steel nerves of Ediborah, who lasted a year along with fellow hostages Martin and Gracia Burnham under the bestial hands of the Abu Sayyaf.

Ediborah and Martin were killed in an encounter between the military and the terrorist Abu Sayyaf in Siraway, Zamboanga del Norte last June 7. Gracia was rescued but suffered a bullet wound in the leg.

The President came here to once more condole with the family of Ediborah and express her deepest sympathies over their great loss.

Ediborah's mother, brother and four children went to see the President in Malacañang last Sunday.

Ediborah's remains lie in state at the Lamitan Parish compound.

"(Ediborah) died in the line of duty," the President said during an informal conversation over early lunch with the members of the local media in Zamboanga City.

"I think that is a very good insight of the Philippine Nurses Association," she said.

"I would like to name a hospital after her," she added, further stressing that she is looking for an appropriate hospital that would bear the memory of Ediborah.

"It must be meaningful," she said.

After the visit at the wake, the President motored to the Claret High School for the joint meeting of the Regional Economic Planning and Development Board and the Regional Peace and Order Council in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The joint meeting is expected to tackle several issues and concerns on socio-economic growth and peace stability in the ARMM.

After the joint meeting, the President would later this afternoon proceed to the ground floor of the Claret High School to lead in the awarding of various checks for livelihood, community based forest management agreement that allowed the extraction of 500 cubic meters of forest products worth P1.5 million in three barangays of Isabela City in Basilan.

She would also give checks for core shelter assistance, for potable water projects, and allowance uniforms and school supplies to 93 PGMA scholars in the five towns of Basilan.

She would also distribute Philhealth Insurance cards and checks from the Department of Agriculture for the agri-modernization program in the province.

The President is expected to lead in the flag-raising ceremonies for June 12 Independence Day celebration here in Lamitan before going to Zamboanga City for her flight to Manila.

GMA urges speedy ARMM socio-economic growth

ZAMBOANGA CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on officials to help the people in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) attain faster socio-economic growth.

Over early lunch with members of the local media here, the President noted the imperative need to "make the ARMM develop faster because it is the poorest area, the poorest region in the whole country."

She explained that the ARMM's five component provinces—Basilan, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi—have remained as the country's five poorest provinces.

“That kind of economic exclusion really is a breeding ground for people who could be vulnerable to the call of terrorists,” she said.

The President made the call before she flew by helicopter to Lamitan, Basilan where she would be presiding over the joint meeting of members of the ARMM’s Regional Economic Planning and Development Board and the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) at the Claret High School.

The meeting would tackle ways to fast-track ongoing social and economic programs and projects while working out ways to stabilize peace and order in the region.

Assisting the President during the meeting is Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Governor Parouk Hussin, ARMM Executive Secretary Nabil Tan and ARMM RPOC Chairman Governor Datu Andal Ampatuan of Maguindanao province.

With the President are Cabinet Secretaries and other national government agency heads concerned with the President’s thrust to rid the country of terrorism and poverty.

GMA focuses on twin battle against terrorism, poverty

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Achieving a military victory over terrorism – such as that which the government is achieving over the terrorist kidnap-for-ransom Abu Sayyaf Group – does not end there.

Even if the Abu Sayyaf is wiped out, there is still the ‘twin’ of the war against terrorism, which is the war against poverty, to focus on.

This President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo stressed as she pushed for solutions to the problem of poverty in Basilan and in the Triple SB complex (Siocon, Siraway, Sibuco, Baliguan towns in Zamboanga del Norte).

Successful anti-poverty programs would nip in the bud any move to create “another outburst sometime in the future,” she told members of the local media who joined her for early lunch at the Southern Command Mansion House here.

“Even as we say ‘let’s finish the Abu Sayyaf,’ let us also move forward with the war against poverty,” she said.

“We cannot let other events distract us from our focus,” she added, as she hoped the anti-poverty campaign would be won within a decade.

The President said that “even as we address immediate threats, military threats, we must always remember that the focus is on the economy.”

She said a bad economy is a breeding ground for the mass base of terrorists.

The President, in answer to a media query, stressed that she has not given the military any timetable to pulverize the Abu Sayyaf.

“Take as long as it takes, as long as you win the war,” she told her audience that included ranking officials of the military and the Cabinet.

GMA to lead 104th Independence Day celebration with flag-raising rites in Lamitan tomorrow

With the stepped-up military campaign aimed at finally putting an end to the kidnapping scourge of the Abu Sayyaf bandit group in Mindanao as a backdrop, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will lead tomorrow the commemoration of the country's 104th Independence Day.

The President will kick off the nationwide celebration by raising the Philippine flag at 7:00 a.m. in Lamitan, Basilan, where she would be staying overnight.

After meeting with military and local officials in Zamboanga City, the President flew by helicopter to Lamitan, Basilan this afternoon where she presided over the joint meeting of the Regional Economic Planning and Development Board of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the Regional Peace and Order Council at the Claret High School.

The President also visited the wake of slain Filipino nurse Ediborah Yap at the Lamitan Parish Church.

Tomorrow's flag-raising ceremony in Lamitan will set off simultaneous flag-raising rites in Kawit, Cavite and in other parts of the country.

Afterward, the President would return to Malacanang to attend the traditional *Vin d'Honneur*, the reception hosted by the President for the Diplomatic Corps.

During the *Vin d'Honneur*, the President will deliver her message to the international community. The dean of the Diplomatic Corps will then make a response.

In the afternoon, the President will speak before the nation at the customary Independence Day celebrations at the Quirino Grandstand. A joint-civic military parade will then follow.

Last year at the 103rd celebrations of the Philippine Independence, the President denounced the Abu Sayyaf for simply being a money-crazed bandit group, without fear of God and word of honor.

The bandit group had then just kidnapped several vacationers at the upscale Dos Palmas Resort in Palawan, including the two American missionaries, Martin and Gracia Burnham.

"Ang galit ng taong-bayan ay umaapaw na. Ang ginagawang pandurukot ng mga Abu Sayyaf ay labag sa batas ng Kristiyanismo at Islam (The wrath of the citizenry is mounting. The kidnapping done by the Abu Sayyaf is against the laws of both Christianity and Islam)," she said. On Saturday, after the encounter with the Abu Sayyaf which resulted in the death of Martin Burnham and Yap, the President ordered the military to finish off the Abu Sayyaf now that they no longer have hostages to be used as shields.

Several colorful floats, a number of marching bands and hundreds of contingents wearing costumes in different shades representing the different government and private sectors will be the major attraction of the *Araw ng Kalayaan* celebration at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park tomorrow.

The parade will start at 3 p.m. and is expected to finish at 6 p.m.

From among the participants will be chosen the Best Float, the Best Contingent, the Best Marching Band, Drum and Bugle Group in the different competition categories. All the participants of the parade shall be included in the judging with the exception of the Department of Tourism and the National Commission for Culture and Arts.

Tourism Undersecretary Oscar Palabyab said at least 35 will vie for the Best Float competition.

GMA calls on people to stay united in Independence Day message

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo called on the citizenry to unite and flesh out the country's democracy in order to achieve its goals of "alleviating mass poverty, eradicating graft and corruption, putting up a common front against international terrorism, setting moral standards in governance, and providing peace, justice and sense of community which is none other than national unity."

In her message commemorating the 104th anniversary of Philippine Independence Day tomorrow, the President said the country is at the "threshold of profound social, economic, political and cultural changes as we enter the brave world of the coming century and beyond."

"It is only by forging anew our unity as one country and one people, and strengthening our freedom on the basis of sustainable development and far-reaching reforms, change and renewal – enhancing our profound love of God and our pride in the Filipino race – can we attain our individual and collective goals, and seek our rightful place in the international community of nations," she said.

The text of the President's message follows in full:

Binabati ko ang buong sambayanang Pilipino gayundin ang ating World Class Filipino Workers sa iba't-ibang panig ng daigdig sa pagdiriwang ng ating ika-104 taon ng Araw ng Kasarinlan.

Kalakip nito ang ating taimtim na dalangin na simulan nating lahat ang lubusang pagkakaisa at pagpunyaging kailangan upang ating makamtam ang mga biyaya ng kasarinlan at ang kaligayahan, kasaganaan ng bawa't Pilipinong may katutubong pagmamahal sa kaligayahan at kapayapaan.

Today, we are called upon to stay united and to flesh out our independence which our country's President General Emilio Aguinaldo, proclaimed in Kawit, Cavite on June 12, 1898, and established the first democratic republic in Asia and Africa.

By remembering that day in history, we hope to remind our people of how hard a struggle our forebears had fought, of how much blood had been shed, to win our country's place in the community of nations.

Today, 104 years after, we are called upon to flesh out democracy in terms of alleviating mass poverty; eradicating graft and corruption; putting up a common front against international terrorism; setting high moral standards in governance; and, providing peace, justice, dignity and sense of the community which is none other than national unity.

Today, the Philippines is at the threshold of profound social, economic, political and cultural changes as we enter the brave world of the coming century and beyond. It is only by forging anew our unity as one country and one people, and strengthening our freedom on the basis of sustainable development and far-reaching reforms, change and renewal – enhancing our profound love of God and our pride in the Filipino race – can we attain our individual and collective goals, and seek our rightful place in the international community of nations.

Mabuhay ang sambayanang Pilipino!

Mabuhay ang Republika ng Pilipinas!

GMA calls Ediborah Yap a National Heroine

LAMITAN, Basilan — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today paid tribute to the late Ediborah Yap, one of the two Abu Sayyaf hostages killed in a fierce clash between the military and the terrorists in Siraway, Zamboanga del Norte on June 7.

The President said nurse Ediborah Yap is not only the hero of Isabela, Lamitan and Basilan. She said Ediborah is the hero of the whole country.

“She died in the line of duty. Up to the end, she did her duty as a nurse. This is a good sign of the good ethics of the people of Lamitan. The good deed of Ediborah reflected the goodness of Lamitan and Basilan province as a whole,” the President said.

She said Ediborah Pamaran Yap was her relative by blood, on the side of her mother Evangeline Macaraeg-Macapagal.

She added that she found out today that the Pamarans were related to her relatives in Manukan, Zamboanga del Norte.

She made the discovery when she was tracing the family tree with the Pamarans at the wake of Ediborah at the Lamitan Parish Compound’s Jardin de Infancia.

The President visited her relatives in Manukan following the recent joint Zamboanga Peninsula Regional Development Council and Regional Peace and Order Council in Dipolog City.

Upon her arrival at the wake, the President presented a birthday cake to Lawrence William, youngest son of Ediborah who is celebrating his birthday today.

She stayed over one hour talking with the family of Ediborah, informing them that the district hospital of Basilan would be named Ediborah Yap District Hospital, in honor of the heroism of the late nurse.

GMA announces N.E.A. takeover of Baselco

LAMITAN, Basilan — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the National Electrification Administration’s (NEA) takeover of the management of the Basilan Electric Cooperatives (Baselco) effective today.

The President said the rehabilitation of the Baselco plant would start soonest to avoid fluctuations, blackouts and the power outages in at least six towns of Basilan and in Isabela City.

She said the takeover was one of the recommendations brought to her attention when she visited Basilan last month.

The takeover was only one of the many socio-economic programs of the President pushed during her visit to the island-province today.

She also received a progress report on the needs of the residents whose houses were razed to the ground in a big fire that hit Barangay Kampurna, Isabela City on May 29.

She awarded three water pumps to the Kampurna fire victims. The water pumps would be used in place of firetrucks that could not penetrate the community due to the absence of roads. This way, “*malawakang* (widespread)” fires could be avoided in the future, she said.

Before a big crowd that met her at the Claret High School Grounds, the President awarded a community-based Forest Management Agreement Utilization Permit for the extraction of 500 cubic meters of forest products worth P1.5 million in three Isabela City barangays.

Sarri Bolon, president of the Maligue Multi-Purpose Cooperative, received the permit.

She also distributed checks worth P1.285 million for the following projects under the Department of Social Welfare and Development:

- P750,000 for the Core Shelter Assistance in Barangay Paniongan, Lantawan;

- P75,680 representing the initial fund release for the Barangay Buli-Buli, Sumisip Potable Water Project;
- P120,000 representing the initial fund release for the Tuburan Potable Water project;
- P174,750 for the allowance, uniforms and school supplies of the 93 President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (PGMA) scholars in six municipalities of Basilan;
- P100,000 for the pre-post harvest equipment in Barangay Batungal, Maluso;
- P20,522 for the practical skills training on food processing of 20 women in Barangay Matering, Tipo-Tipo;
- P40,800 for the construction of a communal comfort room in Upper Beembegan, Sumisip; and
- P4,000 for kitchen utensils in Matibay, Lamitan.

The President also led in distributing PhilHealth cards to 500 recipients, and turned over 10 boxes of medicines worth P100,000 to the municipality of Basilan.

People seeks permanent stay of U.S. troops in Basilan

LAMITAN, Basilan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today received a letter-resolution from concerned citizens of Basilan asking her to let the Americans stay in Basilan permanently.

The letter was signed by Rev. Fr. Cirilo Nacorda, Parish Priest of Lamitan; Enriqueta Tan, president of the Parish Council; and some 3,000 concerned citizens.

The letter said that with the effort of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and local paramilitary groups, together with Americans troops participating in the joint RP-US Balikatan 02-1 military exercises, “we feel a surge of hope for peace and prosperity in the area.”

The letter stressed that the financial institutions in Zamboanga, where Basileños do their business with, attested to the fact that increases in trade, deposits and financial markets have been noted with the presence of the Americans in the area.

“We are hoping that this aura of peace and development will continue but we are uneasy with the thought that the Americans who are giving us moral and civic support will be leaving after their stay of six months. We are insecure with the thought that their absence will bring us back to square one,” the letter said.

The concerned citizens said that whatever people – from other places like Manila who did not experience what people from Basilan have experienced – think, “that’s their privilege and prerogative.”

“As for us who underwent terrors and hardships, the Americans are our hope, protector and inspiration,” they said.

The letter was given to the President when she visited the wake of Ediborah Yap at the Lamitan Parish Compounds’ Jardin de Infancia here.

GMA to raise RP flag in Basilan to open celebration of 104th Independence Day

LAMITAN, Basilan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she will lead the raising of the national flag to celebrate Independence Day at the Municipal Hall grounds here.

The President said raising the Philippine flag here signifies the declaration of the freedom of the people of Basilan from the bondage of poverty and terrorism.

The President said that when Aguinaldo raised the flag in Cavite, it meant freedom was attained.

“He declared that we are free and ready to fight for our freedom through blood and sweat,” she said.

The President made her remarks before convening the joint meeting of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao's Regional Economic Planning and Development Board and Regional Peace and Order Council at the Claret High School here.

She said that Tuesday's declaration of the fight against terrorism would signal the start of a relentless fight against poverty.

She expressed the hope that the day would come when Basilan would be the symbol of peace and development in the country.

The President would spend the night here and would raise the flag in front of the municipal hall at exactly 7:00 a.m. tomorrow, the 104th anniversary of Philippine independence.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 11, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032114/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june11.htm>

The President's Day: June 14, 2002

14 JUNE 2002

- **GMA bares plan to mobilize culture to improve moral standards in society, government**
- **GMA presents 'Gintong Kalabaw' award to 100 graduates of Cavite National High School**
- **GMA presents awards for Judicial Excellence to outstanding judges, prosecutors**

GMA bares plan to mobilize culture to improve moral standards in society, government

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo expounded yesterday on the administration's policy of mobilizing culture to improve moral standards in society and ultimately attaining the goal of winning the battle against poverty.

The President told art and culture experts and heads of government and non-government agencies gathered at the Culture and Arts Conference at the Pearl Manila Hotel in Ermita, that culture reflects and molds moral standards.

She said culture has its place in the four core beliefs of her administration – the second tenet on the improvement of moral standards in government and society in order to provide a strong foundation for good governance.

"We must insure that our culture is strong, vibrant and attractive," the President said.

The President said she would like to see the vision for a Filipino people inspired by its cultural and artistic life and heritage to improve moral standards in government.

"If we are to raise moral standards, first we must strengthen justice and the enforcement of law and order," she said, adding that this pertains to two levels.

At the level of principle, the President said, the administration must affirm its commitment to the principle that no one is above the law. On the other hand, the second level pertains to our sense that justice prevails and the rule of law works in our daily lives, she added.

The President said the second level "is a great challenge to us in today's domestic and international environment which is challenged with crimes and terrorism all around."

"In this challenging environment characterizing the dawn of the 21st century, we must mobilize culture to forge consensus on a just, lasting and honorable peace in our country," she declared.

In mobilizing culture to influence moral standards, the President said, "we must arrive at a national consensus on the principles to guide our search for peace."

In this connection, President Macapagal-Arroyo offered the following three-pronged principles for the Filipino people and the cultural community to consider.

"One principle is that our ultimate objective should be both peace and development. A second principle is that our framework must be based on constitutionality, national sovereignty and territorial integrity," the President said.

The third principle, she said, is that the Philippines "must recognize that our society is a multi-ethnic one which should be founded on social justice for all and the institutionalized accommodation of ethnic traditions."

"Christians and Muslims, Chinese and Spanish, Tagalog and Cebuano. These are but a few of the names to which the Filipino responds in a wondrous testimony to our rich and varied heritage as a nation," the President said.

The President expressed the belief that the Medium-Term Plan for Culture and the Arts of the Arroyo administration should revolve around the vision of institutionalized accommodation of ethnic traditions. “This should be the unifying vision for our Medium-Term Plan for Culture and the Arts,” she said.

While many had expressed unease over an emerging mono-culture as a result of globalization, the President said, the fear was that the culture of developing nations will slowly be eradicated as the cultures of more advanced nations exercised their hegemony.

However, the President said, the reality is that “our culture could only be swamped by global forces if we do not take measures to preserve and defend it.”

“To preserve and defend our culture needs planning and preparedness,” she stressed.

The President also said “we must make culture available to the masses. We must make culture attractive to the masses.”

GMA presents ‘Gintong Kalabaw’ award to 100 graduates of Cavite National High School

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led government officials in presenting the Gawad Gintong Kalabaw award of excellence to 100 Cavite graduates in celebration of the centenary year of the Cavite National High School.

The President, assisted by Education Secretary Raul Roco, Cavite Governor Erineo Maliksi and Rep. Plaridel Abaya of Cavite, personally handed over the awards to the 100 graduates in ceremonies held this morning at Malacañang’s Heroes Hall.

One of the awardees is Elmer Abueg, the President’s former professor when she was taking up her Masteral Degree in Economics at the Ateneo de Manila University in 1972.

“Siya (referring to the President) ang pinakamagaling kong estudyante sa Ateneo (She was my best student in Ateneo de Manila University),” Abueg said as the President presented him the medallion of the Gawad Gintong Kalabaw.

Visibly elated, the President thanked Abueg for his remarks.

The President also presented the award to two of the oldest alumni of the Cavite National High School. They are Maria Rizalina Bautista Poblete of Batch 1926 and Honorato Vega of Batch 1931. Poblete will celebrate her 92nd birthday on June 19, which is also the birth anniversary of National Hero Jose Rizal.

GMA presents awards for Judicial Excellence to outstanding judges, prosecutors

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the presentation of Awards for Judicial Excellence to three outstanding Regional Trial Court judges, two outstanding Municipal Trial Court judges, two outstanding public prosecutors and one outstanding public attorney for, among other things, their contributions to law and jurisprudence and for having exhibited proven sense of justice and fairness.

The awards were traditionally presented at the Supreme Court, but this time their presentation was held at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang.

The awards were being given to personages in Philippine judiciary for excellent character, exemplary work, high ethics, and superior work standard.

The 2002 Awards for Judicial Excellence were given to the following:

- Outstanding Regional Trial Court Judges:
 1. Judge Clifton U. Ganay of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 31, Agoo, La Union who received the Chief Justice Cayetano Arellano Award for Judicial Excellence;
 2. Diosdado Peralta of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 95 of Quezon City who was given the Chief Justice Ramon Avancena Award for Judicial Excellence; and
 3. Judge Lucas Bersamin of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 96, Quezon City, who was awarded the Chief Justice Jose Abad Santos Award for Judicial Excellence.
- Outstanding Municipal Trial Court Judges:
 1. Judge Ma. Theresa Mendoza Arcega of the Metropolitan Trial Court, Poblacion, Bustos, Bulacan, who received the Justice Felicisimo Feria Award for Judicial Excellence; and
 2. Judge Rafael Crescencio Tan, Jr. of the Municipal Trial Court of Sibulan, Negros Oriental who was presented the Justice Alex Reyes Award for Judicial Excellence.
- Outstanding Public Prosecutors:
 1. Prosecutor Richard Anthony Fadullon, State Prosecutor II of the Department of Justice who received the Senator Ambrosio Padilla Award for Judicial Excellence; and
 2. Prosecutor Globert Justalero of the Office of the Iloilo Provincial Prosecutor who was awarded the Senator Lorenzo Tanada Award for Judicial Excellence.
- Outstanding Public Attorney:

Lawyer Ma. Clarita Tabin of the Public Attorney's Office of Baguio City who was presented the Justice Jose P. Laurel Award for Judicial Excellence.

In her message, the President encouraged judges, public prosecutors and public attorneys to strengthen their resolve toward a more effective administration of justice, which she

emphasized, is the hallmark of civilized society.

Each of the awardees received P50,000 in cash and a trophy.

The board of judges for this year's awards was headed by Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Jr. as chairman with the following as members: Associate Justice Josue Bellosillo, Justice Ameurfina Herrera, Acting Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Cancio Garcia, Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, former Supreme Court Associate Justice Regino Hermosisima, Jr., Lawyer Teofilo Pilando, Jr., national president of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines; and Lawyer Federico Alikpala, Jr, president of the Philippine Bar Association.

The board of trustees of the Foundation for Judicial Excellence include Justice Jose Feria, chairman and president; Lawyer Ricardo Romulo, corporate secretary; Lawyer Santiago Dumlao, Jr., corporate treasurer; Lawyer Ricardo Guevarra, trustee; Lawyer Luis Sison, trustee; Justice Ameurfina Herrera, trustee, and Lawyer Lilia de Lima, trustee.

Among those present during the awarding ceremonies were former President Fidel V. Ramos and Acting Chief Justice Josue Bellosillo.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 14, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032148/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june14.htm>

The President's Day: June 15, 2002

15 JUNE 2002

- **Approved infotech projects to open some 10,000 jobs**
- **GMA urges Camarines Norte officials to unite behind gov't drive vs terrorism, criminality**
- **GMA wants D.O.T. to develop Daet's Bagasbas Beach into a surfing paradise**
- **GMA names veteran newsman Fajardo as NBDB executive director**
- **GMA lauds Daet local officials for innovative way in funding a local project**
- **Let's export Bicol pineapples to China and Korea, GMA exhorts local officials in Camarines Norte**

Approved infotech projects to open some 10,000 jobs

Some 10,000 workers will be hired as soon as newly-approved information technology (IT) projects open nationwide.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II said the approved IT investments reached P1.7 billion or 11 percent of the total investments of P15.14 billion posted from January to April this year.

But the projects would generate 35 percent of some 28,000 jobs to be created by the investments the Board of Investments (BOI) and the Philippine Export Zone Authority (PEZA) approved in the four-month period, Roxas said.

The BOI and PEZA grant incentives like tax holidays to all approved project investors.

Roxas noted a 4.72-percent rise in job generation from new investments, compared to the 26,645 expected jobs in first four months of 2001.

He said the rise in jobs opened from January to April this year was mainly due to labor-intensive investments, particularly on IT projects.

On the average, an investment of P542,593 could create a job in the period under review. In contrast, investors had to sink in some P1.66 million to create a job for projects proposed in the same period last year.

Roxas said IT projects slated this year needed only an average investment of P177,506 to create a job.

He said the country continued to be attractive to IT investors, particularly in the fields of animation, call centers, medical transcription, shared service centers, engineering design and software development.

About 150 companies offering IT-enabled services are operating in the country.

The biggest recent IT investment in ecozone areas is the P143-million project of Soluziona Philippines, Inc. (SPI), a Spanish-Filipino firm providing innovative solutions. Expected to generate 308 jobs, SPI will locate in the Eastwood City Cyberpark in Quezon City.

SPI aspires to capture market shares in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, China, Spain, Romania, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the United States, as well as in local electric company Meralco.

BOI, on the other hand, approved the P244-million IT expansion investment of Sykes Asia Inc., one of the world's leading providers of end-to-end customer care management solutions.

Four years ago, Sykes chose the Philippines as a hub for its centralized Asian call center with 500 existing seats.

The firm will add 350 seats to its call center operations. This will allow Sykes to link the Philippines with the rest of Sykes anywhere in the world.

The new facility will serve as a key hub for its global IT and telephony connectivity worldwide.

The Philippines offers a number of advantages over other Asian countries as possible sites for IT-enabled services.

Roxas said “the Philippines has various IT parks or zones equipped with all the infrastructure needed by an IT company.”

“Another advantage is our language ability. The Philippines can outpace other countries for voice-based call centers in view of our capability to adapt the accent of the West,” he noted.

Close to 30 call centers are operating in the Philippines doing mostly inbound calls.

The industry started as provider of e-mail response as well as handling and technical support and has since developed capabilities for almost any customer interaction, ranging from travel, financial, technical support, education support, consumer services as well as online business-to-consumer support and online business-to-business support.

Most of the call centers are located in Metro Manila.

Roxas said 12 prospective investors have expressed interest in locating in the country and several others have started doing their due diligence.

Further, more companies are implementing shared service centers worldwide and the scope of services is expanding to include several functions beyond finance and accounting.

Roxas said that the Philippines has become host to 13 companies offering shared services and is also carving its niche in outsourcing for software development.

“A number of major Wall Street companies are diversifying their global outsourcing for software development,” Roxas reported. So far, 42 firms are in software development.

Moreover, 38 companies are engaged in engineering design, 13 in animation and 14 in data transcription, Roxas said.

GMA urges Camarines Norte officials to unite behind gov't drive vs terrorism, criminality

DAET, Camarines Norte — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today exhorted all sectors here, particularly the local governments, to unite behind the government's stepped-up campaign against terrorism and all forms of criminality so that the province can attract investments and tourists.

The President arrived at the Daet Airport at about 10:30 am. She was met by local officials led by Camarines Norte Governor Jesus Typoco, Jr.

In her speech at the formal opening of the “*Pinyasan Festival 2002*” at Bagasbas Beach here, the President urged the provincial and municipal governments of Camarines Norte to fight those who would try to destroy the peace and order condition in the province.

Aside from attending the 10th Pineapple Festival in this town, the President also turned over livelihood assistance projects to qualified beneficiaries, including core shelter units under the government's *Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan* (KALAHI) program.

The visit here of the President is part of the consultation process that she had adopted upon assuming the presidency in January last year wherein she vowed to bring Malacanang closer to the people in the countryside.

The President congratulated Daet Mayor Tito Sarion for a job well done in maintaining peace and order in his municipality.

As a gesture of her appreciation, the Chief Executive gave Mayor Sarion P1 million from the President's Social Fund to be used for the purchase of patrol cars for the Daet Police Force.

She noted that despite the lack of a patrol car, the local government and the local police were able to maintain the town's peace and order. With a mobile unit, the police force could further safeguard the peace in the town, the President said.

The President also held a private meeting with the local officials, police and military leaders in this province to further fortify the government's campaign against criminality and terrorism in the province.

"If we want tourists to come here, if we want to have more plane arrivals in your airport here in Daet, then what we need is peace," the President said.

Aside from Governor Typoco and Mayor Sarion, among those who joined the President in the meeting were Rep Renato Unico, Jr. (First District, Camarines Norte); PNP Regional Director Chief Superintendent Enrique Galang; and Southern Luzon Command chief Major Gen. Roy Kyamko.

GMA wants D.O.T. to develop Daet's Bagasbas Beach into a surfing paradise

DAET, Camarines Norte — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the Department of Tourism (DOT) to seriously look into the possibility of developing the Bagasbas Beach here as a surfing paradise and a major tourist destination in the country.

In her remarks at the formal opening of "*Pinyasan Festival 2002*" at Bagasbas Beach here, the President recalled that some 30 years ago, she and First Gentleman lawyer Jose Miguel Arroyo used to surf in Dagupan City, in Pangasinan and in Baler, Quezon

"Daet is a promising place for tourism especially during the surfing season," the President told Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, who was with her official party.

The President explained that tourism is very important to the national government because with information and communications technology (ICT), tourism will lead in the human resource intensive-skills service sector where the country's advantages can be found.

The President told the crowd here at the Bagasbas Beach that she and her husband were the ones who introduced surfing in the country some 30 years ago.

Bagasbas Beach, according to the President, provides a good setting for beginners in surfing. Unfortunately, this is not a surfing season but the President assured the people of Daet that she will be back to surf here as part of her efforts to promote eco-tourism in various parts of the archipelago.

"We will look for good opportunity to surf because my husband is already too eager to see if he can still surf after 30 years from the last time we surfed," the President said.

The Chief Executive said Bagasbas Beach provides a good ambience and she was not surprised that the local government of Daet decided to hold this year's pineapple festival on the beach.

Bagasbas Beach is the most popular beach in the province of Camarines Norte and is also one of the most beautiful beaches in the country.

It is haven for swimmers and beach party enthusiasts due to its fine sand and cool waters.

From September to January the waves in the waters off Daet are ideal for surfing neophytes and aficionados. From the shore one can get a panoramic view of the blue Pacific Ocean and offshore islands.

GMA names veteran newsman Fajardo as NBDB executive director

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has appointed Daniel Fajardo, Editor in Chief of *Panay News*, as executive director of the National Book Development Board (NBDB).

The President appointed Fajardo as NBDB executive director on May 28, 2002 vice Ms. Nellie Apolonio. Fajardo's appointment paper was forwarded to NBDB Chairman Dennis Gonzales on June 5, 2002.

Fajardo, a product of Central Philippine University in Iloilo City and Siliman University in Dumaguete City where he finished his AB political science, hails from Mina, Iloilo.

A regular writer of the *Manila Bulletin*, Fajardo is president and chairman of the board of *Panay News*, the biggest daily newspaper in Western Visayas. He was former president of the Iloilo Press Club and executive vice president of the Publishers Association of the Philippines, Inc. (PAPI).

A veteran journalist, Fajardo is a recipient of several awards from international media and civic organizations.

Fajardo hosts a popular radio-television program, "*Reklamo Publico*," which is broadcast in Iloilo City but is beamed to the whole of Western Visayas.

GMA lauds Daet local officials for innovative way in funding a local project

DAET, Camarines Norte — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the local officials of this capital town for finding innovative ways on how to fund local projects such as the soon-to-rise public market near Bagasbas Beach.

In her speech at the formal opening of the "Pinyasan Festival 2002" at the Bagasbas Beach here, the President announced that the local government under Mayor Tito Sarion has already coordinated with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) and the Bureau of Local Government Finance (BLGF) for the immediate launching of the "WOW Daet Bonds."

The program entails the floatation of bonds not exceeding P80 million, and redeemable in 10 years at 100 percent face value.

Proceeds of the program shall augment the P5 million Local Government Social Economic Fund (LGSEF) available for the construction of the Daet Public Market, which has an estimated construction cost of P77.6 million.

The town's bond floatation program has already been approved by the BSP, LBP and BLGF, with the Land Bank as the prospective trustee.

The President recalled that when she was still a senator, she was able to contribute her own countrywide development fund (CDF) in the construction of Daet's public market.

Also in her speech, President Macapagal-Arroyo said she is hoping that the various local governments would appreciate her efforts in releasing their Internal Revenue Allotments (IRA) in full unlike during the previous administration when local officials were being made to beg for their IRAs.

"I don't want that kind of politics, that's politics of patronage," she said, adding that the full release of IRAs to various local government units is the thrust of what she called "new politics."

Instead of politics of patronage, the President said it should be "politics of empowerment of the local governments."

The President said what she would like to ask, in return, is for the LGUs to be self-reliant in funding their needs similar to what the Daet local government has done in the floatation of WOW Bonds.

The President said she has ordered the LBP, BSP and the BLGF to immediately approve the release of the WOW Bonds to speed up the development of the rural communities.

After her speech, the President turned over a P2 million check to Camarines Norte Governor Jesus Typoco, Jr. for various social development projects in the province.

She also distributed 50 units of gill nets and various construction materials to different organizations in Camarines Norte.

Under her core shelter project, which is implemented by the *Kapit-Bisig sa Kahirapan (KALAHÍ)* program, the President likewise turned over 159 certificates of house and lot ownership to 159 urban poor families in Barangay Alawihao here in Daet.

KALAHÍ is an expanded anti-poverty program being jointly implemented by the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Let's export Bicol pineapples to China and Korea, GMA exhorts local officials in Camarines Norte

DAET, Camarines Norte – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the local government officials here to work for the possible export of the famous Bicol pineapples to China or South Korea.

The President made the call in her remarks at the opening of the "*Pinyasan Festival 2002*," held at the Bagasbas Beach here.

She proposed that Camarines Norte Gov. Jesus Typoco Jr., who comes from a prominent Chinese family and very good in business, should collaborate with the Department of Agriculture (DA) on a marketing project that would propagate the Bicol pineapples for the Chinese and Korean markets.

"*Siguro pwedeng magtulungan si Gov. Typoco at ang DA na gumawa ng marketing project para sa China at Korea ng pinyang produkto ng Daet* (Perhaps Gov. Typoco should collaborate with the DA to have a marketing project for the Chinese and Korean markets for Daet's pineapple products)," the President said.

The President said that the DA has been devolved and that the local government is the one that serves as the DA in the provinces. "The DA's role in the regions is just to assist the local government units)," she added.

The Chief Executive also assured Bicolanos that they would benefit from the coconut levy fund, which would be used as fund for micro-finance program for coconut farmers.

She said that she has instructed the Philippine Coconut Authority and the DA not to overlook the province of Camarines Norte in their micro-financing packages.

“Huwag ninyong kalimutang dalhin yung micro-finance ng coconut levy fund sa mga magsasaka ng niyog dito sa Camarines Norte (Do not forget to bring the coconut levy fund’s micro-financing to the coconut farmers of Camarines Norte),” the President said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: June 15, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032158/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june15.htm>

The President's Day: June 16, 2002

16 JUNE 2002

- **GMA to visit Iloilo, Ifugao, Baguio**

GMA to visit Iloilo, Ifugao, Baguio

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is set to visit Iloilo City, Ifugao province and Baguio City in a series of provincial trips aimed at bringing government closer to its constituency.

The President is expected to deliver a speech before government officials, staff and awardees for exemplary public service at the University of San Agustin gymnasium in Iloilo City Monday (June 17) morning,

She will later address the Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Council) National Congress at the Kalantiao Hall, Barcelo-Sarabia Manor Hotel.

In the afternoon, the President will join the members of the Region VI Regional Development Council (RDC) and Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) who will convene in a joint meeting.

The meeting will discuss socio-economic development and peace and order concerns and issues in Western Visayas.

In the evening, the President will have dinner with Iloilo's provincial, city and municipal officials.

The next day, Tuesday (June 18), the President will fly to Lagawe, Ifugao where she is slated to award government programs and projects to beneficiaries in the province.

She will join officials in a traditional Ifugao dance. She is expected to wear the native costume.

Later in the afternoon, she will go to Baguio City to preside over the joint RDC-RPOC meeting of the Cordillera Autonomous Region.

The President will stay overnight in Baguio City and will be back at Malacañang on Wednesday (June 19).

Last week, the President visited Zamboanga City and Lamitan, Basilan where she also convened the joint Regional Economic Planning and Development Board and RPOC meeting of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 16, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032213/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june16.htm>

The President's Day: June 17, 2002

17 JUNE 2002

- **GMA in Iloilo to consolidate peace, development efforts in Western Visayas**
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- **GMA appoints new MTRCB, TESDA, VRB officials**
- **Iloilo trip part of GMA's continuing dialogue with people and local executives**
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- **Agri modernization based on social equity is key to Iloilo's competitiveness, says GMA**
- **Mindanao, Palawan eyed as RP gateways to Asean in revitalized BIMP-EAGA**
- **GMA resolves growth concerns in Western Visayas**
- **Philhealth overshoots enrollment target**

GMA in Iloilo to consolidate peace, development efforts in Western Visayas

ILOILO CITY — To the beat of the Dinagyang tribal music and dances, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived in this Western Visayas city today in a bid to consolidate peace and development efforts in Region 6.

The President arrived at Iloilo City's Mandurriao Airport shortly before 10 in the morning on board the presidential Lear jet, accompanied by Senate President Franklin Drilon and Trade and Industry Secretary and Cabinet Officer for Regional Development Manuel A. Roxas II, two of the more prominent sons of the region.

The President was accorded planeside arrival honors and welcomed by Iloilo City officials led by Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas, City Mayor Jerry Trenes, and Iloilo City Rep. Raul Gonzales Sr., and Iloilo Reps. Oscar Garin (First District), Augusto Syjuco (Second District), Arthur Defensor (Third District), Narciso Monfort (Fourth District) and Rolex Suplico (Fifth District).

Also on hand to welcome her were Western Visayas Regional Development Officer Rene Villa, Presidential Adviser on Western Visayas Franklin Fuentesbella, Maj. Gen. Jacinto Ligot, Philippine National Police Regional Director Rolando Garcia, KGMA Provincial Coordinator Janet Oberio and Bigkis Pinoy Regional Coordinator Sonia Gemora.

The President went straight to the University of San Agustin gymnasium where she was met by Iloilo Vice Gov. Roberto Armada, Iloilo City Vice Mayor Victor Facultad, University of San Agustin (USA) Rector Fr. Manuel Vergara, OSA, San Agustin barangay chairman Teresita Latonera and members of the Iloilo City Sangguniang Panglungsod.

At the USA gymnasium, the President presided over an awarding ceremony for a multi-sectoral group that included farmers and fishermen of Iloilo, the youth, women and the poor.

Afterwards, the President proceeded to the Barcelo-Sarabia Manor Hotel for the 2002 National Congress of the Sangguniang Kabaataan (SK).

On hand to receive the President at the Kalantiao Hall were SK national president Richard Alvin Nalupta, SK Iloilo City president Julienne Baronda, and SK Iloilo Provincial Federation president Rosario Mediatriz Tupas.

With the theme "SK Leaders — Conquering New Horizons," the conference was attended by over 600 SK officials and members from various SK federations nationwide.

The President officiated the launching of the SK Alumni Association Website by logging on to the computer keyboard as the website is shown on the videowall.

The President also distributed awards of recognition to 12 outstanding SK members. She likewise inducted the officers of the SK Alumni Association and witnessed a seven-minute video presentation of the SK accomplishments under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

The President will later have lunch with the local media at the Roca Encantada hall of the same hotel.

Around 1 in the afternoon, the President moves on to the Jordan Hall for the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council (RDC) and the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC).

Officials who will join her at the meeting are RDC 6 Chairman Capiz Gov. Vicente Bermejo, RDC 6 Co-Chairman Roberto Montelibano, RPOC 6 Chairman Aklan Gov. Florencio Miraflores, RPOC 6 Co-Chairman Rolando Garcia, National Economic and Development Authority Regional Director Truman Caingiet, National Police Commission Regional Director Honey Paredes and Department of Interior and Local Government Regional Director Rexdito Reyes.

The joint RDC-RPOC meeting will last the whole afternoon.

Afterwards, the President will have a working dinner with leaders of the local government units, provincial and city officials at a local restaurant.

Also joining the President at the joint RDC-RPOC meeting are Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., NEDA Assistant Director-General Rolando Tungpangan, Agriculture Undersecretary Cesar Drilon, Agrarian Reform Undersecretary Nasser Pangandaman, Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary Demetrio Ignacio, Budget and Management Undersecretary Mario Relampagos, Public Works and Highways Undersecretary Teodoro Encarnacion, Defense Undersecretary Feliciano Gacis, Press Undersecretary Roberto Capco, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council representative Atty. Romero Tordesilla, National Anti-Poverty Commission representative Roberto Tordesillas, Presidential Adviser for Jobs Generation Luis Lorenzo, Official Development Assistance Rep. Cecilia Camba; Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, Government Service Insurance System president Winston Garcia, National Police Commission Commissioner Edgar Dula Torres, Philhealth Assistant Vice President Marilyn Gadupan, Philippine Ports Authority Deputy General Manager Raul Santos, National Irrigation Authority Administrator Jesus Emmanuel Paras, Local Water Utilities Authority Administrator Lorenzo Jamora, Philippine National Oil Corp.-Energy Development Council chairman Sergio Apostol and Presidential Management Staff Undersecretary Ricardo Saludo.

GMA distributes checks, C.L.O.A.'s, Philhealth cards, livelihood projects in Iloilo City

ILOILO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today distributed here checks, livelihood projects and government programs amounting to almost P11 million.

At the awarding ceremony for multi-sectoral groups at the University of San Agustin (USA) gymnasium, the President also gave out 587 pieces of Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOAs) covering a total of 2, 407.75 hectares of land in the province of Iloilo that would benefit some 4,223 people or 700 families.

The President also distributed to 480 recipients the Social Health Insurance cards under Philhealth for the poor families enrolled in Iloilo City under the Greater Medicare Access (GMA) Para sa Masa Program, completing the SONA target of 5, 000 family beneficiaries. To date, more than 15, 000 health cards have been given out.

The breakdown of the checks and equipment distributed by the Chief Executive:

- checks worth P300, 000 for the Level II Water System under the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (Kalahi) rural projects in Barangays Botlog and Nipa in Concepcion, Iloilo;
- checks worth P2,007,419 for various projects under the Comprehensive Development and Integrated Social Services (CIDSS) for Iloilo province and Iloilo City. Projects include day-care centers, water systems, day-care materials, electrification projects, senior citizens centers, drainage system construction and capability-building seminars for the different barangays of Iloilo province;
- twenty-one checks amounting to P6.4 million under the Local Government Unit (LGU) Performance Program-Matching Grant Program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for projects under the Integrated Family Planning Maternal Health Program for the cities and towns of Murcia, Sagay, San Carlos, E.B. Magalona, Kabankalan, Bacolod, Cadiz, (all in Negros Occidental); Jamindan, Cuartero, Dumarao in Capiz; Valderrama and Culasi in Antique; San Enrique, San Rafael, San Joaquin, Zaraga, Iloilo City, Anilao, Leganes and Barotac Viejo in Iloilo; and Buruanga in Aklan;
- two checks amounting to P400, 000 as financial assistance to qualified beneficiaries of the Local Project Desk Program (Sentrong Sigla Certification and Philippine Health Accreditation Program) to Roxas City and Capiz;
- checks worth P412,521 for various projects that include maternity and death benefits for sugar workers, livelihood assistance to disabled persons, workers scholarship fund, programs for the employment of students, disability assistance program to overseas Filipino workers and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Insurance program;
- checks amounting to P431,077 for use in the acquisition of bamboo working tools, food processing equipment and kiln dryer for common service facilities supporting livelihood development in Iloilo (Maasin and Guimbal) and Jordan, Guimaras;
- seven checks amounting to P70,000 as cash assistance from the Social Credit Revolving Fund to 10 families who are beneficiaries of the Australian Aid-funded Street and Urban Working Children program;
- one hundred bags of rice worth P85,000 under the Australian Aid Food for Work Program to local partners for the uplift of the street children and working children of Iloilo City;
- various fishing/catching equipment worth P528,850 for the livelihood projects of seven fishermen's organizations in Tigbauan, Barotac Nuevo, Barotac Viejo, Dumangas, Banate, Ajuy and Iloilo City;
- checks worth P200,000 for the establishment of a tilapia hatchery in Balasan, Iloilo;
- checks amounting to P768,000 as house-and-lot purchase loan from Pag-IBIG to two families;
- checks amounting to P375,000 to 66 beneficiaries composed of tricycle drivers, labanderas, vendors and some professionals;
- 132 bags of 20-kilo hybrid rice seeds to farmers in 10 municipalities of Iloilo and Iloilo City;
- four presidential gold medals to winners of the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Sports Festival.

Development thrust of Region 6 to be ecologically-balanced, gender-responsive

ILOILO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today approved the development thrust of Region 6 (Western Visayas), which is to make the region ecologically-balanced and gender-responsive with a globally competitive economy.

In a presentation to the President and members of the Cabinet in today's 9th Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) Joint Meeting held at the Jordan Hall of the Barcelo Sarabia Manor Hotel and Convention Center here, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Assistant Director General Rolando Tungpalan said that the region's development thrust is anchored on modernized agriculture, agro-based industries, tourism and small and medium enterprises.

Tungpalan enumerated the development objectives of the region as follows:

- Modernize the agricultural sector, promote its strong linkage with industry, and enhance its export potentials; and
- Develop and promote the region as a major tourist destination.

On sustainable agricultural development, Tungpalan emphasized the importance of modernizing, diversifying, and intensifying agriculture and fishery-based industries.

He also pointed out the importance of enhancing the economic viability of small and medium enterprises and the promotion of investments.

The NEDA proposed the expansion of the tourism industry through massive promotion, upgrading and improvement of tourist facilities, and enhancing cultural and ecological destinations.

Tungpalan outlined the following strategic interventions to complement the development thrusts of the region:

- Develop competent entrepreneurs and skilled human resources;
- Enhance natural resource endowments and promote ecological balance;
- Attract information and communication technology (ICT)-related enterprises and electronic industries to enhance their utilization in agri-industry and tourism development;
- Encourage and promote the clustering of urban communities through metropolitan arrangements and the formation of inter local cooperation;
- Provide adequate infrastructure facilities;
- Provide basic social services and improved their delivery; and
- Make the regional and local development planning, investments programming and budgeting gender responsive.

GMA appoints new MTRCB, TESDA, VRB officials

Malacañang today announced the appointment of four new officials of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Videogram Regulatory Board (VRB).

Acting Press Secretary and concurrent Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable, Jr. said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo approved, as early as end-May, the appointments of the four.

Afable said that Mari-len Y. Dinglasan has taken over as the new MTRCB Chairperson effective May 30. Dinglasan replaced Alejandro Roces.

Also last May 30, the President named former Cavite Governor Jose Marie “Bong Revilla” Bautista as new VRB Chairman and Lualhati R. Buenafe as Bautista’s vice-chairperson and executive director.

Afable added that since June 14, former Quezon City Congressman Dante Liban has replaced Lucita S. Lazo as the new TESDA Director General.

Earlier on June 13, former Marikina City Mayor Bayani Fernando took over the helm of the Metro Manila Development Authority, replacing former judge and Mandaluyong City Mayor Benjamin Abalos.

Abalos was named by the President as new Chairman of the Commission on Election and replaced former Supreme Court administrator Alfredo Benipayo.

Iloilo trip part of GMA’s continuing dialogue with people and local executives

ILOILO CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said her visit to this city is part of the continuing regional consultations that she is conducting to find out the needs of the people and the local government executives.

In a lunch with members of the local media at the Barcelo Sarabia Hotel and Convention Center here, the President said that through her provincial trips, local officials can present their problems directly to her and other heads of national agencies so that solutions can be threshed out immediately.

She said feedbacks from these dialogues would be used as inputs on the state of the regions in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) that she will deliver before a joint session of Congress on July 22, 2002.

The President said the interaction between national officials and local executives from Region 6 is being made possible through the 9th Regional Development Council and Regional Peace and Order (RDC-RPOC) joint meeting held here.

She said that an important item in the agenda at the RDC-RPOC joint meeting was agricultural modernization and the propagation of hybrid rice.

The President also said another relevant item discussed in the RDC-RPOC meeting was micro-financing for some 50,000 women throughout the country, wherein a housewife can borrow from P10,000 to P20,000 each for livelihood projects.

The government's micro-finance program was launched recently in Barangay Holy Spirit in Quezon City with some 2,000 women from Metro Manila awarded P10,000 each in collateral loans.

The President also cited some development projects that were delayed but were unlocked and are now being implemented, among them the Batangas Port in Batangas City, the rehabilitation of the Philippine National Bank, the reopening of the National Steel Corporation in Mindanao, and the development of the railroad project in the North that is expected to ease the flow of traffic from the metropolis to Northern Luzon.

GMA challenges Sangguniang Kabataan to prove relevance

ILOILO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today challenged the officers, members and alumni of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) to prove their relevance in these times.

In her very brief remarks at the 2002 SK National Congress at the Barcelo-Sarabia Manor Hotel here, the President said the SK should show that their existence is still important.

“Malaki ang hamon sa SK na ipakita ang relevance ninyo ngayon (There is a big challenge to the SK to prove that you are still relevant today),” the President said.

Amid the President's call for SK to show its relevance is a clamor to abolish the law that provides for the existence of SK since the youth is likewise able to learn governance in student-government bodies.

Upon arrival at the SK Congress, the President witnessed a seven-minute video presentation of the SK accomplishments under the present administration.

Afterwards, the President distributed OSKARs – Outstanding SK Awards and Recognition to -12 top SK members.

She also inducted the new officers of the SK Alumni Association.

The President also launched the SK Alumni Association website by logging on the computer keyboard.

Welcoming the President at the SK event were SK national president Richard Alvin Nalupta, SK Iloilo City president Julienne Baronda and SK Iloilo Provincial Federation president Rosario Mediatrix Tupas.

The SK Congress with the theme, “SK Leaders — Conquering New Horizons,” was attended by over 600 SK officials, members and alumni from various federations nationwide.

The involvement of the youth in all levels of governance — in the barangay, municipal, city, provincial and national levels — was instituted through the passage of Republic Act 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991, which paved the way for the creation of the SK.

According to law, the SK is a non-partisan mechanism for youth participation in politics. The assembly of youth in every barangay known as the Katipunan ng Kabataan (KK), constitutes the core membership of the SK. The young people belonging to the KK are eligible to vote and be voted upon in the SK elections.

Agri modernization based on social equity is key to Iloilo’s competitiveness, says GMA

ILOILO CITY — To sustain the competitiveness of the city and province of Iloilo, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the need for continued agricultural modernization and fisheries development based on social equity.

The President emphasized this in her speech before a multisectoral group at the University of San Agustin, where she led an awarding ceremony.

Speaking in fluent Ilonggo, the President also said that when she was still an undersecretary at the Department of Trade and Industry, she oversaw the creation of an agro-industrial zone in Pavia, Iloilo.

The President also lauded Region 6 for being a leader in implementing a genuine land reform program.

The President noted that during her administration, at least 2,000 hectares of land in Iloilo province have been distributed to farmer-beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

She also noted that Negros Occidental, which is also part of Region 6, is considered the valedictorian of land reform as it has already registered 7,000 hectares out of the 100,000 hectares targeted for distribution nationwide.

The President announced the release of the last batch of Philhealth or the Social Health Insurance Cards for poor families enrolled in the City of Iloilo under the Greater Medicare Access (GMA) Para sa Masa program, completing the SONA target of 5,000 family-beneficiaries.

More than 15,000 health cards have already been awarded nationwide.

Mindanao, Palawan eyed as RP gateways to Asean in revitalized BIMP-EAGA

Mindanao and Palawan will soon rise above the scars of a Moro rebellion and the scourge of Abu Sayyaf terrorism.

As government nears to dealing a final blow on the Abu Sayyaf and pocketsize kidnap-for-ransom gangs in Mindanao and while its peace panel engages the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in talks to find a lasting and meaningful end to the Mindanao conflict, Philippine officials have put back its Asean regional growth thrusts back on track.

In a report to Malacañang, the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) said the government is on schedule in ably setting up the mechanisms, structures and policies to revitalize the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA).

Besides spurring regional investments, trading and tourism, the BIMP-EAGA is proving itself as a venue to promote Mindanao and Palawan as the country’s gateway to the Asean region.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) is a regional development grouping composed of BIMP member-countries, Thailand, Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar.

The PMS report, which outlined the accomplishment of commitments President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo made during her July 2001 State of the Nation Address, reported the operation of various air and sea routes linking Mindanao and Palawan to trade and tourism centers in the BIMP-EAGA.

Since last year, the Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco) and other state agencies have pushed confidence building measures with BIMP-EAGA counterparts that led to the opening of air and sea passenger and cargo services between Davao and Manado; Zamboanga, Tawi-Tawi and Sandakan; Zamboanga, Tawi-Tawi, and Tawau; and Manila and Brunei Darussalam.

Officials are in talks for the use of Brunei's Muara Port as a transshipment point.

At the same time, business linkages and arrangements have been completed between and among the Brunei Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Maguindanao Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

There are similar discussions with Malaysian investors on ventures in oil palm production and extraction in mainland Mindanao.

Other ongoing trade talks are on the BIMP-EAGA-China and North Asia Relations that include the establishment of an Asean Promotion Center in Seoul, South Korea and the EAGA food supply network for China and North Asia.

A request has also been submitted to extend until 2004 the Uniform Port Tariff Agreement between the Philippines and Brunei.

The PMS report noted that government has pursued joint tourism marketing and promotions through familiarization tours and the development of joint tourism packages.

It has also expanded exchange programs through technical training through the BIMP-EAGA-sponsored Vocational Exchange Program. A group of Indonesian students recently completed the program.

Further, BIMP-EAGA officials have entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) that harmonized customs, immigration, quarantine and security (CIQS) rules and policies.

The MOA created a CIQS Inter-Agency Committee and a One-Stop Action Center for CIQS.

More importantly, the BIMP-EAGA has brought about increased cooperation in border security between and among the BIMP member-countries.

A trilateral agreement on security information exchange has recently been signed between the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Under the Philippines-Malaysia Border Patrol Coordinating Group, an Air Border Patrol Operations has been delegated.

The PMS report said the revitalization of the BIMP-EAGA would practically put back Mindanao and Palawan in the radar screens of regional trading, tourism and security.

GMA resolves growth concerns in Western Visayas

ILOILO CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today resolved several issues and concerns raised during the Western Visayas Regional Development Council meeting.

On the need to rehabilitate nine irrigation system to boost agricultural production in Western Visayas, the President instructed the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) to formulate an effective system to identify and prioritize irrigation facilities requiring urgent rehabilitation and work so that these could be immediately funded.

The President also tasked the Presidential Commission on Ecological Waste Management to facilitate the conversion of the Calajunan Dumpsite in Mandurriao, Iloilo City from open dumping to sanitary landfill.

On the Panay River Flood Control Project, the President said the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is planning to propose the project under the 27th Regular Yen Loan Package (RYLP) in 2005.

The DPWH said the flood control project was proposed under the 26th RYLP but was not accommodated because of the agency's annual budget ceiling. But it may also be proposed under the new special yen loan package special term economic partnership.

The President also instructed PhilHealth officials to prepare a separate National Health Insurance package for indigenous peoples, as she noted their culture and way of life. The Local Government Units (LGUs) will fund this project.

She further instructed the DPWH to release funds to complete the Leon-Tubungan Remegio Road that will open the mountainous portions of the road and shorten travel time between Iloilo and Antique.

It will also open up new areas for development, enhance peace and order in the area and assure the delivery of vital social services.

Other issues raised during the RDC meeting today included:

- The need to speed up the implementation of socialized housing projects and the issuance of a proclamation reserving portions of Barangays Veterans Village and Sto. Rosario here. The areas were once under the United States military reservations turned over to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has endorsed the issuance of the proclamation, and the President has approved it.
- The non-approval of applications for land use conversion of agricultural lands to residential use in Barangay Balabag, Iloilo. The President instructed the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR)/PARC to fast-track the approval of applications to facilitate the final individual titling of the property and its eventual release to qualified beneficiaries of the resettlement site.
- The extension of the Iloilo Commercial Port Complex at Loboc, Lapuz, Iloilo City. The President instructed the speedy implementation of the project, such as the resubmission of letter by the NEDA to the Japanese government for a \$63-million funding.

Philhealth overshoots enrollment target

Malacañang today announced that the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) has already enrolled 2.4-million beneficiaries or 440,828 families in urban areas nationwide as of June 1, 2002, surpassing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's State-of-the-Nation Address (SONA) target of enrolling 500,000 urban poor beneficiaries in the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP) in a year's time.

"As early as December 2001, Philhealth already reached its SONA target of 500,000 beneficiaries, almost seven months ahead of schedule," Dr. Francisco T. Duque III said in his report to the President shortly before he enplaned to the United States to attend a USAID conference.

“We are confident that before the President delivers her next SONA, Philhealth would have enrolled 2.4 million beneficiaries, which is more than five times its target,” Duque said.

It will be recalled that in her first SONA, the President recognized the crucial role of social health insurance in the country’s development efforts as she committed the enrollment of 500,000 urban poor Filipinos in the NHIP.

Citing the need for universal health care to help the poor cope with the prohibitive costs of getting sick, the President directed the Philhealth to expand its network coverage to the poor, particularly those living in the urban areas.

Duque said that soon after the President pledged to expand Philhealth’s coverage, he created a team to push for plan 500 enrollment among the corporation’s regional offices.

One of the top performing government executives under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, Duque is the son of the late Health Secretary Francisco Duque who served under former President Diosdado Macapagal and was regarded as the father of Medicare, the precursor of Philhealth.

He disclosed that a total of 402 urban local government units are currently participating in the NHIP-greater Medicare Access backed up with memoranda of agreements signed with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), the League of Provinces, Cities and Municipalities, and the Liga ng mga Barangay.

As of June 1, 2002, the following Philhealth regional offices have posted the following enrollment records: NCR-Rizal, 40,675 families or 203,375 beneficiaries; PRO CAR, 7307 families with 36,535 beneficiaries; PRO I, 22,551 or 112,755 beneficiaries; PRO II, 14251 or 71,255 beneficiaries, PRO III, 74,497 families or 372,485 beneficiaries, PRO IV A, 26,158 families or 130,790 beneficiaries; PRO IV B, 37,445 families or 187,225 beneficiaries; PRO V, 16,543 families or 82,715 beneficiaries; PRO VI, 48,282 or 241,410 beneficiaries, PRO VII, 4, 472 or 22, 360 beneficiaries; PRO VIII, 13,086 families or 65,430 beneficiaries; PRO IX, 9,433 families or 47,165 beneficiaries; PRO X, 81,372 families or 406,860 beneficiaries; PRO XI, 21,246 families or 106,230 families; PRO XII, 9,985 families or 49,925 beneficiaries; PRO CARAGA, 13,525 families of 67,625 beneficiaries.

Duque also cited some solons who allocated funds for the enrollment of their constituents in the health insurance program.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: June 17, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032220/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june17.htm>

The President's Day: June 18, 2002

- **Legarda-Leviste assures GMA of continued support**
- **GMA distributes land patents, assistance, farm implements, Philhealth cards in Ifugao**
- **Work on DOTC rail lines in Metro Manila on track**
- **Let's all help in preserving the Ifugao rice terraces, GMA calls on Filipinos**
- **Authorities now tracking down the hostage takers in Zamboanga – Palace**
- **GMA transfers management of two Baguio properties to local gov't**
- **A.R. development thrust discussed extensively**

Legarda-Leviste assures GMA of continued support

ILOILO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night received assurances from Sen. Loren Legarda-Leviste of continued support for the platform of her administration in Congress.

“There’s no such thing. There are no such plans,” Legarda-Leviste said when asked to comment on reports that she had jumped ship and would be the running mate of the opposition candidate for president.

“That’s pure speculation from the media,” she added.

Legarda-Leviste was with the President at a dinner at Tatoy’s Restaurant in Arevalo district which was also attended by the leaders and officials of this Western Visayas City. The President was guest of honor during the affair.

The senator, who is in town to attend the 2002 Sangguniang Kabataan National Congress at the Sarabia Manor Hotel, arrived at the dinner while the President was discussing with Iloilo government officials ways of enticing foreign investors to pour more money and open more businesses in the area.

Stressing that she came to Iloilo City to speak before the SK forum, Legarda-Leviste said she reiterated to the President that she has no intention “of jumping ship.”

“And she believed my reassurance,” she added.

When Legarda-Leviste sat near the President, local officials teased her about reports that she would jump ship.

The President remarked, “Ninang ni (Pampanga Vice Gov. Juan Miguel) Mikey (Arroyo) ‘yan.”

The President was referring to the forthcoming wedding of her son to Angela Montenegro, where the senator will be one of the principal sponsors.

Aside from Legarda-Leviste, Senate President Franklin Drilon, who is also an Ilonggo, was at the same event.

Drilon said Senator Legarda-Leviste remains deeply loyal and firmly committed to the administration bloc in the Senate.

GMA distributes land patents, assistance, farm implements, Philhealth cards in Ifugao

LAGAWE, Ifugao — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led government officials in distributing 105 free patents for land titles, checks for procurement of post-harvest facilities and heavy equipment, farm implements and agricultural products as well as PhilHealth cards to qualified beneficiaries of Ifugao province and neighboring towns and cities.

The Chief Executive, dressed in an Ifugao costume, distributed various forms of government assistance after addressing thousands of Ifugao residents in celebration of the 36th Ifugao Foundation anniversary held this morning at the Capitol Plaza here. She was assisted by Ifugao Governor Teodoro Baguilat, Jr. and other concerned agency representatives.

The President said the 105 free patents for land titles distributed to Ifugao beneficiaries represents a 103-percent accomplishment rate for the year 2002.

It can be noted that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources office in Ifugao has a commitment of 101 free patents for 2002 as enunciated in the President's State of the Nation Address in July last year.

The President handed out some 100 PhilHealth cards from the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation to the indigent families enrolled in Lamut, Ifugao under the Greater Medical Access (GMA) Para sa Masa program.

During the awarding rites, the President also distributed checks for various government programs and projects in Ifugao and nearby towns and cities as follows:

- Department of Social Welfare and Development – a check worth P125,000 for water tank and pipe installation presence to Teresita Rillon of Barangay Laya, Alfonso Lista, Ifugao; P150,000 check for the construction of a foot bridge given to Pablo Guhip of Barangay Dulao; P150,000 check for the construction of Day-Care Center received by Donato Bubod of Barangay Pugol, Lamut, Ifugao; P145,000 check for the construction of a spring reservoir, to Johnson Chupalan of Barangay Banhal, Mayoyao, Ifugao; and P115,000 check for the construction of water system given to Rebecca Maguiwe of Mayoyao, Ifugao.
- Department of Labor and Employment – awarding of checks amounting to P1,300 each to 44 qualified students under the Special Program for Employment, and awarding of two checks amounting to P120,000 to two Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) beneficiaries.
- Department of Agriculture – P2.8 million check for post-harvest facilities and heavy equipment procurement presented to Mt. Province Vice Governor Anthony Warden; and a P1.8 million check for heavy equipment procurement given to Kalinga Vice Governor Joseph Delson.

The President arrived at the Capitol Plaza here at exactly 10 a.m. from the Loakan Airport in Baguio City. She was accompanied by Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Heherson Alvarez, and Acting Press Secretary and Presidential Management Staff head Silvestre Afable, Jr., who is CORD officer for the Cordillera Administrative Region, and other government officials.

Upon arrival at the Capitol Plaza, the President was officially welcomed by Governor Baguilat, Lagawe Mayor Joaquin Dugon, Jr., Congressman Solomon Chungalao and other local officials.

Work on DOTC rail lines in Metro Manila on track

A comfortable ride on faster on-time air-conditioned trains crisscrossing Metro Manila's main roads awaits everyone when the government completes the expansion and extension of two operating rail lines and the construction of a mass rail transit by 2004.

Another three new rail networks, to include those that will bring passengers north and south of the metropolis are projected for completion by 2007.

Government has tapped private sector support, through the Build-Operate-Transfer Law, to fund the projects that are expected to ease vehicular traffic in the country's capital, a Presidential Management Staff (PMS) report said.

The report cited the achievements of the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) in relation to commitments President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo made during her July 2001 State of the Nation Address.

Targeted to be fully operational in December 2004 is the Metro Manila Strategic Mass Rail Development (MSMRD) project that stretches from Claro M. Recto Avenue in Manila to Santolan in Pasig City.

The DOTC said construction on the MSMRD, also known as the Mass Rail Transit (MRT) 2, has passed its halfway stage.

The MSMRD project depot is 64.03 percent complete, its substructure 89.47 percent finished, and its systems, vehicles and trackworks 36.28 percent done.

The extension work on the 16.8-kilometer MRT 3, which runs in the middle of EDSA from Taft Avenue in Pasay City to North Avenue in Quezon City, will also be completed by 2004.

The nine-kilometer extension will bring passengers from the MRT 3 depot on North Avenue to Monumento in Caloocan City. It will also complete the loop between the MRT 3 and the Light Rail Transit (LRT) 1 that runs from Monumento to Baclaran.

The DOTC said it has approved the Build-Transfer (BT) draft contract for the civil works, to include development rights, proposed by the Sobrepeña-controlled private firm Metro Rail Transit Corporation.

The Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) has endorsed the project with focus on traffic projections that the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee (ICC) of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) is evaluating.

By April 2004, work on the air-conditioning of the old train fleet of the LRT 1 will be completed. A contract was signed last April 1 between the Light Rail Transit Administration (LRTA) and Japanese firm Marubeni Corporation.

The LRTA also projected the completion of additional civil works and the installation of 12 more air-conditioned four-car trains for the LRT 1 by December 2004.

The LRTA has approved the contract for concurrence by Japanese financing agency Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

The PMS-DOTC report further showed that the government hoped to operate the LRT 1 South Extension, the Northrail and the Southrail by 2005.

The LRT 1 South Extension stretches from Monumento to Bacoor, Cavite. The Implementation Agreement of the Joint Venture Agreement between the LRTA and Canadian rail company SNC-Lavalin was signed on December 20, 2001.

The DOTC, meanwhile, has submitted to the NEDA-ICC the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Southrail project that would cover the Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon (Calabarzon) growth corridor.

After a NEDA-ICC approval, the TOR will be referred to the Asian Development Bank for concurrence. The DOTC said a memorandum of understanding has been signed by the Philippine National Railways and Daewoo Corporation to conduct the feasibility study.

On the Northrail project, the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) has obtained the NEDA-ICC approval for the feasibility study for the project's Obuchi Fund-bankrolled Phase I, to operate from Caloocan City to Clark.

Finally, the PMNS-DOTC report said a French consortium is refining the proposal to build the MRT 4 that will ferry rail commuters from the Old Bilibid in Manila to the Batasan area in Quezon City. Project completion is targeted in 2007.

As this developed, the MMDA also reported the increase in traffic speed in Metro Manila's major thoroughfares.

Traffic speed in the metropolis leapt to 17.42 kilometers per hour (kph) in April from 16.18 kph in March and 13.5 kph earlier.

Increases in traffic speed were noted along EDSA, R. Magsaysay to Aurora Boulevard Commonwealth, Rizal Avenue España to Quezon Boulevard, E. Rodriguez Boulevard, A. Bonifacio, South Super Highway, Roxas Boulevard and Pres. Quirino Avenue.

The MMDA has also expanded its traffic discipline zone to cover 17 EDSA intersections from Balintawak to Taft Avenue.

Let's all help in preserving the Ifugao rice terraces, GMA calls on Filipinos

LAGAWE, Ifugao — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on all Filipinos, not only the tribal folks of Ifugao and the Cordilleras, to help in the preservation of the rice terraces, which have been declared as one of the world's heritage sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Speaking before thousands of residents during the celebration of the 36th founding anniversary of the province of Ifugao at the Capitol Plaza here, the Chief Executive said that it is the duty of every Filipino to help preserve the rice terraces.

Wearing an Ifugao native costume, which was woven by the tribal folks, the President said that there are only a few heritage sites in the world and among them are the Ifugao rice terraces.

The President announced that her administration was able to secure from the UNESCO a grant of \$75,000 for the preservation of the rice terraces.

She said that she was giving the Ifugao provincial government the responsibility to manage the UNESCO grant, adding that she did not believe in creating a task force to handle the money.

"If there is a task force, there's no more accountability. I believe in accountability resting in one office. And since the rice terraces are in Ifugao, then the UNESCO project be managed by the provincial government of Ifugao," the President said.

The President urged the people of Ifugao to support Governor Teodoro Baguilat, Jr., in the efforts to preserve the rice terraces.

She also directed the National Commission on Culture and Arts (NCCA) and the Department of Tourism (DOT) to provide technical support to Governor Baguilat for this project.

According to the President, the NCCA and the DOT are planning to put up a P50 million program for the rice terraces.

The President also expressed the hope that the Ifugao provincial government will use part of the UNESCO grant to provide the means to take tourists to the site of the rice terraces.

During her speech, the President also touched on the peace and order situation not only in the province of Ifugao but also the entire CAR.

She directed Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., to ensure the peace and order in the areas where the rice terraces are located "if we want more tourists to go there."

The President specifically ordered Regional Director George Alino of the CAR Philippine National Police “to help the governors of the Cordillera galvanize community action and become vigilant against those who transgress the law and peace of mind of the people.”

The tourists must feel safe when they trek to the rice terraces either in Hungduan, Batad, Banaue, Mayoyao, Kiangnan, Hingyon, the President told the PNP and local officials.

Authorities now tracking down the hostage takers in Zamboanga – Palace

BAGUIO CITY — Malacañang today said that military authorities can handle the latest hostage-taking incident off the waters of Tamuk Island, some 45 nautical miles from Zamboanga City, and operations are ongoing to track down the still unidentified hostage takers.

In a press briefing at the Mansion House here, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said the incident involving four Indonesian crewmen is still being investigated by military authorities.

Afable held the press briefing after the more than five hours of the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and Regional Peace and Order Council of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

Afable said that it is unfortunate that this incident has happened when the pursuit operations of the remnants of the Abu Sayyaf terrorists in Sirawai, Zamboanga del Norte are still in progress.

“But I am sure that the authorities can handle the situation and be able to gain an early solution to this problem,” Afable told newsmen.

Elements of the Philippine Navy and Philippine Coast Guard have started search and rescue operations for the victims on the nearby islands.

Reports said that the victims of the latest kidnapping incident in Mindanao included the captain, chief engineer, chief petty officer and chief mate of an Indonesian tugboat towing a barge loaded with coal from Indonesia and bound for Cebu.

In another topic, Afable reiterated that Malacañang is not involved, nor will it get involve, in the partisan squabble in the Senate.

“It is not involved in raiding the opposition of any of these things. Actually the activities within the Senate itself and among its members are generating this hype of party raiding,” Afable said when asked to comment on reports that the administration senators are trying to lure opposition senators to their camp.

Afable also said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo proceeded to this city from Ifugao to preside over the RDC-RPOC joint meeting. In Ifugao, she attended the 35th founding anniversary of the province.

The President came all the way from Iloilo City where she stayed overnight, also to preside over the Region 6 joint RDC-RPOC meeting.

GMA transfers management of two Baguio properties to local gov’t

BAGUIO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced her approval of the transfer of the management of two government-owned assets to the city of Baguio.

President made the approval during the five-hour joint meeting of the 10th Regional Development Council and Regional Peace and Order Council held at the Mansion House here.

During the meeting, the President personally congratulated Baguio City Mayor Bernardo Vergara after announcing the turnover of the management of the Baguio Convention Center and Hilltop Hotel property.

President believes that the transfer of the management of the refurbished and well-maintained convention center would boost Baguio's reputation as a "convention capital" and center of the Cordillera Autonomous Region.

The Convention Center has been the site of national and regional conventions, stage plays, school graduation and other important regional events. Lately, however, it has been in a state of disrepair and neglect.

The Hilltop Hotel, meanwhile, has lain idle and unutilized for productive purposes after it was heavily destroyed by a strong earthquake of July 1990.

The President admits that the Hilltop property could be utilized for more productive purposes. This property is under the Asset Privatization Trust.

C.A.R. development thrust discussed extensively

BAGUIO CITY — The development thrust of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) was discussed extensively as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presided over a five-hour joint meeting of the Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) at the Mansion House here today.

National Economic and Development Authority Director General Dante Canlas said the CAR is envisioned to be the watershed of the country, the leading source of hydro power and non-conventional energy, the premier eco-tourist destination, the prime educational center, the leader in the manufacture of light industrial products and the food basket for semi-temperate fruits and vegetables.

The strategic interventions for CAR to become the watershed cradle of the county include the improvement of forest cover and quality of groundwater resources, promotion of equitable distribution of benefits from watershed and strengthening support activities.

On becoming the major energy producer, the strategies include the development of small-scale hydro power potentials; rehabilitation, upgrading and modernization of major power plants, transmission lines and substations; facilitation of the completion of on-going and committed power plants and expansion of rural electrification.

On the goal of CAR becoming the premier eco-tourism paradise, the strategies include the implementation of tourism cluster development approach, strengthening of tourism development bodies and institutions, intensification of fund sourcing for tourism projects, improving access infrastructure and tourism related services, intensification of tourism promotion and marketing activities, and development of regional eco-tourism database.

To be the center of responsive, basic, tertiary, technical and vocational education in North Luzon, the interventions include the development of quality teachers and administrators, promotion of responsive and relevant education curriculum, identification and development of CAR Centers of excellence and development of programs of advocacy, brokerage, direct action, research and development among institution.

On the thrust of the CAR to be a major contributor to national food security, the strategies include the expansion and cultivation of agricultural areas in accordance with appropriate development plans, cultivation of crops suitable to each province, implementation of indigenous natural resources management practices in agriculture projects; the fast tracking of installation and completion of irrigation projects.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 18, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032232/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june18.htm>

The President's Day: June 19, 2002

19 JUNE 2002

- **GMA presents awards to 10 top students**
- **NEDA chief upbeat on RP growth as GMA administration surpasses SONA targets**
- **NEDA, USAID ink pact on governance, health, and environment and energy**
- **GMA calls on TESDA to help resolve problem on job mismatch**
- **GMA urges healthy investment climate to create more relevant jobs**
- **GMA bares recovery of Indonesian in Sulu**
- **Bunye tops list of candidates for Press Secretary, says GMA**
- **GMA urges people to unite and rally behind ideals of Jose Rizal**
- **Gordon asks GMA to extend liberalized policy on visa issuance to Taiwan visitors**

GMA presents awards to 10 top students

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded this year's Ten Outstanding Students of the Philippines (TOSP) for their academic excellence, exemplary leadership, and social responsibility anchored on moral values as she personally presented them their respective awards.

The President — assisted by First Gentleman Jose Miguel T. Arroyo, former Trade and Industry Secretary and chairman of the TOSP Executive Committee Jose Concepcion, Jr., National Book Store president Alfredo Ramos, and Chairperson Ester Garcia of the Commission on Higher Education — handed out the trophies to the young achievers in ceremonies held this morning at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall.

The TOSP awardees, who received their awards from the President are the following:

- Carlos Alfonso Q. Santos, Doctor of Medicine, University of the Philippines-Manila, Cum Laude;
- Dionne Marie M. Sanchez, BS Business Administration and Accountancy, University of the Philippines-Manila, Summa Cum Laude and College Valedictorian;
- Arlene Maneja, Bachelor of Laws, University of Sto. Tomas, Magna Cum Laude;
- Sherlyn L. de Guzman, BS Management, Engineering, Ateneo de Manila University;
- Ryan C. Guinaran, Doctor of Medicine, University of the Philippines-Manila;
- John Iver Z. Solidum III, BS Nursing, Colegio San Agustin-Bacolod, Magna Cum Laude;
- Joemar L. Losaria, BS Marine Transportation, John Lacson Colleges Foundation-Arevalo;
- Emmeline Y. Aglipay, BA Economics, De la Salle University, Magna Cum Laude and Valedictorian;
- Gizelle Lou M. Cabahug, BA Political Science, Central Mindanao University, Summa Cum Laude and Class Valedictorian; and
- Jenny Lind D. Elmaco, AB Political Science, Silliman University, Magna Cum Laude.

The President offered a token of P20,000 each to the ten young achievers during the awarding ceremonies which coincided with the 141th birth anniversary of Dr. Jose P. Rizal.

Concepcion said the culmination of this year's search brings into focus the importance of the youth in living the fire of idealism and devoting their energies, commitment, and aspirations to the noble task of nation-building.

"The TOSP is more than just an award. It has been a continuing commitment to service and excellence for the last 40 years, interrupted only during the period of martial law," he said.

Concepcion pointed out that it is TOSP's mission to "create an atmosphere of lasting inspiration for our youth – our future, who (comprise) 56 percent of the 75 million Filipinos."

The TOSP was launched on June 19, 1961, aptly on the 100th birth anniversary of Rizal. It was held continuously until martial law was declared in 1972.

In November 1988, RFM Corporation and the Rotary Club of Makati Central, in cooperation with the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, revived the search, and in 1991, it was held under the auspices of the newly-created RFM Foundation.

NEDA chief upbeat on RP growth as GMA administration surpasses SONA targets

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has surpassed the targets she set during her first State of the Nation Address (SONA), according to Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante B. Canlas.

“The President will have a good story to tell to the people come July when she delivers another SONA,” Canlas said in an interview on cable TV recently.

Canlas, who also heads the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), said the overall performance in 2001 was very good, with domestic growth posting a 3.4 percent growth, higher than the 3.3 percent government target and the less-than-3 percent growth expectation of the private sector.

True to the President Arroyo’s pronouncements in her first SONA, Canlas cited that thousands of beneficiaries have already been identified for enrollment in the National Health Insurance Program, while the cost of commonly purchased medicines is now within reach.

“All 73 government hospitals are now stocked with select half-priced quality drugs from parallel drug imports and local manufacturers,” he added.

In contrast to the rise in the number of jobless persons in 2000, about two million jobs were created as of October 2001, with 1.2 million of these coming from the services sector and 800,000 from the agricultural sector.

Canlas said the peace and order situation has improved, with the President giving more focus on terrorism and kidnap-for-ransom activities.

He admitted, however, that just one case of kidnapping incident tends to “change the (positive) perception” of the public.

The NEDA chief brushed aside fears that the alleged political activities of some officials for the 2004 election would dampen the economic gains.

He said the administration has laid a solid economic foundation and noted that the political summit in April showcased platform-based programs rather than personalities.

For this year, Canlas predicted that the economy would continue to gather strength brought about by the economic policies that began last year.

The country’s farm sector, for example, grew by 3.8 percent in the first quarter of the year due to ample output gains in palay and mango, and stronger upturn in fishery.

In 2001, P29 billion was allotted to agricultural modernization, way above the P20-billion budget requirement under the Agricultural and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA).

He said information technology would be another bright spot in the economy in 2002.

The government expects to double the number of call centers in the Philippines to 80 next year from the current number of 40 to transform the country into a call center hub in the Asia Pacific region.

The passage of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act, which had been stalled for nine years in Congress, has also sent a good signal to investors, according to Canlas.

NEDA, USAID ink pact on governance, health, and environment and energy

The Philippines and the United States have signed three memoranda of understanding (MOU) that would effectively provide assistance to improve economic governance, the delivery of health and family planning services, and the management of environment and energy in the country.

The MOUs would serve as a framework that would guide the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in its activities in the Philippines.

Signing for the Philippines were Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Deputy Director-General Gilbert Llanto.

USAID Mission Director Patricia K. Buckles and USAID Deputy Mission Director Francis Donovan signed for the US.

In a report, Canlas said “the three MOUs will address major problems in the country and promote the social and economic development of the country.”

Buckles, on the other hand, noted that the MOUs further strengthened the partnership between the US and the Philippines.

She said the US looked forward to moving further ahead in achieving the goals of the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in reducing poverty and securing peace nationwide.

The MOUs stipulate the provision of USAID assistance in:

— Economic governance, whereby more transparent and accountable institutions, policies, and practices; the removal of competitive barriers to the development of infrastructure and trade; and taking advantage of the framework of international trade agreements are expected to be achieved.

— Health and family planning, whereby local government units are given better management of Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome-Tuberculosis-Human Immuno Virus services; greater social acceptance of family planning; and improved policy environment and financing will be given priority.

— Environment, whereby assistance will focus on environmental policy reforms; building institutional capability and mobilizing public and private sector support for improved environmental management with emphasis on more transparent and accountable governance.

— Energy, whereby improved policy environment, increased use of clean and renewable fuels, and reduced vehicle emissions are sought.

Under the MOU, the NEDA and USAID agreed to conduct annual high-level bilateral consultations that would review overall program and policy directions, update relevant developments affecting program implementation, and identify new areas or activities eligible for funding.

A semestral review of results would be made to monitor the progress of ongoing activities and address any implementation concern.

GMA calls on TESDA to help resolve problem on job mismatch

CALAMBA, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to prepare a new curriculum that would help solve the problem of job mismatch by training young people for jobs that are being offered by factories and other employers.

In her speech at the commemoration of the 141st birth anniversary of Dr. Jose Rizal at the *Liwasang Lungsod* here, the President said the so-called lack of employment opportunities is actually a problem of job mismatch.

The President said that in most jobs fairs that the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has set up in Metro Manila and in the provinces, there were more job offerings than applicants.

“May trabahong naghahanap ng manggagawa, may manggagawa namang naghahanap ng trabaho (There are jobs looking for workers, and there are workers looking for jobs),” the President said, adding that what is needed right now is how to solve this job mismatch.

“Napakalaking problema ang job matching (To match jobs is a big problem),” the President said.

According to the President, this is one reason why she has reorganized the TESDA, with the appointment of former Quezon Congressman as new TESDA director general.

The President also announced that she has appointed former TESDA Director General Lucita Lazo as DOLE undersecretary for reintegration of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

She said there is a need for this new office to attend to returning OFWs, especially those who are in their forties or near retirement age and who can no longer apply for work in factories.

The President said the job of Undersecretary Lazo would be to initiate a program that would provide gainful employment or livelihood activities to returning OFWs.

GMA urges healthy investment climate to create more relevant jobs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said her administration would aggressively go on looking for ways to provide every Filipino worker a job he loves to do and a service that investors need to be done.

“Hindi tayo titigil na maghanap ng paraan upang dumami muli and trabaho para sa mamamayan... Kailangan din ay bagay ang kakayahan ng manggagawa sa pangangailangan ng mga namumuhunan,” she said.

But this can only be done in a healthy investment climate where stable peace and order conditions and industrial peace are present, the President said in a speech in Calamba, Laguna where she joined the people in celebrating the 141st birth anniversary of national hero Dr. Jose Rizal.

“Iyong dalawang klaseng kapayapaan na iyon ay kailangan para sa trabaho (We need these two classes of peace to create more jobs for the people),” she said.

During a luncheon with local officials and members of the media, the President said that after her July 2001 State of the Nation Address, she had set her eyes on revitalizing the economy.

She said a lot of programs on the economy are on “automatic pilot.” Even the latest country review of the International Monetary Fund expressed belief that the government would hit its economic targets.

She noted that while Laguna is booming with industries, it is still beset with an 11-percent unemployment rate. “*Gaano pa doon sa ibang lugar?* (How then can other places unlike Laguna cope?),” she asked in her speech.

She said her administration has been seriously dealing with new forms of enslavement – terrorism and poverty – plaguing society.

She added that graft and corruption, political feuds and banditry have aggravated conditions, thus making the nation sink deeper in the pit of poverty.

“*Hindi tayo titigil hanggang hindi mawawakasan ang karahasan ng mga terorista at mga kriminal* (We will not stop until terrorism and criminality have been eradicated),” she stressed.

She cited the big help Interior and Local Government Secretary and former Laguna governor Jose Lina, Jr. gave to boost industrial growth in the province and in uplifting the lives of the people.

The President also took note of the country’s export growth that reached 20 percent compared to negative growth last year and the rising tourism growth of ten percent month-on-month.

“*Pero marami pa ring walang trabaho, kaya’t dodoblehin natin ang ating kailangang gawin* (But many still do not have jobs, so we will exert more efforts, double it, to have our anti-poverty goals met),” she said.

She also lauded the efforts of Luis Lorenzo, Presidential Adviser on One Million Jobs and a native of Laguna, for setting up job fairs nationwide.

GMA bares recovery of Indonesian in Sulu

CALAMBA, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the recovery of one of the four Indonesian nationals who were abducted early this week by unidentified armed men from a tugboat off Basilan.

The President made this announcement during an informal luncheon meeting with the local and national press, and the local officials of the province of Laguna at the shrine of Dr. Jose P. Rizal here where she was the guest of honor and keynote speaker on the 141st birth anniversary of the national hero.

She said the Indonesian hostage victim, identified as Ferdinan Yoel, 35, was recovered in Luuk, Sulu.

“They just recovered him now and they still have to debrief him. No details are yet available,” the President said during the luncheon.

The President said she received the news on the recovery of the Indonesian hostage via a telephone call from Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu shortly before the start of the luncheon.

Aside from Yoel, those who were abducted were Munku Yacobus Windwatan, Pieter Lerrich and a certain “Zulfifli.”

She noted that it was also in Luuk where American hostage Jeffrey Schilling was recovered by the military from the hand of the Abu Sayyaf bandits.

“The people there are super. I really love them,” the President said in reference to the people of Luuk, Sulu.

In the last senatorial election, the President even recalled that Luuk delivered a 13-0 vote in favor of her People Power Coalition (PPC) candidates.

Bunye tops list of candidates for Press Secretary, says GMA

CALAMBA, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said former Muntinlupa Mayor Ignacio Bunye is on top of the list of candidates to the position of press secretary.

In a luncheon meeting with the local and national media as well as the local officials here, the President said Bunye is the top choice of the search committee in charge of selecting and recommending possible appointments for key positions in her Cabinet.

She stressed that she will need Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. to head the Presidential Management Staff (PMS), adding that she needs somebody to do her strategic thinking.

“I need his brains for PMS,” the President told media representatives during the informal luncheon meeting.

The President explained that she needs Afable at the PMS to design special programs to remove the bottlenecks in agrarian reform, the expansion of urban land reform and for the overseas Filipino workers, among other things.

“I need him to do those things but I can’t even demand that of him now because he’s doing all those nitty-gritty work as press secretary,” she said.

While noting that Afable has other talents, the President pointed out that the Acting Press Secretary is above all a strategist.

“Many can be press secretaries but very few can be strategic thinker,” the President said in describing Afable’s skills.

On the position of the Presidential Spokesman, the President reiterated that Rigoberto Tiglao will retain the same post as soon as he returns from a three-month fellowship in Japan.

GMA urges people to unite and rally behind ideals of Jose Rizal

CALAMBA, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the entire Filipino nation to unite and to replicate the ideals of national hero Dr. Jose P. Rizal in the common battle against crimes and poverty in the country.

In her speech during the 141st birth anniversary celebration of Rizal here, the President stressed that unity among the Filipinos was the message of Rizal’s own struggle to free the nation from the perceived bad governance of foreign invaders.

“These are the ideals instilled to our hearts and minds by our hero Dr. Jose Rizal, for us to unite and free the country,” the President said, adding that Rizal was deeply concerned with the ascendancy of a united Filipino nation.

According to her, one of the reasons why Rizal became the national hero is because he left us with the legacy of nationhood, of being one race, one people.

“Rizal wanted his countrymen to create a new nation committed to a shared destiny,” she said.

In making Rizal a contemporary hero, the President called on all Filipinos to draw inspiration from his life and ideals.

Prior to her speech, the President offered a wreath at the marker of Rizal's birthplace in Calamba.

To provide more meaning to the commemoration of Rizal's birth anniversary, Calamba Mayor Severino Lajara prepared birthday gift bags for 1,000 indigent families in Calamba.

In an informal luncheon meeting that followed the ceremony, the President lauded the local government of Calamba for successfully maintaining peace and order in the area and providing a good business environment.

Among those present in the ceremony were Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., Laguna Vice Gov. Dan Fernandez, Laguna Rep. Joaquin Chipeco, Jr, Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM) chief Maj. Gen. Roy Kyamco and the mayors of all the toward in the province.

Gordon asks GMA to extend liberalized policy on visa issuance to Taiwan visitors

Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon has asked President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to extend a liberalized policy in the issuance of visas to facilitate the entry of visitors from Taiwan.

In a memorandum for the President, Gordon said the government's "progressive liberalization policy" on the air services pact between the country and Taiwan "saw a 12.56 percent increase" in tourist arrivals from Taiwan in 2001.

He said the rise in tourist arrivals from Taiwan was a result of the lifting of the suspension of flights of foreign air carriers from Taiwan.

He cited statistics that showed the deadlock in the air services agreement in 1998 caused a 24.56-percent decline in arrivals in 1999. In 2000, arrivals dropped to as much as 47.35 percent.

In 1998, tourist arrivals from Taiwan totaled 246,370. Two years later, only 75,722 tourist arrivals were recorded.

In his memorandum, Gordon proposed that all airlines operating from Taiwan to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) and the Laoag International Airport (LIA) should "be authorized to collect, through a Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO)-designated representative, the visa fee from its passengers with the corresponding official receipt stamped on the passengers' passports."

The tourism secretary also proposed that upon their arrival at the country's premier airports, passengers from Taiwan should present their passports with the MECO-issued official receipts to the Bureau of Immigration for the issuance of an entry visa.

At the same time, passengers should be holders of a passport valid for not less than six months and that the immigration bureau should have the prerogative to refuse entry to passengers in the watch list of passengers who fall in a similar category.

Gordon said the government should maximize the potentials of Taiwan as a tourism and investment market.

"We hope to regain the standing of Taiwan as one of the Philippines' top five markets in terms of tourist arrivals by this year," he said.

There are 35 regular flights from Taiwan to the NAIA and 10 regular chartered flights to the LIA.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 19, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032241/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june19.htm>

The President's Day: June 20, 2002

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- **GMA to abolish NACC, gives General Ebdane one year to eliminate kidnapping**
- **GMA lauds Chinese-Filipinos for their contributions to nation building**
- **Madaris officials, tutors approve unified curriculum**
- **Semi-conductor firms hail moves to hasten implementation of open access to power scheme**
- **Power cost to go down by 20 percent in July billings, Perez tells Cabinet**
- **DOLE pushes drive against illegal recruiters**

GMA to abolish NACC, gives General Ebdane one year to eliminate kidnapping

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the abolition of the National Anti-Crime Commission (NACC) as she gave incoming Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. the sole responsibility to go against criminal elements, particularly the kidnapers.

In her speech at the awarding ceremonies of the Dr. Jose P. Rizal Awards of Excellence for outstanding Chinese-Filipinos or Tsinoy held late Wednesday night at the Le Pavillon along Roxas Boulevard, the President also challenged Ebdane to eliminate kidnapping in the country within one year.

The President said that Ebdane was the choice of the Chinese-Filipino community for the top PNP post even during the start of her administration.

“Because I have given Jun Ebdane a challenge and I know you will support him, I will give him the full authority, and also the full accountability, for eliminating kidnapping,” the President said.

According to the President, as soon as Ebdane takes command of the PNP, the NACC will cease to exist, “so you talk only to one person in fighting kidnapping.”

Most of the victims in kidnapping for ransom incidents, especially in Metro Manila, have been wealthy Chinese-Filipinos.

The President said the Tsinoy community had been working closely with the government in solving kidnapping cases involving Chinese-Filipinos.

“I’m quite sure that it will work even more closely when General Ebdane becomes the PNP chief,” the President said.

She said with the continued support of the Chinese-Filipino community, the administration will meet the problem of kidnapping with more focus and counterforce.

The President also called on young Chinese-Filipinos to join the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines and consider making police work as a lifetime career.

She also asked young Tsinoy to join in the training sessions of the PNP and other law enforcement agencies so that they would gain expertise needed in detecting and stopping kidnappings.

The President recalled that in her first State of the Nation Address in July 2001, she said that she wanted the bulk of the members of the kidnapping syndicates behind bars.

“With your choice at the helm of the PNP, let us work to eradicate the kidnap gangs and arrest, prosecute and jail the kidnap bosses,” the President told the leaders of the Chinese-Filipino community.

GMA lauds Chinese-Filipinos for their contributions to nation building

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Chinese-Filipino community for their contribution not only in advancing the interest of their community but also in helping build the nation through their personal vocations.

In her speech at the awarding ceremonies of the Dr. Jose P. Rizal Awards for Excellence held late Wednesday night at the Le Pavillon along Roxas Boulevard, the President said that the modern and enterprising Chinese-Filipinos (Tsinoy) have broken from the national stereotype that they are successful only in business and entrepreneurship.

The President said that more Tsinoy have now given significant contributions to such fields as art and culture, community service, education, journalism, management and finance, medicine, public service, science and technology and sports.

But no awards night for Chinese-Filipinos would be complete, the President said, without recognizing the lifetime achievements of the giant taipans of the Philippines.

She particularly cited successful Chinese-Filipino business leaders as Lucio Tan, Henry Sy, John Gokongwei, George Ty, Angelo King, Alfonso Yuchengco and Pao Shih Tien, who have all been recipients of Lifetime Achievement Awards in last night’s awarding ceremonies.

The ten recipients of the Jose P. Rizal Awards for Excellence were Ricardo Lee, for art and culture; Jose Dy Tan, for community service; Julie Yap-Daza, for journalism; Johnlu G. Koa, for business and entrepreneurship; Queena Lee-Chua, for education; Dy Bun Yok, for medicine; Josiah Go, for management and finance, Perry S. Ong, for science and technology; Naga City Mayor Jesse Robredo for public service; and Doreen Yu for journalism.

The President also congratulated the *Manila Times* and *Kabayan* for sponsoring the Awards as well as the co-sponsors, namely the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and industry, *Kaisa*, Philippine-Chinese Charitable Association, and the Chinese-Filipino Business Club.

According to the President, Dr. Jose P. Rizal is a classic example of the Chinese-Filipino whose life and work helped found the nation and brought Filipinos closer together.

The Dr. Jose P. Rizal Awards for Excellence, named after the national hero, honor outstanding Chinese-Filipinos who have demonstrated excellence in their chosen fields and have contributed to the growth of the nation.

The President said she was proud to have worked closely with the leaders of the Chinese-Filipino community, adding that under her administration, the government and the Tsinoy “have built new bridges of friendship and understanding.”

She then asked the Chinese-Filipinos to help her administration carry out and complete its program of change and reform.

The President said that she was sad that the public satisfaction of her administration has been much lower today than two months ago, apparently, according to her, because of public dismay over electricity rates.

She said that although the cost of electricity is not a problem of her making, she was doing the best “within her power” to alleviate the situation.

The President said she has instructed the National Power Corporation (Napocor) to reduce its purchased power cost adjustment (PPCA) to P0.40.

“Because of this, from being the second most expensive cost of electricity in the region, we will go down to number six after your PPCA reduction takes effect in your July billing,” the President said.

The President also called on all undocumented but qualified Chinese nationals to avail of the naturalization law so that they can help in achieving the government’s budget deficit ceiling target for this year.

Madaris officials, tutors approve unified curriculum

A curriculum focused on Islamic values and the Arabic language with a mix of English, Filipino, Science, Mathematics and *Makabayan* (Civic Studies) is very acceptable in the *madrasah* (Arabic school) system.

This was the common reaction of some 500 *ulamas* (Muslim religious leaders) who attended a seminar-workshop on the proposed Unified *Madrasah* Curriculum in Cotabato City from June 17 to 19.

The *ulamas* are proprietors, officials and faculty members of private madaris (plural for *madrasah*) operating in the provinces of Basilan, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi and in Marawi City, all in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Presidential Assistant for Education Mona Dumlao Valisno said the *ulamas* appreciated the commitment of the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to make Mindanao a centerpiece of the national agenda for social and economic development.

Valisno said the adoption of the Unified *Madrasah* Curriculum would be a very significant breakthrough in the Philippine educational system.

“It is a dream realized after more than 30 years of hoping and pushing by all the stakeholders” from the government and private sectors, she said.

She reechoed the President’s optimism that the “mainstreaming” of *madrasah* education into the national education “is the only lasting persuasive and integrative strategy towards achieving peace and improving the human resource capabilities of the Mindanaons.”

“Through education, any resistance and conflict in beliefs, cultural practices, religion and perceptions of development can easily be mended, harmonized and unified,” Valisno said.

She said the unified curriculum would soon be implemented in five elementary and secondary schools in each of the five provinces and one city of the ARMM.

In her speech during the opening of the seminar-workshop, Valisno cited the *madaris* as a channel for promoting peace and development in Mindanao.

Through these Arabic schools, many Muslim families could be reached and be brought into the mainstream society to participate in nation building, she said.

The seminar-workshop was organized by ARMM Vice Governor and ARMM Education Regional Secretary Mahid Mutilan.

Semi-conductor firms hail moves to hasten implementation of open access to power scheme

Power-intensive industries led by the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines, Inc. (SEIPI) have expressed satisfaction on recent legislative moves to speed up the implementation of the open access scheme in the electricity sector.

In a report in today's Cabinet meeting, the Department of Energy (DoE) cited the SEIPI for saying that the pending congressional bills would positively help strengthen the competitiveness of industries suffering from very high power costs.

"The industry supports such move of the legislators as this would be a big relief in terms of our efforts in reducing the cost of doing business here in the Philippines," SEIPI executive director Ernie B. Santiago said.

The open access scheme would allow SEIPI members to opt for the cheapest and most efficient power supply that would meet their requirements, the SEIPI said.

This would also break the monopoly of power utilities as the exclusive distributor of electricity in their respective areas, it added.

Under the open access scheme, power consumers using at least one megawatt (1MW) monthly and located within the franchise area of a distribution utility may source power directly from generating plants as early as June next year by using the power lines of the distribution companies.

"If we can buy cheap electricity from other sources and at the same time this company can specifically address the quality of electricity we need, then we should only be allowed to do so under a deregulated power industry. If the accelerated open access will make this happen faster, we will support such move," Santiago said.

He noted that a major concern of the semi-conductor industry is the high costs of power, adding that electricity costs account for 10 to 20 percent of electronics manufacturing costs.

The average monthly consumption of a medium-sized semi-electronics industry usually ranges from P5 million to P10 million.

SEIPI also welcomed the decision of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to reduce the cost of power of the National Power Corp. (Napocor).

The President last May 8 ordered Napocor to peg at a uniform rate of 40-centavos per kilowatthour (kWh) its power purchased cost adjustment (PPCA) starting this month.

This would result in the reduction of between P0.10 to P1.13 per kWh depending on the grid. Napocor's average PPCA is about P1.25 per kWh, to be reflected in the monthly billings of consumers by July.

Santiago said that in the last six years, the power use of the electronics manufacturing sector has gone up to meet the growth in the demand of the product but the cost of power has also doubled, bloating the companies' operating costs.

He said this made it difficult for them to compete with other countries.

"Any move by the government in making the industry's production set-up more cost effective and efficient would bring a lot of competitive edges the Philippines has to offer," he said.

"Let us make sure that we can capitalize on those and work on the biggest export sector of the country, accounting for more than 70 percent or \$22 billion of the total Philippine exports of merchandise goods," he urged.

Santigao explained that the opening of the China market might result in excess capacity in the electronics sector, which could lead to the reduction in the price of the product.

He said the only way to counter this scenario is to “improve the cost of manufacturing, particularly the electricity rate in the country, to put us in the same playing field as China.”

“The reduction in the power rate shows that the government is sincere in its well intended plan to work with the industry in facing the global challenges and changes ahead,” he added.

The DoE said that utilities and large firms sourcing their electricity supply from Napocor will enjoy the impact of a power cost reduction of about P1.13 per kWh in the Luzon area and some P0.67 per kWh in the Cebu-Negros-Panay grid.

But some large industries may not benefit from the reduction as some distribution utilities like the Manila Electric Co. source a large portion of their supply from other independent power producers, the DoE said.

Napocor, however, assured that the full benefit of the reduction will be enjoyed by end-consumers of distribution utilities that source 100 percent of their power from the government-run power firm.

SEIPI is the largest and leading organization of foreign and Filipino electronics companies in the country. Most of its member companies are located within the franchise area of a distribution utility, which is the exclusive power distributor in the area.

Power cost to go down by 20 percent in July billings, Perez tells Cabinet

Energy Secretary Vicente Perez today said that electricity costs will go down by as much as 20 percent in the July billings of power consumers within the franchise area of the Manila Electric Company (Meralco), which covers more than three-fourths of Luzon.

In his report to the Cabinet meeting held this morning in Malacañang, Perez said this was a result of the order last May 8 of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to the National Power Corporation (Napocor) to reduce its purchased power cost adjustment (PPCA) passed on to consumers by an average of P0.85 per kilowatt-hour.

Perez said that this is on top of the mandated rate reduction of P0.30 per kilowatt-hour for residential consumers implemented every month since July 2001.

He said that the review of contracts of independent power producers (IPPs) will be completed by the end of June; and if companies are found to have cheated the people, they would have to face the law.

Perez said the results of the review would be submitted immediately to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The government would make sure the results are made public, Perez said, adding that “we will not spare companies that cheated the people” as “no one is above the law.”

But while the energy department would exhaust all measures to provide immediate relief to power consumers, Perez said the people should understand that “we need a sustainable solution” to the problem caused by the controversial PPCA.

Perez said everyone has to bear with the challenges of building a competitive market mechanism for power.

This would start with the privatization of the transmission and generation assets of the Napocor, he said, adding that there is also the need to come up with an imaginative refinancing plan for the state-run power firm.

He cited two important things. First is that there is no one-shot solution to the problem that has caused people untold hardships. Second, the affected consumers must share their part, through sacrifice and enlightenment, in solving the problem.

Perez assured that government would continue to implement reforms in the power sector.

He said there are always short-term pains to endure long-term gains.

DOLE pushes drive against illegal recruiters

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has stepped up its campaign against illegal recruiters nationwide, even as the agency has given overseas Filipino workers (OFW) better services and assistance.

In a Presidential Management Staff (PMS) report showing the agency's achievements vis-à-vis commitments set in President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's July 2001 State of the Nation Address, the DOLE said it gave legal help in 906 cases of illegal recruitment involving 2,783 victims.

The PMS report, which covered the period following the SONA up to June 19, 2002, cited the DOLE for also handling and prosecuting 125 court cases involving 353 complainants.

To date, 12 illegal recruiters have been convicted. Four of them were sentenced to life imprisonment, the report said.

The DOLE conducted regular surveillance operations leading to the arrest of 26 suspected illegal recruiters and the closure of 40 establishments engaged in illegal recruitment.

Meanwhile, the agency has reduced the processing time and signatories for the documentation of OFWs with the implementation of its electronic link (E-Link) services.

By the end of June, the DOLE would have reduced OFW documentation time by 50 percent.

Land-based OFW documentation would go down to three hours from six hours while sea-based OFW documentation would take only six hours from 12 hours.

The agency has further installed a computerized system that would simplify and reduce the processing time for the Alien Registration System (ARS), the Private Recruitment and Placement System (PRPS) and the Special Program for Employment System (SPES).

The ARS processing time went down to eight hours from two days; the PRPS, to five minutes from one day; and the SPES, to eight hours from two days.

The DOLE has set up a 24-hour OFW hotline in the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration offices for document follow-ups and other queries.

Also launched was the OFW Electron Card to *Balik-Manggagawa* (Returning Workers) that would unify the transaction card for OFWs.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

The President's Day: June 21, 2002

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- **President's statement on Zamboanga encounter**
- **GMA declares 'Araw ng Maynila' as special non-working day in City**
- **Bush happy over neutralization of Sabaya group, GMA says**
- **Gov't winning fight against poverty in Ilocos**
- **GMA distributes land certificates to new landowners in Ilocos**
- **GMA reiterates need to privatize transmission, generation assets of Napocor**
- **GMA identifies Laoag airport as vital to RP tourism**
- **GMA directs peace-order council to ensure that Barangay polls remain non-partisan**
- **GMA announces arrest of Ativan Gang leader**
- **GMA elated over series of positive developments in fight against terrorism, criminality**
- **GMA distributes checks, farm and fisheries equipment for Ilocos Region beneficiaries**
- **Press statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in San Fernando, La Union at 6:10 P.M. today, June 21, 2002**

President's statement on Zamboanga encounter

SAN FERNANDO, La Union

This morning, there was an encounter between a unit of the Special Warfare Group (SWAG) of the Philippine Navy and the main Abu Sayyaf group led by Abu Sabaya aboard a boat, one kilometer off the coast of Sibuco in Zamboanga del Norte, at 4:30 this morning.

Three Abu Sayyaf members were wounded and jumped off their boat, while 4 others were captured. The captured Abu Sayyaf members confirmed that one of those who jumped into the sea was Abu Sabaya, who was wearing a black sweatshirt. The SWAG team also confirmed shooting the man in the black sweatshirt. Government forces are now scouring the coast for Sabaya, or his body.

I congratulate the Armed Forces for their continuing determination and tenacity to finish off the Abu Sayyaf. Even since Operation Daybreak began, we have seen the best fighting skills and courage among our soldiers. They deserve the accolade of our people.

Our no-ransom, no-negotiation policy is paying off. Terrorists will be hunted down relentlessly wherever they are, in the fastness of the jungle or in the high seas. They will be given no room to maneuver, to hide, or to rest. We will not stop until they are all accounted for.

GMA declares 'Araw ng Maynila' as special non-working day in City

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has declared Monday, June 24, 2002, as a special non-working day in the City of Manila.

In Proclamation No. 206 which she signed last June 10, 2002, the President said that every year, the City of Manila celebrates June 24 as "Araw ng Maynila" in commemoration of the founding of the city as the premier Christian City of Asia.

"Monday, June 24, 2002 marks the 431st Foundation Day Anniversary of the City of Manila," the President said.

The President said she issued the proclamation to give the residents of Manila, conscious of the historical and cultural significance of the event, the opportunity to celebrate "Araw ng Maynila" with appropriate ceremonies.

Bush happy over neutralization of Sabaya group, GMA says

SAN FERNANDO, La Union — United States President George W. Bush has expressed gladness over reports that notorious Abu Sayyaf leader and spokesman Aldam Tilao a.k.a. Abu Sabaya and his band of kidnapper-terrorists have been neutralized.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she had a phone conversation with President Bush, following reports that the military had tracked and fought it out with Abu Sabaya's group a kilometer off the coast of Sibuco, Zamboanga del Norte at about 4:30 this morning.

The President interrupted the meeting of the Ilocos Regional Development Council (RDC) here to announce that she "just talked with President Bush."

"He's happy that the Abu Sayyaf (problem) has been solved," she said.

"The *Balikatan* exercises will be finished on July 31 as scheduled," she added, referring to the joint RP-US military exercises being undertaken in Basilan province, lair of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf.

"But they are ready to schedule the next *Balikatan* exercises," she said.

Local officials and residents in Basilan and other parts of Mindanao have lately asked the government to extend the stay of, if not permanently allow, American troops participating in the *Balikatan* in the area.

The President also took time to monitor and report to the RDC meeting the latest developments in the military-Abu Sayyaf encounter.

Interrupting the meeting at times, the President said the military has recovered a satellite phone, dark glasses and bonnet believed to belong to Abu Sabaya, who along with two others, jumped into the sea during the firefight.

One of the soldiers was very sure he shot Abu Sabaya who was wearing a black sweat shirt, and fell down from the boat together with two others, she told the meeting. But Sabaya, dead or alive, has yet to be recovered.

Four others left in the Abu Sayyaf speedboat were captured, she added. Interrogation with the captured Abu Sayyaf members showed their three companions who jumped off the boat had gunshot wounds.

The President congratulated the military for aggressively monitoring the movement of Abu Sabaya's group who tried to get out of the Siocon, Siraway, Sibuco, Baliguian complex in Zamboanga del Norte.

The military has continued to scour the shorelines for Sabaya's body.

Gov't winning fight against poverty in Ilocos

SAN FERNANDO, La Union — Region I, composed of the four provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union and Pangasinan, and the eight cities of Laoag, Vigan, Candon, San Fernando, Urdaneta, Dagupan, San Carlos and Alaminos, is experiencing a big improvement in alleviating poverty.

During a presentation of the Ilocos Region socio-economic situationer to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the Joint Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) meeting at the Provincial Capitol here, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas said the number of poor families dropped from 47.9 percent in 1994 to 3.7 percent in 2000.

Canlas, however, said that the employment rate remained almost the same in 2000 and 2001 at 89.6 and 89.3 percent, respectively. These were a little bit higher compared to the country's 88.9 percent.

However, Canlas pointed out that the unemployment rate improved significantly, dropping from 20.1 to 12.7 percent in the two years, following the trend at the national level.

The region was also reported to have the highest percentage of households with sanitary toilets, at 90.6 percent. About 79.5 percent of its household have access to potable water, higher than the national average of 76.3 percent.

The President congratulated RDC Chairman and Pangasinan Gov. Victor Agbayani who reported to the Chief Executive that as of 2001, 99 percent of the barangays in the region have been energized.

Region I is located in the northwestern part of the country, whose coastline runs along the international sea lanes of the South China Sea.

It is the gateway to East and Southeast Asian countries. Travel from the Laoag International Airport to Hong Kong and Taiwan is less than one hour. It takes less than three hours to reach Singapore and about three and a half hours to Japan and Korea.

Aside from its location advantage, the region boasts of good roads and telecommunications facilities, adequate power supply, good peace and order situation and skilled manpower imbued with industrial discipline.

GMA distributes land certificates to new landowners in Ilocos

BANAYOYO, Ilocos Sur — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today distributed more than 70 hectares of land to beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) here, making at least 85 tenant-farmers into new landowners.

The President, assisted by Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Bragaza, Cabinet Officer for Regional Development (CORD) for Region 1 (Ilocos), personally handed over the Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs) to the farmer beneficiaries in a ceremony held here.

The farmers who received their CLOAs came all the way from the municipalities of San Juan, Sta. Maria and Santiago in Ilocos Sur; Malasiqui, Mangatarem, Rosales, Villasis and Tayug in Pangasinan; and Caba in La Union.

The 85 farmer beneficiaries are part of the 533 beneficiaries from the Ilocos region who were given lands under the CARP since the start of 2002.

According to Braganza, for the first half of the year alone, the DAR personnel in Region I have distributed a total of 726 hectares of land representing 88 percent of the target for 2002.

He pointed out that the latest accomplishment brought to 116,585 hectares the total area distributed under CARP in the Ilocos region, leaving a balance of only 2,211 hectares.

“For the entire region, we have accomplished 98 percent of the target as far as land acquisition and distribution is concerned. We can safely say that the land distribution in Region I is almost finished,” Braganza said.

GMA reiterates need to privatize transmission, generation assets of Napocor

BANAYOYO, Ilocos Sur — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reiterated the need to privatize the transmission and generation assets of the National Power Corporation (Napocor) to further reduce the cost of electricity for consumers.

In a speech here at the town plaza, the President also expressed the need for competition in the generation sector of the power industry as well as to come up with an imaginative and refinancing solutions for the Napocor.

The President took the opportunity to express her sadness over the recent drop of her net satisfaction rating which is perceived to be caused by the public perception of the controversial power purchased cost adjustment (PPCA) issue.

As a consumer herself, the President said she fully understands and feels the burden brought by the high monthly electricity rates to the consumers.

The President said consumers will eventually have the opportunity to choose where to buy their supply of electricity, adding that the power of choice will lead to the lowering of prices like in the telecommunications industry.

She explained that when the government deregulated the telecommunications sector, it took several years before the reduced cost of telephone bills was felt by the public.

With regards to the present problem on the PPCA, the Chief Executive asked for patience and understanding from the consumers but assured them that the reduction on the charges will be reflected in the electric billings starting this July.

President Macapagal-Arroyo recalled that last May 8, she directed the Napocor to lower its PPCA rates by as much as 40 centavos per kilowatt-hour on top of the 30-centavo reduction that she ordered in July last year.

She said the result of the review on contracts of independent power producers (IPP) will be made public by the end of this month, adding that those who will be found illegally exacting charges will not be spared from the law.

With the ongoing reforms being instituted in the power sector and the anticipated reduction of electricity bills in July, the President is optimistic that the Philippines will be downgraded to the sixth spot in the list of most expensive electric providers in the whole Asia. The Philippines is currently second to Japan.

Once these reforms take effect, the President said consumers will not only be freed from the burden of paying high cost of electricity but there will be renewed confidence among the investors and more infusion of fresh capital.

GMA identifies Laoag airport as vital to RP tourism

SAN FERNANDO, La Union — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today wished that the Laoag International Airport would attract more tourists from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China, especially this coming year, 2003, which is “Visit Philippines” year.

This should be like Thailand where tourism became popular because of its “Visit Thailand Year” promotion, the President said.

She added that she wanted the domestic tourism industry developed after the “Visit Philippines” in 2003, adding that Laoag is a most vital gateway for tourists coming from Taiwan, China and Hong Kong.

In a press briefing, Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo said that to achieve this goal, the President instructed the installation of needed facilities, like upgraded navigational aids, within 2002.

To address the needs of farmers and mitigate the effects of the El Nino phenomenon this year, the President directed the immediate release of P17 million, out of the P23 million allocated for agricultural and fisheries modernization, to fund projects like irrigation for Region 1.

The President also instructed Chief Presidential Legal Counsel, Avelino Cruz, Jr. to prepare the necessary document that would separate Poro Point in San Fernando, La Union, and Camp John Hay in Baguio.

The President said Camp John Hay would be under the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA), while Poro Point would be under the regulatory function of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA).

The ownership of both facility, however, would be retained by the BCDA, the President said. The separation of Poro Point from Camp John Hay would facilitate its development, the President said.

The San Fernando Airport would also be developed with Fedex committing to provide runway lighting facilities within three to six months. "This will allow night time landing at San Fernando Airport," Saludo said.

Another development is the petition from the local government executives of Region I to develop the Currimaog Port in Ilocos Norte.

The PPA, according to Saludo, is undertaking two things: updating the feasibility study which was done in 1993 and undertaking a program to upgrade the Currimaog port at a cost of P110 million. This would involve the expansion of the reclamation work, dredging and the construction of public utilities.

The President also announced that the North Luzon Growth Commission, which was abolished during the previous administration, has been restored.

GMA directs peace-order council to ensure that Barangay polls remain non-partisan

SAN FERNANDO, La Union — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today exhorted the members of the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) here to ensure that next month's barangay elections are not used as tools of insurgency.

During the joint meeting of the RPOC-Regional Development Council (RDC) at the Provincial Capitol here, the President expressed concern that rebel groups and other elements might to influence the elections and prevent the expression of the true will of the people.

The President said the barangay elections are non-partisan, therefore there should be no interference by partisan groups.

The President enjoined all government and other groups in society, including political blocs, to join hands in ensuring that there is democracy and free expression of the people's will in these elections.

"You should not be intimidated by groups who may use violence and other terror tactics in trying to influence your votes," Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo quoted the President as saying.

On the issue of patrol boats needed to back up the police for peace and order duties on municipal waters, the President has offered to provide P3 million as counterpart funding if the local government can come up with the rest of the money needed to purchase the boats.

GMA announces arrest of Ativan Gang leader

BANAYOYO, Ilocos Sur — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the arrest the leader of the Ativan Gang who was responsible for the series of robbery-holdup incidents, particularly the recent killing of a Korean diplomat.

In her speech here, the President identified the arrested suspect as Rodrigo Fabricante.

According to the President, the suspect was positively identified by the companion of the Korean diplomat who was killed by the said gang.

The President added that the suspect admitted that when they dumped the body of the Korean, the victim was still alive.

As for the Pentagon Gang escape, the President said she has instructed incoming Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. to immediately dismiss the guards who were directly involved in the escape of Pentagon leader Marohombsar Faisal

“I hope that these developments related to law enforcement augur well for our quest for peace and the personal safety of people who visit or live in our country,” the President said.

GMA elated over series of positive developments in fight against terrorism, criminality

BANAYOYO, Ilocos Sur — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed elation over a series of positive developments in the government’s drive against terrorism and criminality, topped by a successful military campaign against an Abu Sayyaf band headed by spokesman Abu Sabaya early this morning off the coast of Sibuco in Zamboanga del Norte.

In her brief remarks during the awarding of certificates of land ownership awards (CLOAs) to farmer-beneficiaries here, the President said the other piece of “good news” was the arrest, also today, of Rodrigo Fabricante, the alleged leader of the so-called Ativan gang, which was pinpointed as responsible for the kidnap slaying of Chong Young Ho, third secretary of the Korean embassy in Manila.

The President said that she was informed by police authorities that Fabricante was positively identified by the Korean companion of the victim.

According to the President, Fabricante admitted that when they dumped Chong’s body, he was still alive.

The President also said that former Mayor Ruben Ecleo, the leader of a religious cult, the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association (PBMA), has already been brought to Cebu City where he will be incarcerated and where he will face criminal charges, including parricide and complexity in the massacre of his wife’s family.

She also said that she has ordered incoming Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, to summarily dismiss from the service and to file criminal charges against all the guards responsible for the escape from Camp Crame of Marohombsar Faisal and two of his men.

“I hope that these developments related to law enforcement augur well for our quest for peace and personal safety of the people who visit or live in our country,” the President said.

GMA distributes checks, farm and fisheries equipment for Ilocos Region beneficiaries

BANAYOYO, Ilocos Sur — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today turned over some P7 million worth of checks as well as farm and fisheries equipment to qualified beneficiaries in the Ilocos Region.

The ceremony held here coincided with the birthday celebration of former Ilocos Sur Governor Luis “Chavit” Singson, which was held at a tobacco flue-curing barn here.

Among the items distributed by the President were 100 boxes of zinc mettalate, which is used to increase rice yield, one unit of four-wheel drive tractor, five units of multi-crop combined husker and thresher, and hybrid F1 seeds.

Instead of releasing funds from R. A. 7171 or the tobacco excise tax, the President said she was distributing the “goodies” as her gift for the birthday celebrator.

During the ceremony, the President also awarded 300 Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC) health cards to poor beneficiaries in San Fernando City, in La Union.

The checks handed over by the President will be used for the purchase of “*lambaklad*” or fishnets, rice and corn shellers, tractors, rice threshers, post-harvest facilities, motorized bancas and other farm equipment.

Part of the amount will also be used for the construction of potable water system, septic tanks, sanitation facilities and a hanging bridge.

One of the activities during the President’s visit here was a jobs fair organized by the Office of Presidential Adviser for Jobs Creation Luis Lorenzo, the Department of Labor and Employment, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Among those present at the ceremony were Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza, Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor, Ilocos Sur Governor Deogracias Victor Sabellano, Ilocos Norte Governor Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., and Ilocos Norte Representative Imee Marcos.

Press statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in San Fernando, La Union at 6:10 P.M. today, June 21, 2002

Kanina pong umaga tinawagan ako ng mga heneral para ibalitang nagsalpuhan kaninang madaling araw ang puwersa ng ating Armed Forces at ang pangkat ng Abu Sayyaf terrorist commander na si Abu Sabaya sa dagat malapit sa Zamboanga City.

Tiniyak sa akin ni General Ernesto Carolina, ang ating hinirang na South Commander, na tinamaan si Abu Sabaya at patay na. Hinahanap ngayon ang kanyang bangkay na nakitang nalaglag sa tubig at nalunod.

Marami na sa mga Abu Sayyaf ang nalagas. Kung hindi napatay, o nahuli ang iba sa kanila ay sumuko dahil sa takot sa ating mga sundalo. Malaki na ang hinina ng kanilang puwersa. Mula sa libu-libo ay malaki na ang nabawas sa kanilang lakas simula nang inilunsad natin ang ating kampanya laban sa terorismo, kasama na rin ang Balikatan exercises.

Mula sa dating kilos-hari sa Basilan at Sulu, ang Abu Sayyaf ngayon ay parang mga daga na nagtatago sa kanilang lungga. Mula sa pananambang, sila ngayon ang ating tinatambangan.

Mula sa panlulusob sila na ngayon ang sinasalakay. Baligtad na. Patuloy ang pagtugis natin sa mga natitirang Abu Sayyaf.

Ito’y pagpapatunay sa husay at tagumpay ng ating kampanya laban sa terorismo at pananakot ng mga bandido. Sa dahilang ito’y nagpapasalamat ako ng malaki sa kawal Pilipino na nagbubuwis ng buhay para sa ating kaligtasan.

Tinatanaw ko ang aking utang na loob at utang na loob ng buong bayan sa mga pangkaraniwang mamamayan sa Basilan, Zamboanga, Sulu at iba pang lugar sa Mindanao dahil sa kanilang suporta sa aking kampanya.

At nagpapasalamat ako sa nakararaming taong-bayan dahil sa kanilang pag-unawa, pasensiya, at panalangin para sa tagumpay ng ating pakay.

Hindi pa lubos ang ating kampanya laban sa terorismo. Marami pa tayong dapat gawin para sa katahimikan ng Mindanao at ibang bahagi ng ating bayan. Kaya naman may pakiusap ako sa ating sambayanan – habaan pa po ninyo ang inyong pang-unawa.

Kailangan po ng ating mga sundalo ang inyong panalangin at pang-unawa.

Inaasahan ko na bago bukas ng umaga ay may dagdag na impormasyon si General Carolina.

Kasabay nito'y patuloy ang ating pagtugis sa mga terorista. Sa tulong ninyo, walang imposible. Tatapusin natin ito. Magtutungan po tayo sa hamong ito.

Salamat po.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 21, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032304/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june21.htm>

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Farmers lives take off with GMA thrust on agricultural modernization

“Alam ko na matutupad ang aking pangarap na maiahon ang aking pamilya sa tulong ng pamahalaan (I know that government help can make my dream to give my family a better life come true).”

Donato C. Aquino, Jr., of Victoria, Laguna, is only one of the tens of thousands of farmers nationwide who are benefiting from the implementation of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) under the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

“Simula pa lang nang mag-apply ako bilang farmer-beneficiary ay naramdaman ko na iyon at ngayon nga ay nag-uumpisa na ang pagginhawa namin sa buhay (Since I applied as farmer-beneficiary, our way of life began improving),” Aquino said.

He noted the government's aggressiveness in carrying out projects on communal irrigation and water supply, electrification, post-harvest facilities, solar drying, rice production and milling, livestock production and farm-to-market roads.

True enough, the government has allocated some P37.2 billion for AFMA programs and projects for this year alone.

Of the total, P22.3 billion came from the General Appropriations Act and P14.9 billion, from the Land Bank of the Philippines (LandBank) and the Development Bank of the Philippines

A Presidential Management Staff (PMS) report showed that as of April 30, some P2.369 billion have been loaned out to 94,195 farmers through the LandBank and the Quedancor credit and guarantee programs.

The PMS report focused on accomplishments made vis-à-vis the commitments made by the President in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July 2001.

During the first four months of 2002, the government has established three livestock auction markets and upgraded two biogas digesters; conducted 118 training sessions benefiting 4,492 agricultural workers; participated in the Foodex Japan trade fair and conducted 14 local trade fairs, 14 market matching and three market assessment activities.

In research and development (R&D), AFMA funds went to 11 ongoing national R&D projects, provided scholarships and upgraded 20 R&D facilities.

“Our cooperative was provided technical assistance for our corn harvest requirement, moisture meter, and technologically-advanced corn dryer,” said Rodolfo Santos III, a farmer from San Miguel, Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

“Kasabay ng agricultural modernization, inaasahan din naming mapapabuti ang kabuhayan ng mas maraming magsasaka (With agricultural modernization, we look forward to more farmers getting the best in life),” Santos said.

Last year, the government allocated P29.75 billion and used some P24.21 billion for AFMA projects and programs. This was done immediately after President Macapagal-Arroyo took over the reins of government from former President Joseph Estrada in January 20.

Of the used AFMA funds, P9.17 billion went to loans given to 232,342 farmers. Part of the money also went to the crop insurances of 35,868 farmers and guaranteed loans of 36,016 farmers.

The PMS report said P4.64 billion went to irrigation projects that watered 17,378 new hectares of farmlands and rehabilitated 61,664 hectares more nationwide.

About P4.4 billion bankrolled the formation of three business alliances among 40 farmer-cooperatives; the conduct of market matching for a for 78 cooperatives; the launching of an Internet-based marketing network; and the conduct of 24 trade fairs, 13 trade missions and exhibits and eight farmers’ congresses.

Some P2.65 billion went to the construction of farm-to-market roads, 1,310 of which have been completed and 1,185 are ongoing; and the establishment of a mariculture park in Samal, Davao City.

Another P1.04 billion supported the programs of 49 research and development (R&D) networks and 11 R&D centers and provided 72 degree and 108 non-degree R&D scholarships.

The purchase and distribution of post harvest machineries and the construction of 576 post harvest facilities totaled P760 million.

Jury Manunggal, 38, farmer from Kilangan, Pagalungan, Maguindanao, lauded the opening of the Malitubog-Maridagao irrigation project late last year.

“Ngayong tapos na ito, makakatanim na kami ng palay. Ito ay magsisilbing puhunan namin habang may buhay, pati na ang susunod naming mga salinlahi (With the completion of the irrigation project, we can start planting rice. This will be our investment for life. Moreover, the next generation will benefit from it),” Manunggal said.

The PMS report said the President’s commitment to create a million jobs in the agriculture sector is on schedule.

As of April, a total of 872,000 jobs have been created, including 232,000 in AFMA-related programs and projects.

Last year, 852,000 jobs were generated. From January to April this year, another 22,443 jobs were created, the report added.

Balikatan to end in July, says GMA

SAN FERNANDO, La Union — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the current Balikatan exercise in Basilan will definitely end on July 31, 2002.

The President told local and Metro Manila media representatives during dinner last night that the American soldiers participating in the Balikatan exercise can now go down to the company level where previously their training operations were limited to the battalion headquarters level.

The President said she received a message from United States President George W. Bush giving clearance to the Americans forces to get closer to the combat lines with the Filipino soldiers for training purposes.

Once the current military exercise ends in July, another Balikatan program would be scheduled, the President disclosed. The site for the new war games, however, will still have to be determined, she added.

The clearance from President Bush for US soldiers to conduct training maneuvers in the company level and start another Balikatan security and defense exercise was relayed to the President by US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone during the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council meeting here yesterday.

The President also said Mr. Bush and the Americans were very happy that the Abu Sayyaf problem has virtually ended, with the successful military campaign against an Abu Sayyaf band led by spokesman and chieftain Abu Sabaya at 4:30 a.m. yesterday off the coast of Sibucu, Zamboanga del Norte

According to the President, sophisticated US war materiel and equipment like spy planes and night-vision goggles helped Filipino troops in tracking the movements of the Abu Sayyaf.

The President also disclosed that the leader of the Special Warfare Group (SWAG) responsible for the downfall of Abu Sabaya and the capture of four of his companions, Deputy Brigade Commander Ariel Querubin, was from Bauang, La Union,.

“You should be proud of his courage and bravery,” the President stressed, saying that Querubin and his brigade will be awarded medals of honor.

All roads lead to Lubao for historic wedding

LUBAO, Pampanga — For the First Family, their relatives, friends and supporters, all roads to the presidential hometown of Lubao, Pampanga on Monday, June 24.

The reason: Presidential son and Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel “Mikey” M. Arroyo, 33, will tie the knot with beautiful Maria Angelica A. Montenegro, 27.

The wedding rites will be held at the Saint Augustine (or San Agustin) Church in Barangay San Nicolas, only a few hundred meters away from the municipal building of Lubao, the only town that produced two Philippine Presidents.

The wedding is historic for the First Family not only because of its setting but also because they are giving away their eldest son who, on wedding day, is not just the duly-elected Vice Governor but also the acting governor of Pampanga in the absence of Gov. Manuel “Lito” Lapid who is in the United States.

The wedding is also historic because it brings together the incumbent President, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the bridegroom’s mother, and two former Presidents of the Republic – Corazon C. Aquino and Fidel V. Ramos – together with other prominent godparents like *Manila Bulletin* Chairman Dr. Emilio T. Yap – in the first such event to happen in Saint Augustine Church in Lubao, some 120 kilometers or an hour’s drive from Manila.

Made of brick, sand and stones mixed with egg albumen, the Saint Augustine Church is said to be the oldest church in Pampanga and the second oldest church in the Philippines, according to Mrs. Anita Salalila Limson whose father Miguel, a prominent tailor of the town, made one of the first pants of the late President Diosdado Macapagal.

A marker placed by the Philippine Historical Commission (now the National Historical Institute) and donated by Judge Pedro Bautista and his wife, Atty. Lourdes P. Macapagal-Bautista, showed that the church was founded in 1572 in Sta. Catalina near its present site. Thirty years later, or in 1602, the church moved to its present site, an entire block of about one hectare bounded by San Nicolas I Street, San Nicolas II Street and Sta. Lucia Street which leads to big fish farms and the nearby town of Sasmuan (formerly Sexmoan)

The chief architect of the Saint Augustine Church was Fr. Antonio Herrera.

The colorful history of church includes its having served as the seat of the revolution against Spain in 1898 when it was occupied by the “revolucionarios.” The following year in 1899, following the defeat of the Spanish armada in Manila Bay by Commodore George Dewey, the church was converted into a hospital by the American troops.

The Saint Augustine Church was destroyed by shelling of the Japanese troops during the war in 1942. Full restoration was undertaken in 1949 to 1952 under the leadership of the parish priest, Fr. Melencio Garcia.

Many famous natives of Lubao like President Diosdado Macapagal, and his brother-in-law, actor and former Ambassador Rogelio de la Rosa, and his actor-brother Jaime de la Rosa attended Mass at the Saint Augustine Church.

Unknown to many, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo’s father, President Diosdado Macapagal, was also baptized in the Saint Augustine Church. The young Macapagal, who was born on September 28, 1910 through midwife Escolastica Romero, was brought to the church by his parents Urbano and Romana Dadong for the baptism rites conducted by Fr. Francisco de la Banda on October 12, 1910 when he was only about a month old. Leading the sponsors then was one Angel Javier.

Cong Dadong’s baptism was recorded as the fourth entry on Page 38 of the Church’s Baptismal Book 32 by the parish priest, Fr. Pedro Diez.

Cong Dadong, who eventually became known as the “Poor Boy from Lubao” for his unprecedented feat, conquered extreme poverty to finish his education with highest honors, became bar topnotcher in 1936 and got his doctor of laws and doctor of economics from the University of Sto. Tomas. He was elected in 1949 as congressman of Pampanga and was reelected for a second term. In 1957, he was elected president of the Liberal Party and in 1961 he was elected as the fifth President of the Philippines in 1961 after his unsuccessful senatorial bid. After his presidency, he served as President of the 1971 Constitutional Convention. His term, which ended in 1965, was capped by his signing into law on August 8, 1963 of the Agricultural Land Reform Code which ended the centuries-old tenancy system in the country.

In his own words, the new law was his way to fight mass poverty in the country, an objective being pursued by his daughter, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and her son, Vice Governor Juan Miguel Arroyo, through his Mikey Against Poverty or MAP program.

Bush says GMA did world a great service by being tough against terrorists

United States President George W. Bush has hailed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo following the reported killing of Aldam Tilao alias Abu Sabaya in a clash with the Navy’s Special Warfare Group in the waters a kilometer off Mantibo Point, Sibuco, Zamboanga del Norte Friday.

Abu Sabaya was the leader and spokesman of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf group that abducted American missionary couple Martin and Gracia Burnham in a resort in Palawan last year.

According to wire reports, Bush said President Macapagal-Arroyo “did the world a great service.”

In his speech in Orlando, Florida, Bush cited the President “for being tough and firm and strong to help rid the world of this particular threat.”

“I want to congratulate the President of the Philippines. I appreciate her leadership and her strength,” he said.

“(The Abu Sayyaf) kidnapped. They killed. And today, their leader met his maker. Thanks to one of our coalition partners,” he added.

“It goes to show that by assembling a vast coalition of freedom-loving countries, that when we work together and are strong and are diligent, we can succeed. And that’s what’s going to happen,” he stressed.

US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld also welcomed the development and praised Philippine officials “for their continued battle against terrorism in their nation.”

Lt. Cmdr. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said American troops helped with planning, communications and intelligence-sharing for the naval operation against Abu Sabaya and his band.

GMA outlines 4 key principles in search for peace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today outlined four principles she said represented the national consensus in the search for lasting and meaningful peace throughout the country.

In her keynote speech during the 2nd Mindanao Budget Summit at the EDSA Shangri-la Hotel in Mandaluyong City, the President said the “ultimate objective should be both peace and development,” one working simultaneously with the other.

“A second principle is that our framework should be based on constitutionality, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity,” she said.

The third principle is the recognition of Philippine society as a multi-ethnic one.

Thus, all efforts to gain peace “should be founded on social justice for all and the institutionalized accommodation of ethnic traditions, Christian and Muslim, Chinese and Spanish, Tagalog and Cebuano,” she added.

The President noted a fourth operational principle: “In our search for peace, there is no role for terrorism or inhuman brutality.”

She said such acts should be universally condemned and addressed decisively.

She told her audience, composed of Mindanao’s leaders, that the government, in dealing with terrorism and criminal activity in some areas of southern Philippines, has always banked on the principle “that all reasonable efforts must be exerted to safeguard the lives of innocent victims, such as hostages.”

“But when it becomes necessary to use our police and military forces, we must extend them full moral and material support, for their lives are at stake,” she urged the Mindanao officials.

In her speech, the President also called the meeting between her and Mindanao officials “a great day,” coming at the heels of the reported killing of notorious Abu Sayyaf leader and spokesman Aldam Tilao a.k.a. Abu Sabaya in a clash with the Navy’s Special Warfare Group off the coast of Sibuco, Zamboanga del Norte Friday.

“I think the Lord planned this day. I think the Lord wants me to use this occasion to reaffirm today our determination to enforce law and order,” she said.

“The people must be safe in their homes and places of work. They must be safe not only in the cities but in the farms in the hinterlands,” she added.

“The Abu Sayyaf is virtually finished. We must not stop until we account for all of them,” she stressed, as she renewed this commitment before the Mindanao leaders, the people they represent, and the people of the whole of Mindanao.

She also resolved to further “strengthen the capability and discipline of our military and police forces,” as she took time to once again praise the troops “who stand heavy fire on land or at sea” and “who stand guard in far away detachments.”

“We shall upgrade the high quality of soldiering we already have. We shall put the police back in the high regard of the public. We shall modernize equipment and facilities,” she said.

The President also cited the big help of American troops participating in the ongoing RP-US joint *Balikatan 02-1* exercises in Mindanao. “We shall continue to train with our foreign allies,” she said.

She reiterated her government’s resolve to wipe out the problem of poverty in Mindanao, and elsewhere in the country.

“Our problem in Mindanao is rooted in economic exclusion. The axis of poverty is often crossed by the axis of terrorism,” she said.

“I am not saying that poverty is the cause of terrorism. Evil is the cause of terrorism. But poverty and the sense of powerlessness it brings are the spawning grounds where terrorism can more easily spread its evil ideology. The war against terrorism is also a war against poverty,” she stressed.

GMA stresses resolve to strengthen law, order

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has directed Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes to “keep the Marine battalion in the Socsargen (South Cotabato-Saranggani-Gen. Santos City) area” to help hunt down escaped Pentagon kidnap gang leader Faisal Marohombsar.

In her speech before the 2nd Mindanao Budget Summit at Edsa Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong, the President said “we will hunt him down.”

She said “the Marine battalion was supposed to be moved out of Socsargen and brought to Sulu to help catch the rest of the Abu Sayyaf,” in stepped-up operations following the reported killing of Abu Sayyaf leader and spokesman Aldam Tilao alias Abu Sabaya.

She stressed that her administration would strengthen law and order “because we want to free our people from the tyranny of lawlessness and terrorism.”

On Marohombsar’s escape, the President said she has told Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, General Leandro Mendoza and incoming Philippine National Police chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane that “they must immediately discharge the guards who were in-charge of guarding the Pentagon Gang leader, aside from charging them criminally.”

She said Ebdane has accepted the challenge of eliminating kidnapping within one year. “He has put his job on the line in his promise to comply with that challenge,” she said.

The President made a similar proposal for the Pasay City policemen who botched a hostage-taking drama that involved a four-year old boy.

“I feel the move they made transferring the policemen of Pasay City and putting them all under training is good but it’s weak. They should have dismissed immediately the ones who were directly involved,” she added.

“That is going to be our new ethic in the drive for peace and order,” she said.

“Anybody who makes a blunder will be discharged as well as charged immediately,” she stressed, adding that Mendoza and Ebdane have vowed to account for the fugitives.

In efforts to strengthen law and order, the President said she was not speaking only of the rich and privileged.

“I am speaking of ordinary people who get held up in jeepneys or who get victimized by snatchers in the streets. I am speaking of the likes of Ediborah Yap who had to endure poverty only to fall into the hands of terrorists. I am speaking of the people of Mindanao who earn their money through sweat only to be taken by bandits,” she said.

GMA says BIMP-EAGA security crucial in restoring investor confidence

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today noted the importance of putting the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP EAGA) back on track.

But the President noted that enhanced security cooperation between and among member countries of the regional trading group was imperative to restore investor confidence in the area.

In her speech keynoting the 2nd Mindanao Business Summit at the EDSA Shangri-la in Mandaluyong City, the President cited the crucial role of the trilateral agreement on security recently signed between the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia.

“The trilateral agreement should strengthen border controls to enable the country signatories to apprehend criminals and terrorists plying our common waters,” she said.

She recounted that when she and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad witnessed the signing of the pact in Kuala Lumpur, the Prime Minister urged immediate action on strengthening the border patrols of the three country signatories.

She said she had also discussed the same topic with Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes.

“We should work out immediately the joint patrols with our two neighboring countries (Malaysia and Indonesia) so that we could prevent another hijacking of tugboats the way it happened a few days ago,” she added.

In her speech, the President hoped that the travel tax exemption extension she allowed until 2004 would further increase the mobility of people in the Asean region.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) is a regional development grouping composed of the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar.

In a recent report to Malacañang, the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) said the government is on schedule in ably setting up the mechanisms, structures and policies to revitalize the BIMP-EAGA.

Besides spurring regional investments, trading and tourism, the BIMP-EAGA is proving itself as a venue to promote Mindanao and Palawan as the country’s gateway to the Asean region.

The PMS report, which outlined the accomplishment of commitments President Macapagal-Arroyo made during her July 2001 State of the Nation Address, reported the operation of various air and sea routes linking Mindanao and Palawan to trade and tourism centers in the BIMP-EAGA.

Since last year, the Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco) and other state agencies have pushed confidence building measures with BIMP-EAGA counterparts that led to the opening of air and sea passenger and

cargo services between Davao and Manado; Zamboanga, Tawi-Tawi, Sabah and Sandakan; Zamboanga, Tawi-Tawi, and Tawau; and Manila and Brunei Darussalam.

Officials are in talks for the use of Brunei's Muara Port as a transshipment point.

At the same time, business linkages and arrangements have been completed between and among the Brunei Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Maguindanao Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

There are similar discussions with Malaysian investors on ventures in oil palm production and extraction in mainland Mindanao.

Other ongoing trade talks are on the BIMP-EAGA-China and North Asia Relations that include the establishment of an Asean Promotion Center in Seoul, South Korea and the EAGA food supply network for China and North Asia.

A request has also been submitted to extend until 2004 the Uniform Port Tariff Agreement between the Philippines and Brunei.

The PMS report noted that government has pursued joint tourism marketing and promotions through familiarization tours and the development of joint tourism packages.

It has also expanded exchange programs through technical training through the BIMP-EAGA-sponsored Vocational Exchange Program. A group of Indonesian students recently completed the program.

Further, BIMP-EAGA officials have entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) that harmonized customs, immigration, quarantine and security (CIQS) rules and policies.

The MOA created a CIQS Inter-Agency Committee and a One-Stop Action Center for CIQS.

More importantly, the BIMP-EAGA has brought about increased cooperation in border security between and among the BIMP member-countries.

The BIMP-EAGA revitalization would practically put back Mindanao and Palawan in the radar screens of regional trading, tourism and security.

GMA to discuss conduct of more joint RP-US military exercises with Bush

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she expects to discuss with United States President George W. Bush, who she said would call her up tonight, the future of the joint RP-US *Balikatan* military exercises.

"Tonight, President Bush will call me up about many things, But I'm sure the *Balikatan* will be part of it," the President said.

In her speech before the 2nd Mindanao Budget Summit at Edsa Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City, the President said the *Balikatan* 02-1 would end on July 31 as scheduled, but she had instructed Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu to work out the details of the next *Balikatan* in the Mutual Defense Board meeting in Hawaii on Thursday.

"I told Gen. Cimatu and Secretary Reyes to make sure that it goes down the line," the President said.

“I’ve already said that even through each other’s officials, that while the military training portion of *Balikatan* 02-1 will end on July 31, we shall start the next *Balikatan* immediately because the Mutual Defense Board is meeting on Thursday,” she said.

“So by the time that July 31 comes, I hope that they have the next *Balikatan* already worked out,” she added.

The President said unlike *Balikatan* 02-1, she wanted the next one to be more geographically spread out.

“As a result of the clamor from people all over the country, this time, the *Balikatan* will be more geographically spread out unlike this *Balikatan*, which upon my request, had been concentrated in Basilan,” she said.

The President said she would inaugurate the Basilan Airport, which was renovated by the American Seabees, before July 1 to highlight the many contributions of the foreign troops.

Aside from the airport, the Seabees is constructing the Basilan circumferential road, an infrastructure that Basilan folk aspired for over the years.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: June 22, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032319/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june22.htm>

The President's Day: June 23, 2002

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- **Lower electric bills expected in July**
- **GMA urges agencies to realign budgets with regional development plans**
- **GMA pushes for modern key transport facilities in Mindanao**
- **Lubao spruced up for favorite son's wedding tomorrow**
- **Canlas says GNP, GDP forecast for 2002 achievable**

Lower electric bills expected in July

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday Filipinos should expect their electricity bills to further decrease next month.

The President announced in her speech before the Second Mindanao Budget Summit at the EDSA Shangri-la in Mandaluyong City that she had ordered the National Power Corporation (Napocor) since May 8 to reduce their Purchased Power Cost Adjustment.

"When I told Napocor to bring it down to 40 centavos, this will now be reflected in the July billings," she said.

As result, the President said, the Philippines will come down from No. 2 to No. 6 of East Asia's most expensive country in terms of electricity rate.

"We will jump over four other countries in terms of competitiveness," she said.

Energy Secretary Vicente Perez had announced earlier that the decrease would be as much as 20 percent in the billings of power consumers within the franchise area of the Manila Electric Company (Meralco), which covers more than three-fourths of Luzon.

The latest decrease in power rates is on top of the mandated rate reduction of 30 centavos per kilowatt-hour for residential consumers implemented every month since July 2001.

Perez noted that an ongoing review of contracts of independent power producers will be completed by the end of June and if companies were found to have violated the law, they would have to face its consequences.

GMA urges agencies to realign budgets with regional development plans

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has instructed all concerned government departments and agencies to realign their regional budgets based on development programs for each area or region.

The President announced these instructions during her keynote speech yesterday at the Second Mindanao Budget Summit at the Edsa Shangri-la Hotel in Mandaluyong City.

The President said departments and other concerned agencies should not make their own regional programs separate from area-based development plans.

She said she has observed that area-based development plans are not funded because departments are doing their own regional budget priorities.

"They would say 'what are your proposed projects outside the development areas' because they thought development areas would have their special budget from outside their departments, which was not so," she said.

“Let me make it clear. These area development plans must be the regional development plans of the national departments as well,” she added.

The President stressed that the government is pursuing development projects and, at the same time, exercising fiscal discipline as a strategy for progress.

“The fiscal discipline that I exercised last year was the litmus test for the capital markets. That’s the reason why we graduated from negative to stable according to the international credit-rating agencies,” she said.

The President said fiscal discipline has led to the present low rates in interest and inflation as well as the stable peso.

“If we bloat our deficit in the name of more projects, even if it’s for projects in Mindanao, it will be more counterproductive. It will result in one-way inflation, sky-high interest rates and peso devaluation. It would not be worth all those projects,” she added.

GMA pushes for modern key transport facilities in Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has cited the importance of modernizing key transport facilities in Mindanao.

In her speech before the Second Mindanao Budget Summit yesterday at the EDSA Shagri-la in Mandaluyong City, the President cited the establishment of the P2 billion Mindanao International Container Terminal in Misamis Oriental.

The terminal has been designed to meet the increasing demands for cargo movement to and from Cagayan de Oro and Iligan cities.

The President also recalled that she had supervised the formulation of the master plan for the Cagayan de Oro-Iligan growth corridor while she was still Trade and Industry Undersecretary.

A landmark project under the plan was the construction of the Laguindingan Airport. “I am dismayed that it is not yet on the ground,” she said.

She instructed incoming Transportation and Communication Secretary Leandro Mendoza “to give it the highest priority.”

The President also said that work to upgrade the airports in Tawi-Tawi, Cotabato, Pagadian, Butuan and Dipolog should be given immediate consideration.

“The Asian Development Bank, exasperated by the five-year delay (in implementation), actually gave notice of project cancellation. But we have been able to save Dipolog and Butuan and we’re trying to save Pagadian and Cotabato,” she said.

“We do need to have some technical competence to be able to bring development, not only verbose pronouncements and strong words of support and braggadocio,” she stressed.

Meanwhile, the Mindanao Container Terminal Project (MCTP), Phase II Bulk and Food Terminal covers the extension of the existing 300- meter MCTP Phase I berth by 200 meters, the provision of a wharf bulk loader and unloader for easier cargo handling, and the expansion of support facilities and office.

The MCTP Phase II will be located on the shoreline of Macajalar Bay at Tagoloan, some 17 kilometers northeast by road from Cagayan de Oro City.

Its site is within the vicinity of the industries at PHIVIDEDEC Industrial Estate-Misamis Oriental (PIE-MO) adjacent to the MCTP Phase I.

Of the total cost of \$40.9 million (P2.043 billion), around 60 percent will be funded under the Special Yen Loan Package (SYLP) while the remaining 40 percent will be shouldered by local counterpart funds.

The MCTP Phase II will cater to bulk cargos like fertilizer, animal feeds, grains, rice/palay and sugar.

The project is also expected to ease the already heavily congested Cagayan de Oro Base Port.

The MCTP Phase II has been designed to handle 2.3 million tons of dry and break bulk cargoes and accommodate the berthing of one 20,000 deadweight ton (DWT) vessel to two 150 DWT vessels.

Supporting facilities include terminal operation building, transit shed, maintenance shop, generator house and canteen and port workers room.

Project construction is expected to begin in 2003 and will be fully operational by 2006.

Lubao spruced up for favorite son's wedding tomorrow

LUBAO, Pampanga – Lubao, the only town in the country to have produced two Philippine presidents, has been spruced up for the historic wedding tomorrow of another favorite son, presidential son and Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel “Mikey” M. Arroyo to beautiful Maria Angela Montenegro.

For one, big streamers are now flying in many parts of the town welcoming and congratulating President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, her son Mikey and future daughter-in-law Maria Angelica.

The improvements are simple and the budget modest compared to the wedding of then-presidential daughter Irene R. Marcos and a scion of a prominent family, Gregg Araneta, also in a historic setting – the old Spanish church of Sarrat in Ilocos Norte, hometown of the late President Ferdinand Marcos.

Lubao will be the main beneficiary of the big event. This is the reason why Lubao folk are awaiting the wedding with great anticipation.

Mrs. Anita Salalila Limson and Vivian Turla Queri, whose houses stand beside the Saint Augustine Church, said they were thankful President Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice Governor Mikey chose their hometown as the site for the wedding.

“We are on a vantage point during the wedding and important event in our town because our houses are adjacent to the church. We are looking forward to this event on Monday,” they chorused.

For one, the nation will be focused once again on the town, they said. Still, some infrastructures in the town like bridges, roads and drainage canals leading to the Saint Augustine Church were improved in time for the wedding.

The 491-year-old Saint Augustine Church is the biggest beneficiary of the event. The church where Mikey's grandfather, President Diosdado Macapagal, was baptized on October 12, 1910, underwent a major facelift, especially its interiors.

To make everybody comfortable during the wedding ceremony which will start at 10 a.m., heavy-duty Carrier and Koppel air-conditioning units have been installed inside the church. Some 600 to 700 people could be accommodated inside during the wedding ceremonies.

The church's front yard, which is about half a hectare, was also given a facelift.

About a dozen split-type air conditioners were also installed at a newly-built fully enclosed white canvas tent with wooden flooring at the church courtyard dwarfed and dotted by centuries old trees, a centuries-old brick house for the priests and several buildings of the church-run Holy Rosary Academy.

To ensure that there will be no power disruption during the wedding and reception, a mobile power generator was installed at the back of the church.

Bishop Paciano Aniceto of the Archdiocese of Pampanga will officiate the wedding. He will be assisted by Fr. Rodolfo de Guzman, parish priest of Saint Augustine Church, and Fr. Pat Lim, parish priest of La Vista Church in Quezon City where the First Family resides.

The colorful wedding ceremonies will highlight the creations of couturier Pitoy Moreno (barong), Joe Salazar (wedding gowns), Ronnie Ong (cake), Tony Parsons of 517 (floral arrangement) and the Ateneo Glee Club Choir and String Minstrels (music).

Key participants in the ceremonies will be the parents of the bride and groom – President Gloria and First Gentleman Mike for Mikey and Rosario “Charito” Arroyo and German Montenegro for the bride.

Main sponsors are former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel V. Ramos, Sen. Loren Legarda Leviste, Georgina de Venecia, wife of Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr.; Enrique Aboitiz, Salvacion Villaraza, presidential brother Diosdado Macapagal Jr., *Manila Bulletin* Chairman Dr. Emilio Yap, Mario Cruel and Norma Chan.

Mikey's brother, Diosdado “Dato” Arroyo, will be the best man; Emily Montenegro Yupangco, matron of honor; Rose Montenegro and Evangelina “Luli” Arroyo, maid of honor. The secondary sponsors are Alex Macapagal and Joanne Dawns, Greg Montenegro (candle) and Marinella Montenegro (veil) and Rafael Mondragon and Cetrin Datok (cord).

Presidential social secretary Betina Aboitiz will be the overall supervisor of the ceremonies.

After the Church wedding, the newlyweds and entourage and guests will proceed to the church courtyard for the celebration and reception which will approximate a barrio fiesta.

Food for the churchyard reception — consisting of an all-Filipino fare like lechon, halo-halo, crispy crablets, pancit luglog, tibok-tibok and a variety of seafoods — will be prepared by the Plaza and Cabalen. Caterer for the evening reception at Malacañang Palace will be the Manila Hotel and Graitto Forest.

Only a week before their wedding, Mikey Arroyo and Angela Montenegro were visibly happy and “a bit nervous,” said Claire Morales True, herself a native of Lubao, the vice governor's media consultant. The bride and bridegroom were at the Saint Augustine Church last June 18 for the final practice for their wedding ceremonies together with other principal participants of the wedding. “Happy because we have found our perfect partner but a bit nervous because, understandably, we are undergoing this process only once in a lifetime,” the couple said.

After the wedding, Mikey will take a leave as Pampanga's acting governor, duly-elected vice governor and presiding officer of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan. He and Angela will fly to the United States for their honeymoon.

Canlas says GNP, GDP forecast for 2002 achievable

Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas has remained confident that the country would attain the full year forecast of 4 to 4.5 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth and the 4.5 to 5 percent gross national product (GNP) growth.

In a memorandum for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Acting Executive Secretary Avelino Cruz, Jr. cited a report from Canlas that said the country posted a higher GDP growth compared to four other countries in the Asian region.

These are Malaysia which posted a 1.1 GDP growth; Indonesia, 2.2 percent; Singapore, -1.7 percent; and Taiwan, 0.9 percent.

Only China, which posted a 7.6-percent GDP growth, and South Korea, which had a 5.7-percent GDP growth, registered higher rates than the Philippines.

Canlas has reported that while agriculture grew by 4.4 percent due to the rising production of crops, fishery and forestry, a slowdown is expected because of the occurrence of the El Niño weather phenomenon in the last quarter of the year.

But he said the continued strength in services and a pick-up in industrial growth would offset the slower annual growth of agriculture.

Highlight of the Canlas report showed that:

- The GNP, adjusted for inflation, grew by 4.9 percent, exceeding the government forecast of 4.3 to 4.8 percent. The GNP was buoyed by income from abroad that rose by 22.5 percent and the GDP which grew by 3.8 percent.
- Growth in personal consumption, especially in telecom-munications, reached 3.4 percent. Fixed capital investments increased by 2.8 percent but total investments fell 1.3 percent due to the drawdown of inventories to meet domestic demand.
- Net exports improved 19.1 percent as the decline in exports slowed to 2.9 percent.
- On the production side, services led with a 4.8-percent growth followed by agriculture at 4.4 percent. Industry strengthened at a rate of 1.9 percent due to mining and quarrying that rose 35.8 percent. Construction grew 1.5 percent; food manufacturing, 9.1 percent; and electrical machinery, 13.4 percent. However, the utilities sector dipped by 8.8 percent.
- In services, communications grew 19.6 percent; trade, 5.3 percent; and private services, 5 percent. Among private services, medical services grew by 8.3 percent while business services went up 8.2 percent. Real estate rebounded 6.9 percent while the banking sector, dragged by non-performing loans, continued to suffer.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 23, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032333/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june23.htm>

The President's Day: June 24, 2002

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- **Presidential son 'Mikey' Arroyo weds Angela Montenegro in simple rites in Lubao**
- **Pope wishes Mikey and Angela abundance of joy and peace**
- **Palace calls on public utility firms to defer planned rate, fee hikes**
- **Lubao: a historic town awakens**
- **A simple but elegant wedding**

Presidential son 'Mikey' Arroyo weds Angela Montenegro in simple rites in Lubao

LUBAO, Pampanga — Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel “Mikey” Arroyo, eldest son of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, today exchanged vows with Ms. Angela Montenegro in simple but solemn rites held this morning at the 430-year-old St. Augustine Church here.

The venue of the wedding is the same church where the late President Diosdado Macapagal, the bridegroom's grandfather, was baptized on Oct. 12, 1910.

The President, elegant in her celadon Filipina dress, arrived at the church grounds at exactly 9:30 a.m. With her were the First Gentleman, Mikey, second son Dato, and daughter Evangeline “Luli” Macapagal-Arroyo.

Upon her arrival at the church, the President was warmly welcomed by her *cabalens* who were gathered at the church grounds since early morning.

The President shook hands with her *cabalens* and greeted them in *Capampangan*.

In an interview before the start of the wedding ceremonies, Mikey said that he was both excited and happy over his wedding to Angela. He said because of his excitement, he only slept for three hours the night before.

Mikey also stressed that earlier, his parents asked him to be a “good husband” to Angela. He said that he and Angela would fly to San Francisco, California, on June 28 for their honeymoon.

Former President Fidel Ramos, who was one of the principal sponsors in the wedding, arrived at exactly 9:00 a.m. He wore a barong Tagalog.

Former President Corazon C. Aquino, also one of the principal sponsors, who wore a simple peach attire, was escorted by her son, Tarlac Congressman Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III.

The bride's father, Herman Montenegro, escorted her daughter Angela, in walking down the aisle. He then “gave away” her daughter to Mikey who waited for them at the altar.

The historic church was packed with some 600 invited guests. The wedding rites were officiated by Bishop Paciano Aniceto of the Archdiocese of Pampanga.

Aside from Mrs. Aquino and Ramos, the other principal sponsors were Don Emilio Yap, Diosdado “Boboy” Macapagal, Jr., Mario Cruel, Enrique Aboitiz, Jr., Mrs. Norma Chan, Mrs. Gina de Venecia, Senator Loren Legarda-Leviste, and Mrs. Salvacion Villaraza.

Pope wishes Mikey and Angela abundance of joy and peace

LUBAO, Pampanga — His Holiness Pope John Paul II today greeted the newly-wed presidential son and Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel “Mikey” Arroyo and Angela Montenegro and wished the couple an abundance of joy and peace in their married life.

The Pontiff’s message, which was sent through Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines Archbishop Antonio Franco, was read by officiating priest Pampanga Bishop Paciano Aniceto shortly before the prayer of the faithful portion of the concelebrated mass.

“On the happy occasion of their wedding, the Holy Father invokes an abundance of joy and peace upon Juan Macapagal-Arroyo and Angela Montenegro,” the Pope’s message said.

The Pontiff also said he prays that, strengthened and sustained by the grace of the Holy Sacrament of the Holy Matrimony, the Christian union of Mikey and Angela “will always be marked by mutual love, respect and fidelity and by unflinching harmony and confidence in meeting the challenges of family life.”

“As a pledge of God’s continuing assistance, His Holiness cordially imparts to them and to all present at the ceremony his apostolic blessing,” the message added.

According to Bishop Aniceto, the Pope’s message was signed by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State of the Vatican, and by the Papal Nuncio.

The couple exchanged vows this morning at a simple wedding ceremony held at the historic St. Augustine Church here.

The historic church was the same church where the late President Diosdado Macapagal, the bridegroom’s grandfather, was baptized on October 12, 1910.

More than 600 prominent guests attended the Arroyo-Montenegro nuptial. Thousands more of the President’s *cabalens* gathered at the church grounds to witness the wedding rites touted to be the wedding of the year.

Also present were some movie stars and friends of Mikey in the movie industry as well as local officials and prominent businessmen.

Palace calls on public utility firms to defer planned rate, fee hikes

Malacañang today urged public service and utility companies to try to at least defer any planned rate increase to relieve the people from additional financial burdens.

Acting Press Secretary and concurrent Presidential Management Staff Chief Silvestre Afable, Jr. said that at this time, it is best for all that the best means should be sought so as not to implement any rate increase for public utilities.

In his regular press briefing at Malacañang, Afable said there were rumors that the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and other utilities wanted to raise their rates.

There are also possibilities that the South and North Luzon Expressways might increase their toll fees.

Afable said that if the reports were true, Malacañang would encourage these public firms to find a win-win solution to the problem.

He said any increases in rates and fees would definitely hurt the pockets of people since consumers later would have to shoulder such increases.

“Well, as we have seen from the effect of the PPA (power purchase adjustment), *talaga namang nahihirapan ang mga tao* (the consumers really suffered),” he stressed.

“The Palace would urge and encourage all public utility companies to find the best means by which they can relieve the burdens of our people at this time,” he added.

Lubao: a historic town awakens

LUBAO, Pampanga — Unknown to many, Lubao is a giant and historical town in its own right. It is one of the oldest towns in Pampanga, if not in the entire Central Luzon, having been founded by the Malayans. It was already an established settlement with local government headed by Rajah Macabulos when the first Spaniards led by Martin de Goiti set foot on its soil and “founded” it in September 1571.

Composed today of a total of 15,731.11 hectares and 44 barangays – the biggest of any town in the country – with a population of about 130,000, Lubao got its name from the Spaniards who baptized it “Lo Bajo” and eventually corrupted to Lubao.

The Augustian friars led by the Reverend Juan Callegos built the town’s first church, the Saint Augustine Church, the venue of the Arroyo-Montenegro wedding this morning, in 1572.

Records also showed that the first printing press in the country was established in the Saint Augustine Church in 1602.

Lubao became the capital of the Philippine Revolutionary government under General Emilio Aguinaldo in 1898. The Saint Augustine Church became the temporary and emergency seat of the Aguinaldo government when it fled from the Americans in 1898. In fact, one of the leading citizens of Lubao, Don Leandro Ibarra, occupied a prominent position in the revolutionary government, that of Secretary of Interior.

During the Second World War, a big warehouse and bodega in the town served as arsenal of the American Army, thus making it one of the main targets of the Japanese bombing missions.

The infamous Death March passed through Lubao. During those trying times, the people of Lubao exerted efforts to help the marchers by giving them food or medicines at the very risk of their own lives. In fact, many marchers escaped through the support and encouragement of the Lubao people although many more perished due to sickness and hunger.

During the Japanese occupation, underground movements or guerrilla units of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) and the Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon (Hukbalahap) were organized in Lubao and had endless encounters with the Japanese soldiers.

Despite producing in 1961 its first Philippine President, Diosdado Pangan Macapagal, Lubao has not grown by leaps and bounds as expected during his time.

President Macapagal, mainly due to his personal virtues of honesty, commitment, integrity, deep love and fear of God, did not concentrate and pour in projects to his hometown as his successor, Ferdinand Marcos, did for his home province of Ilocos Norte.

But Macapagal could be credited for initiating the North Luzon Expressway and the Epifanio de los Santos Ave. (EDSA) which cut short travel time to Pampanga, triggering faster development of the province much later.

Macapagal's issuance of the Agrarian Reform Law in 1963 also brought improved peace and order not only to Pampanga, then the hotbed of the Hukbalahap, or Huk, movement and communist insurgency, but to the entire Central Luzon region.

The post-Diosdado Macapagal era brought Lubao back to sleep.

With the ascent of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in 2001 to the Presidency and the eventual election of her eldest son, Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, as vice governor of Pampanga, Lubao suddenly awakened from its deep sleep.

With a President in the Malacañang Palace and a Vice Governor, now acting Governor, at the Provincial Capitol in San Fernando City, the people of Lubao have high hopes for a faster and better development of their town in the coming years. Already, some projects have been poured into the town by the Arroyo administration. Pampanga's Governor, Manuel "Lito" Lapid is currently in the United States.

The people of Lubao — which now has a youthful mayor, Dennis G. Padilla, and a member of the Provincial Board Member in the person of his mother and former mayor, Lilia G. Pineda — are expecting more from the Arroyo administration to make Lubao, once the capital town of the Philippines and a center of printing in the country during the Spanish times, a premier municipality in the country again.

A simple but elegant wedding

LUBAO, Pampanga — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today witnessed the union in marriage of her son, Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo to lovely Ma. Angela Montenegro in simple rites at the 491-year old St. Augustine Parish Church here.

Accompanied by First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, the President led her family, relatives and friends to the simple yet very much elegant morning wedding.

White flowers, which included roses, chrysanthemums and hydrangeas, highlighted the aisle of the newly refurbished St. Augustine Church as bright lights flooded the church's interior and altar.

Made of brick, sand and stones mixed with egg albumen, the St. Augustine Church in Barangay San Nicolas is said to be the oldest church in Pampanga, and the second oldest church in the Philippines.

Unknown to many, the President's father, President Diosdado Macapagal was baptized in the parish church. The young Macapagal, who was born on September 28, 1910 through midwife Escolastica Romero, was brought to the church by his parents Urbano and Romana.

Fr. Francisco de la Banda conducted Diosdado's baptism on Oct. 12, 1910 when he was only about a month old.

Principal sponsors in the Arroyo-Montenegro nuptial included former Presidents Fidel V. Ramos and Corazon Aquino, Sen. Loren Legarda-Leviste, Don Emilio Yap, Gina de Venecia, Norma Chan and Salvacion Villarasa, Diosdado Macapagal Jr., Mario Cruel and Enrique Aboitiz Jr.

As in keeping with the Filipino motif, the *Ninangs* were in peach *Filipiniana* ensembles while the *Ninongs* were in *pina* barongs.

The march, led by Mikey's brother Diosdado "Dato" Arroyo, was undertaken to the tune of Con Te Partiro, Pachelbel Canon in D and songs like the Promise.

Other songs during the ceremony included Tanging Yaman, Lead Me Lord, Theme from the Ice Castle, Panunumpa, Anima Christi, The Prayer, Take and Receive and Sa 'Yo Lamang.

Clad in a celadon green terno, the President walked down the aisle unaccompanied as Atty. Arroyo walked in tandem with the bride's mother, Charito Montenegro, while the father of the bride escorted Ma. Angela.

A beautiful sight to behold, Ma. Angela was clad in a gown made of *pina* with a detachable embroidered and beaded *panuelo* worn with an old heirloom tiara.

Mikey was in a *Barong Tagalog* circa 19th century with tiny embroidery evoking the peace dove floating on geometric *callado* designs on the edges.

Other members of the entourage included Emily Montenegro Yupangco, matron of honor; Rose Montenegro and Evangeline Lourdes "Luli" Arroyo, maid of honor. The secondary sponsors were Alex Macapagal and Joanne Downs (candle), Gregorio Montenegro and Marinela Montenegro (veil), Raphael Mondragon and Katrina Datoc (cord).

After the Church ceremony, the newlyweds and entourage and guests moved on to the church courtyard for the celebration and reception, which appeared like a *barrio fiesta*.

Caterers Plaza and Cabalen prepared food for the churchyard reception. The food consisted of an all-Filipino fare like lechon, halo-halo, crispy crablets, pancit luglog, tibok-tibok and a variety of seafoods.

The main celebrant of the wedding was Archbishop Paciano Aniceto of San Fernando, Pampanga. Co-celebrants were Msgr. Patricio Lim, Fr. Rodolfo De Guzman, Fr. Dennise Antonio Paez and Fr. Manuel Roux.

During the wedding liturgy, the couple got a pleasant surprise – no less than a blessing from Pope John Paul II, sent through Papal Nuncio Antonio Franco, which was read by Bishop Aniceto.

In his homily, the bishop lectured on the sanctity of the sacrament of marriage while the liturgy touched on the oneness of husband and wife.

After the wedding, Mickey and Angela posed with their families and entourage in a brief photo shoot.

The couple later greeted Lubao townsfolk, who didn't have the chance to see the church rites. Subsequently, the two proceeded to the churchyard reception.

Aside from family, relatives and friends of the bride and groom, Pampanga officials, most of whom are colleagues of Mikey in government, likewise attended the ceremony.

Mikey's colleagues in show business to include Paquito Diaz, Tony Ferrer, Rez Cortez, Al Tantay, Roi Vinzons and movie scribe Aster Amoyo, who was among the liturgical readers, also attended the occasion.

Wedding giveaways at the church were paper and *banig* fans embroidered with the couple's names and the wedding date.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 24, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032351/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june24.htm>

The President's Day: June 25, 2002

25 JUNE 2002

- **Plan to tax cellular phone calls and text messaging not an administration move — DOF**
- **GMA presents P5-M reward to Abu Sayyaf aide**
- **GMA stresses need to bring jobs, development to SSSB area in Zamboanga Del Norte**
- **GMA working on ways to bring power rates down**

Plan to tax cellular phone calls and text messaging not an administration move — DOF

Contrary to published reports, the administration has no plans of imposing a tax on cellular phone calls and text messaging, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said today.

In an interview, Camacho said that the plan to tax cellular phone calls and texting actually came from the House of Representatives where there are two pending bills containing such revenue-generating move.

Camacho explained that whenever this is a tax measure proposed in Congress, the Department of Finance (DoF) is asked to give its comments.

He said that in giving its comments on the proposed measure, the DoF has recommended that if approved, 40 percent of the revenues generated should go to the general fund and only 60 percent should be used for the computer literacy education in public schools, which is the intended beneficiary of the measure.

“Ang sinasabi ng DoF ay kung magkaroon ng batas ay sana iyong 40 percent ay ilagay na lang sa general fund (What the DoF was saying was that if there is a law, 40 percent should go the general fund),” Camacho said.

He said that using all of the proceeds from this measure for the government's computer literacy program would not be prudent since the Department of Education is already getting a yearly budget for this particular program.

If approved by Congress, the tax on cellular phone calls and text messaging would raise for the government from P2 billion to P3 billion in additional revenues.

GMA presents P5-M reward to Abu Sayyaf aide

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today personally awarded a P5 million reward to Gardo Ibrahim, the courier and close-in security of Abu Sabaya, who said that the Abu Sayyaf spokesman was killed during the encounter in Sibuco Bay last June 21.

In her brief remarks, President lauded Ibrahim, a military informer, for the timely information he provided to the members of Philippine Navy and Philippine Marines which led to the encounter at sea where three Abu Sayyaf members, including Abu Sabaya, were killed and four others were captured.

“I think now that Abu Sabaya is dead and the Abu Sayyaf is largely neutralized,” the President said during the presentation of the reward to Ibrahim at Malacañang's Reception Hall.

“I would like to congratulate the people, and, of course, I would like to congratulate our soldiers and our Navy men who did such an astounding victory,” President added.

The President also thanked the people of Luuc in Sulu for their continuing support to the government's effort to eliminate the bandit group operating in Mindanao.

Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu presented Ibrahim to the President and the members of media in a simple ceremony at Malacañang this afternoon.

President said Luuc was the same place where former American kidnap victim Jeffrey Schilling was recovered by the military sometime in December last year and the place where an Indonesian national, Ferdinand Joel, was recovered after he escaped from the hands of his Abu Sayyaf abductors.

The President said she believes that the battle on Sibuco Bay off Zamboanga del Norte “was a perfect example of perfect surveillance, intelligence fusion, perfect planning and perfect execution. And I congratulate everyone involved in that.”

Ibrahim served as a courier of Abu Sayyaf Group and eventually became a close-in security of Abu Sabaya.

On June 20 at 8:00 in the evening, Ibrahim’s handler received information about Abu Sabaya requesting for a boat for their escape from Zamboanga del Norte.

According to the military, Ibrahim was with the group riding in the boat when the encounter occurred and he personally witnessed how Abu Sabaya was shot and killed by Navy personnel.

Upon receipt of the information from Ibrahim on the arrival of the group of Sabaya on the shoreline of Parang-parang, operation “Black Archer” was launched by a Special Warfare Group (SWAG) of the Navy and Marines.

The military also informed the President that based on the testimony of Ibrahim, there were actually nine people on board the Abu Sayyaf boat. Two of them, including Ibrahim, are informers of the military.

GMA stresses need to bring jobs, development to SSSB area in Zamboanga Del Norte

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today underscored the need to bring more jobs and community development to the Siocon, Siraway, Sibuco and Balaguian (SSSB) area in Zamboanga del Norte, especially now that the Abu Sayyaf bandit group has been neutralized.

“We have to bring more jobs to the areas where there is so much economic exclusion that the jobless people in those areas are easily led to follow the Syrian song of the easy money coming from being hatchet men and accomplices of the terrorist groups,” the Chief Executive said in her brief remarks after presenting a cash reward of P5 million to Gardo Ibrahim, an Abu Sayyaf courier and close-in security of Abu Sayyaf spokesman Abu Sabaya, in ceremonies held this afternoon at Malacanang.

The information fed by Ibrahim to the military led to the encounter that resulted in the killing of Sabaya and two other Abu Sayyaf members. Four other Abu Sayyaf terrorists were captured in the encounter.

The President said that the fight against terrorism is not only a military fight but it “is also a fight to have jobs available for our people.”

“We need to have jobs available for our people. Jobs that are decent, jobs that are in accordance with the law,” she added.

According to the President, she has already instructed National Anti-Poverty Commission chairperson Teresita Deles to start implementing the community development programs in the SSSB area.

The President recalled that during her speech before the Chinese-Filipino community last June 19, she called on them to “help us fight poverty in the SSSB area.”

President Macapagal-Arroyo noted that aside from the school- buildings they have contributed especially to the country's barangays without school-buildings, the Filipino-Chinese community also contributed funds, "so that we can introduce the Chinese hybrid rice to the SSSB area."

She said that the Chinese hybrid rice is being handled by Presidential Adviser for Job Creation Luis Lorenzo.

On the peace and order situation in Metro Manila, the President stressed that there should be no room for errors.

"People who make blunders will have to go. They have to be discharged and their superiors will have to answer in terms of command responsibility," she said.

The President defined command responsibility as the responsibility of the direct commander for the wrongdoings of his subordinates.

"So, if the one who did the wrongdoing is dismissed then his direct commander is suspended. But each time a unit makes a repetition of the blunder, the command responsibility goes higher and higher," the President said.

The President expressed the hope that with the strict observance of "command responsibility" in which errors are not going to be tolerated, crimes in Metro Manila can be prevented.

GMA working on ways to bring power rates down

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that her more than 18-month-old administration is working on a 10-point program to "look for every way by which we can bring power rates down."

"This is where I am going to be putting my attention in the next several months," the President said in her remarks after presenting a cash reward of P5 million to Gardo Ibrahim, an Abu Sayyaf courier and close-in security of Abu Sayyaf spokesman Abu Sabaya, held this afternoon at Malacanang.

The President said, however, that she and Energy Secretary Vicente Perez need a lot of homework, pencil pushing and desk work to do.

The President underscored the need to make the country's electric rates more competitive.

Right now, she added, the country's electricity rate is the second most expensive in the region.

"The only one more expensive than us is Japan. But in your July billing, when the rates go down, we will move from number 2 to number 6. We will overtake Singapore, Brunei, Hong Kong and, I believe, Cambodia in power rates," she said.

This is the reason why the administration has to do the privatization of the National Power Corporation (Napocor), the President said. "Because Napocor has contributed so much to our budget deficit," she added.

On the Power Purchase Adjustment (PPA) issue, the President said she did not invent it but she inherited it.

She expressed the belief that pointing fingers to solve the PPA issue is not productive at this time.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 25, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032417/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june25.htm>

The President's Day: June 26, 2002

26 JUNE 2002

- **GMA to reform power sector, vows to concentrate efforts on bringing down electricity rates**
- **GMA orders stepped-up hunt for 4 Abu Sayyaf leaders**
- **GMA reiterates commitment to good governance**
- **Napolcom has mandate to supervise PNP — Palace**

GMA to reform power sector, vows to concentrate efforts on bringing down electricity rates

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today vowed to devote her time and energy to attending to the issue of electricity rates in order to bring down the country's power rates.

In her speech at the Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals (BCBP) Third National Grand Breakfast held this morning at the Intercontinental Hotel in Makati City, the President said she will spend "the next weeks and months to find ways to further bring down power rates."

"Every centavo matters even after the 20 percent cut in our July billings," the President said.

The President said her more than 18-month-old administration is determined to make the country's electricity rates more competitive.

"One of the reasons why I needed to reform the power sector is that I inherited the power sector whose electricity rates are also second highest in Asia, second only to Japan," she said.

The President pointed out that last May 8, she instructed the National Power Corporation to bring down its Purchased Power Cost Adjustment (PPCA), which is a component of the Power Purchase Adjustment (PPA) — to bring it down to 40 centavos.

She added that the cost adjustment will be reflected in the consumers' July billings. This elicited a big round of applause from the Christian businessmen present during the affair.

"When this reduction is reflected in your July billings — where hopefully, the bulk of the Meralco consumers will see it go down by 20 percent — we will move from number two to number six (among countries with high electricity rates)," the President said.

When this happens, the President said "we will overtake Singapore, Hong Kong, Cambodia and Brunei Darussalam."

GMA orders stepped-up hunt for 4 Abu Sayyaf leaders

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the military to step up its hunt for the four remaining leaders of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) as she moved to call off the search for the body of Abu Sayyaf spokesman Aldam Tilao alias Abu Sabaya in Sibuco Bay, Zamboanga del Norte.

But the President stressed that the P50,000 reward to be given to anyone who could recover Sabaya's body continued.

Being hunted by the government are ASG leaders Amir Khadafi Abubakar Janjalani, Jainal Antel Sali, Jr., Isnilon Toton Hapilon and Hamsitaji Marusi Sali.

Speaking before the Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals Third National Grand Breakfast this morning at the Intercontinental Hotel in Makati City, the President said “the bulk of our forces (in Mindanao) should go not to finding the dead leader but the four remaining live leaders of the Abu Sayyaf.”

She said the United States Navy Seals have offered to help the government look for Sabaya’s body.

“Let’s have a small unit of ours, so it’s not all being done by the Americans alone,” she stressed.

The President pointed out that the government’s success against the ASG was “the result of our soldiers’ and policemen’s renewed focus on duty, integrity and honor aided by the advance technical expertise and sophisticated equipment of our international allies.”

She said the operation the military, through the Navy’s Special Warfare Group and the Marines, undertook last June 21 against the Sabaya-led ASG band in Sibuco Bay was done with “perfect technology, perfect planning and perfect execution.”

She narrated that a government asset, disguised as a pumpboat operator, involved in the operation were briefed by the soldiers before the firefight.

The asset was briefed and given a necklace which flashes when soldiers turn on their krypton flashlights in their night vision equipment, she said.

When the necklace flickered, the soldiers knew that bearer was “a friendly force and they are not supposed to fire at them,” she added.

The President further said the assets were told that the moment the attack on the ASG began — they should jump into the water.

“They followed it very well. It was a perfectly planned and perfectly executed operation,” she said.

GMA reiterates commitment to good governance

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed that her 18-month old administration remained committed to institutionalizing good governance that “can serve as a pathway to peace, justice and the conquest of poverty” in the country.

In a speech before the Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals’ (BCBP) Third National Grand Breakfast meeting at the Intercontinental Hotel in Makati City, the President said that since she assumed the presidency in January 2001, she launched a moral revolution from the top by exercising leadership by example.

“Then, as now, I insist that only moral strength can be the invincible foundation of good governance,” she said.

But she added that graft and corruption remained a bureaucratic scourge and a serious challenge to her administration.

“I would be the first to admit that graft and corruption rob the people of resources that otherwise could be channeled to priority programs and projects. It erodes the confidence of citizens and entrepreneurs in the integrity of our institutions,” the President said.

She added that graft and corruption have alienated the people from government.

In this connection, the President cited the *Philippine Daily Inquirer’s* top story on a Pulse Asia survey.

She quoted the story which said “19 percent of Filipinos agree with the statement that this country is hopeless, and if it were only possible, they would migrate to another country and live there.”

“Of course, we have to see the other side of the news. A glass is half full or half empty depending on how you want to see it. Yes, the glass is 19 percent empty, but it is more than half full because 60 percent disagrees with the statement,” the President said.

She, however, stressed that she was not discouraged by the news. But “we must recognize that graft and corruption are among the biggest hindrances to development.”

While the country ranked behind Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand in good governance, the President said that “we, at least in this administration, are ranking ahead of them in economic growth and we can even grow more if we catch up with them.”

She recalled that her late father President Diosdado Macapagal left her a motto for her public and private behavior which is: “Do what is right, do your best and God will take care of the rest.”

In her speech, the President expressed elation over the BCBP’s dedication to good corporate governance, particularly in its drive to promote the honest payment of taxes.

“I thank you for that because that way, you help clean up the revenue agencies,” she said.

She disclosed that the Bureau of Internal Revenue has established a one-stop-shop inter-agency credit and duty drawback center and that signatures for verification reports have been reduced from six to two.

She also announced that criminal complaints have been filed against 64 firms that fraudulently acquired tax certificates amounting to P5.3 billion.

Further, she signed last year Executive Order 25 forming the Governance Advisory Council, which is working on simplifying the rules and regulations of certain government agencies, and how to raise the country’s international rankings on transparency, business ethics and integrity of business and financial transactions.

“This council is also facilitating and expediting national and corporate governance reforms and soon it will conduct a study on how to strengthen the judicial system to deal with graft and corruption,” she said.

The President said the council has pinpointed four critical elements in a good governance program: The rule of law taking into account the nuisances of our history and culture; a policy regime favoring competition reducing discretion and raising accountability; an effective enforcement mechanisms through professionalized public institutions such as the Philippine National Police; and a responsible citizenry nurturing a culture of compliance, ethics, social responsibility.

Fighting corruption means cutting red tape, she said, adding that over the past years, 12 departments and 19 agencies have pushed measures to reduce processing time for documents and transactions.

For example, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council has reduced the number of signatories and the processing time for permits from 88 days to 45 days.

The Department of Labor and Employment has reduced by half the processing time for the Overseas Filipino Workers’ documentation from six hours to three hours for land-based workers, and from 12 hours to six hours for sea-based workers.

The President said the government’s computerization and automation program have also deterred acts of graft.

“The E-procurement systems have been adopted by several agencies for equipment acquisition,” she said, adding that this has reduced corruption and has resulted in savings for these agencies.

The President noted that she would like the Securities and Exchange Commission and other government agencies in the Capital Market Development Council “to work closely” with the business sector like the BCBP to ensure that the Code of Corporate Governance is strongly enforced.

“I have instructed them to actively implement the three-year program of corporate governance reforms that they adopted this year,” she said.

She added that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas issued a circular requiring all the directors in the corporate boards of banks to take an orientation course on corporate governance.

For her part, the President has required all appointed directors in corporate boards of government-owned and -controlled corporations and government financial institutions to also take an orientation course on corporate governance.

“We must fight graft and corruption because morality is an end in itself. In fact, morality is the ultimate end because we were created to know God, to love God, and to serve within this world, so that we can be with Him forever,” she said.

Napolcom has mandate to supervise PNP — Palace

Malacanang said today that it will not interfere in the decision of the National Police Commission (Napolcom) to relieve four regional police directors and three other senior police officers for their alleged failure to stop illegal gambling, particularly the numbers game *jueteng*, in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

In a telephone interview with Malacañang reporters, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said the Napolcom has the mandate under the law to supervise the operations of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

In a resolution, the Napolcom, chaired by Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. relieved Chief Superintendents Edgar Aglipay of the National Capital Region, Reynaldo Berroya of Central Luzon (Region III), Domingo Reyes of the Southern Tagalog Region (Region IV), and Avelino Razon of Central Visayas (Region VII).

The issue here, according to Afable, is the authority and the legitimacy of the actions taken by the Napolcom since the latter has the mandate to supervise the PNP.

“He (Lina) had made an action and I’m sure he can justify and substantiate the reasons behind his action,” Afable said.

Lina told a news conference earlier today that the relief order is contained in a memorandum circular that he and four other Napolcom commissioners had signed.

The Napolcom order came amid reports that illegal gambling activities have reportedly continued to proliferate in various parts of the country.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: June 26, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032429/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june26.htm>

The President's Day: June 27, 2002

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- **RP, India ink trade, investments pact — DTI**
- **GMA commitments to 'bankang papel' children fulfilled**
- **Charter Change can wait, says Palace**
- **Land Bank grants more credit access to farmers to ease El Niño effects**
- **Afable says GMA letter not meant to be given to VP Guingona**

RP, India ink trade, investments pact — DTI

The recent signing of a bilateral trade agreement between the Philippines and India is expected to enhance trade, investments and economic cooperation between the two countries in the coming years.

Trade Undersecretary Thomas Aquino said the pact would perk up countertrading, the exchange of information on business opportunities and contacts, and business matching activities, among others.

Aquino said the Philippines considered India as one of its top trading partners.

"There is a huge market for Philippine exports to India, it being home to over 1 billion or 15 percent of the world's population, with a large emerging middle class who has growing disposable income," he said.

"Its economic reforms since 1991 have helped the country achieve macro economic stability and a moderate degree of liberalization in its trade, investment and financial sectors," he added.

Aquino said he had talks with Indian Commerce Secretary Dipak Chatterjee on subjects such as the mutual cooperation in small and medium enterprise development and promotion, scientific and technical cooperation in pharmaceuticals, renewable energy sources and agricultural sciences and technology, information technology, and gems and jewelry.

The Philippines initially intended to promote metal parts and components, electronics components including semiconductor devices, processed fruits, ceramics, gloves and mittens, seaweeds and carageenan, fertilizers, chemicals like fatty alcohol, coconut oil, glycerine, and surface active washing or cleaning preparations in India.

The country's exports to India grew from \$34 million in 1997 to \$71 million in 2001 and balance of merchandise trade has narrowed down from \$194 million in 1997 to \$166 million in 2001.

The top five Philippine merchandise exports in 2001 included newsprint in rolls and sheets, phosphoric and sulfuric acid, and parts and accessories of motor vehicles. Semiconductor devices were among the top five exports of the Philippines to India in 1999 and 2000.

The top five merchandise imports included buffalo meat, airplanes and other aircraft, wheat and meslin, oil cake and other solid residues.

Through parallel importation, the Philippines bought branded medicines from India for the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)-initiated *Presyong Tama, Gamot Pampamilya* (Right Price, Medicine for the Family) program.

A study by the Philippine International Trading Corp, a DTI agency, showed that medicines sourced from other countries including India, were up to 10 times cheaper than prices of drugs sold commercially.

The program on half-priced branded medicine was one of the major poverty alleviation goals that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo committed in her State of the Nation Address in July, 2001.

In a report, the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) said that all 73 Department of Health-retained hospitals have been stocked with selected low-cost quality drugs.

The drugs included Adalat Retard and Tenormin for hypertension; Bactrim Adult and Septran for infections; Daonil for diabetes; and Ventorlin and Becoride for asthma.

The PMS report added that all 249 National Food Authority-deployed rolling stores in the National Capital Region and 61 local government hospitals have started selling the low-priced quality medicines.

As of June 7, about P6.22 million worth of medicines were sold in government outlets, the report said.

GMA commitments to ‘bankang papel’ children fulfilled

The administration has fulfilled its commitments to the victims of the landslide tragedy in Payatas, Quezon City as pledged by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered before a joint session of Congress on July 23, 2001.

In a report to the President, coursed through the Presidential Management Staff (PMS), Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said the more than 400 families comprising three organizations of Payatas landslide victims have expressed their “sincere thanks” to the President for the assistance that the government has extended to them.

When she delivered her first SONA, the President invited three children from Payatas—Jayson Banogoon, 10 years old; Erwin Dolera, 9 years old; and Jomer Pabalan, 10 years old—and three others who have figuratively floated a paper boat (*bangkang papel*) on the Pasig River containing their appeal to the President for help so that their dreams of a better life can be realized.

The President used the *bangkang papel* metaphor to emphasize the challenge that she hurled to the people and the nation to work together for poverty alleviation and national development.

Soliman said that as pledged by the President, the government, through the DSWD and the *Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan* (KALAHI) program, has extended educational and livelihood assistance not only to the members of the three organizations of Payatas victims but also to other urban poor associations in Payatas.

She said the six children invited to the SONA were provided with educational assistance by the government and private benefactors for school year 2001-2002.

The families of the six children, Soliman said, were also provided with P10,000 each as seed capital for livelihood projects.

Another 400 elementary and high school students coming from families directly affected by the Payatas tragedy were given P10,000 each, also for livelihood projects, under the “PGMA-Payatas Scholarship Program. The program is directly funded by the President’s Social Fund.

Soliman said that the remaining 765 families were given livelihood assistance through their organizations, the *Samahang Tunay ng Phase II Lupang Pangako*, the *Samahang Magkakapitbahay ng Payatas* and the July 10 Payatas Victims Organization which received P400,000 each as capital for their livelihood projects.

Technical assistance to the families and their organizations were also provided by the DSWD and two community-based non-governmental organizations, the *Kristong Hari Foundation and Kalipunan at Damayan ng mga Mahihirap (KADAMAY)*, Soliman said.

According to Soliman, the DSWD has also coordinated with the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), the National Housing Authority (NHA) and the local government units in resolving housing and land-related issues raised by the victims of the Payatas tragedy.

She also assured the President that the DSWD, in coordination with NGOs and private foundations would continue to provide educational assistance to the more than 400 children of Payatas to help them complete their education and ensure a better future for their families.

Charter Change can wait, says Palace

Although there are provisions in the present Constitution that need revisions, this is not yet the proper time to discuss them, Malacanang said today.

In his regular press briefing, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said that the country is still saddled with economic and social problems that discussions on charter changes are not advisable at the moment.

“This has to be put off to a later date in the future when we, as a nation, can really have the time and the leisure to tackle this issue,” Afable said.

According to Afable, it has always been the stand of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that there are changes that could be done in the charter but not at this time.

On the relief of seven top-ranking officials of the Philippine National Police (PNP) for their inability to stop rampant gambling, particularly *jueteng*, in their areas of jurisdiction, Afable said that the President has continued to keep her hands off the issue.

“She will continue to leave it to the National Police Commission (Napolcom) to undertake the process by which this matter will be investigated and resolved,” Afable said.

Afable also explained that Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. in his capacity as chairman of the Napolcom, has acted on the matter based on principle, and not of political expediency.

“He (Lina) has been very vocal about the anti-*jueteng* campaign and he just decided to put his neck on the line. And he has acted within his authority,” Afable said.

Land Bank grants more credit access to farmers to ease El Niño effects

The Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) has opened more windows for credit access to small farmers in the bank’s bid to help mitigate the negative effects to agriculture of the El Nino weather phenomenon.

A long dry spell is experienced during the El Nino, which officials expect to begin in September. This weather imbalance is a bane to farmers.

In a report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, LBP president Gary Teves said the bank has raised — to 65 percent by the end of 2004 from 38 percent in 2001 — the share of agriculture in the bank’s loan portfolio.

“As of March 2002, the LBP’s outstanding loans to the agriculture and agrarian sector reached P41.3 billion. This represents 41 percent of our total loan portfolio,” he said.

For 2002, the bank has targeted a P47.8-billion credit exposure to the priority sectors.

Loan releases will come from the implementation of various loan programs for the different sectors such as cooperatives, countryside financial institutions, participating financial institutions, small and medium enterprises (SME), local government units (LGU) and other clients in the agricultural business.

Teves said the LBP has also identified accounts for incremental loan releases, notable of which is the P1.3-billion additional loan intended for the National Food Authority.

This would be used for the financing requirements for local procurement and rice importation to fill in the country's required buffer stock, both for food security and prize stabilization, before the lean season.

He said the LBP has likewise allocated more resources to agri-infrastructure and agri-related activities, agri-business projects and SMEs.

Teves noted the P800-million rediscounting line to the Quedan Rural Credit and Guarantee Corporation (Quedancor) to bankroll the *Ginintuang Masaganang Ani* Countrywide Assistance for Rural Employment and Services (GMA Cares) and the Hybrid Rice Cultivation Project.

On top of this, Teves said the bank is evaluating the request of Quedancor for another P800-million rediscounting line for in-bred rice, hybrid corn and coffee production.

He added that the bank has streamlined its lending procedures, reducing the processing time for production loans from 75 to 45 working days and lessening loan signature requirements from 18 to 10.

He further noted the bank's implementation of flexible debt restructuring terms for cooperatives by providing credit relief to coops with past due accounts such as the condonation of penalties, capitalization of interest, reduction of interest on a case-to-case basis, extension of loan maturity dates.

After loan restructuring, the LBP would grant additional working capital to cooperatives and would take a pro-active approach in extending support to coops experiencing organizational difficulties.

Other pro-farmer measures included the:

- Packaging of a special credit facility for the repair and rehabilitation of irrigation systems at a lower interest rate of 10 percent per annum;
- Allocation of P500 million for borrowers who will build up small irrigation systems and shallow tube wells;
- Grant of loans to LGUs for the purchase of heavy equipment for use in building small water impounding units for farmers;
- Focus on marine and aquaculture projects such as *bangus* and *tilapia* production and municipal fishing;
- Encouragement of cooperative members to plant early maturing varieties and root crops that thrive during the El Niño.

Afable says GMA letter not meant to be given to VP Guingona

Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. today said his office made a mistake in releasing to the media a letter of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo offering Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. the position of Adviser on Foreign Affairs.

Afable said: "It was a mistake. I thought that this was a letter meant for release. It was a letter not supposed to be sent."

He said he should have double-checked such a “sensitive letter,” adding that what happened “was an inadvertence on the part of my office.”

He added that he got the letter from the Office of the Executive Secretary this morning.

The letter “was supposed to be torn up because it was not really meant to be sent to the Vice President,” he told reporters in an interview after a meeting between the President and Guingona early last night.

“I do not know the background of the preparation of the letter,” he said, adding that the letter was signed by the President “but it was not meant to be sent” to Guingona.

He added that the President admonished the Office of the Press Secretary to be more circumspect the next time. “And we intend to do that,” Afable said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: June 27, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032446/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june27.htm>

The President's Day: June 28, 2002

28 JUNE 2002

- **GMA proclaims July 2 special non-working holiday in Pasig**
- **GMA orders mobilization of PMMA reserve officers for Barangay, Sangguniang Kabataan polls**
- **PNP revamp is rehearsal of strict adherence to 'command responsibility' dictum, says GMA**
- **GMA urges PMMA grads, people to support gov't counter-terrorism campaign**
- **GMA unveils 10-point program to further bring down cost of electricity**

GMA proclaims July 2 special non-working holiday in Pasig

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has declared July 2 as a special non-working holiday in Pasig City.

In signing Proclamation No. 210 last June 19, the President said the day marks the city's 429th foundation anniversary.

The President said the holiday would give the residents of Pasig City the chance to "celebrate this milestone in their city's history with fitting ceremonies."

Historically, Pasig was one of the oldest towns in the Philippines, having been established in 1572 by early Spanish settlers.

Pasig became a major *pueblo* with an initial population of 2,000. In 1582, it was established as an *encomienda* under the administration and supervision of the alcalde mayor of Tondo.

With its strategic location, the town had been the site of revolutionary conflicts such as the Spanish-British war of 1762 and the staging ground for sporadic revolts in the Tagalog region during the Philippine revolution of August 1896.

When the American forces arrived in the country, the town was placed under military rule that paved the way for the establishment of a civil government.

On June 11, 1901, Pasig became part of the newly created Province of Rizal through the Philippine Commission Act No. 137, and became its capital town until 1975. However, in 1904, for seven months, San Felipe Neri town in Mandaluyong became the provincial capital.

But afterward, Pasig continued to be Rizal's premier town until 1975 when the Metro Manila Commission was created, integrating four towns and 13 cities, including the town of Pasig.

On December 8, 1993, former President Fidel V. Ramos signed Republic Act No. 7829 converting Pasig into a highly urbanized city.

The city is composed of 30 barangays, occupying a total land area of 3,100 hectares (31 kilometers) or about 4 percent of the total land area of Metro Manila.

Today, Pasig City has transformed itself into one of the major urbanized areas in Metro Manila, a bustling metropolis and a financial hub.

GMA orders mobilization of PMMA reserve officers for Barangay, Sangguniang Kabataan polls

SAN NARCISO, Zambales – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today asked Northern Command chief Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia to enlist and mobilize the reserve officers of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) for the forthcoming Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections on July 15, 2002.

Speaking at the 179th Commencement Exercises of the PMMA here, the President said this is in keeping with the requirement to have an honest, orderly and peaceful elections this July. The members of the Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines are deputized for these events.

The President said the PMMA has adhered to highly exacting global standards in training certification and watch keeping.

The President said that according to the International Standards Organization (ISO 9001), the PMMA graduates are among the most sought after in their fields.

“You have a 95 percent average passing in the national board exams and all of the passers are immediately given jobs by international shipping companies,” the President said.

The President also said that the PMMA is the source of 10 percent of the 50,000 Filipino deck and engine officers working in various shipping companies.

“It is difficult to equal this record,” the President said.

The Philippine government, the President said, has been able to guarantee the continued employment of Filipino sea-based workers.

She said the Philippines’ membership in the 32-member council of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) affirms the resolve to uphold all conventions, protocols and resolutions of this international body.

The power of sea-based Filipino workers lies not only in their competence but also in their vital contribution to the Philippine economy.

Sea-based workers gave the country P2 billion in annual remittances.

“Every year, P6 billion are sent to us by overseas Filipinos. And out of the that, one-third comes from sea-based workers,” the President said.

Out of the 235 graduates this year, nine men and a woman, Marycel Callejo, graduated cum laude.

All of them were commissioned as ensigns in the Philippine Navy.

PNP revamp is rehearsal of strict adherence to ‘command responsibility’ dictum, says GMA

SAN NARCISO, Zambales – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today that the ongoing major revamp at the Philippine National Police (PNP) is a “rehearsal” on the very strict interpretation of the rule of command responsibility in the drive against criminality, including illegal gambling, that she has earlier ordered.

Speaking at the 179th Commencement Exercises of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) at the school’s parade grounds here, the President said “this is a rehearsal for a bigger challenge of applying the rule of command responsibility on kidnapping and illegal drugs.”

The President was referring to the recent order of Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. relieving seven top-ranking PNP officials for their alleged failure to curb illegal gambling, particularly the numbers game *jueteng*, in their respective jurisdiction.

The President, however, congratulated the PNP for the strong measures they have implemented to neutralize the terrorist cell in Northern Luzon.

She said the country's image abroad is somewhat diminished by security concerns here and this affects overseas Filipino workers, including the Filipino seafarers.

The President said that resolving the peace and order problem is as important to her as getting the country back on the growth path "because peace and development always come together."

"These are realities and the challenges of the world as you, young men and one woman, are entering the world of the great Filipino workforce," the President told the graduating students.

According to the President, the PMMA graduates are fortunate because they are assured of immediate jobs.

"When you sail out of our shores, keep in mind that you represent a nation renowned for workers of skills, industry, competence and integrity on the job," the President said.

The Philippines is one of the world's top suppliers of seafarers. Thousands of Filipino seamen are now manning ocean-going vessels around the world.

GMA urges PMMA grads, people to support gov't counter-terrorism campaign

SAN ISIDRO, Zambales – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the people to go on supporting the government's bid to rid the country of terrorist groups, as the world's powerful countries like the United States are looking up with pride in the Philippines' all-out campaign against the Al-Qaeda-backed Abu Sayyaf terrorists.

In a speech before 235 Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) graduates here, the President said the peace and order problem remained a vital administration concern because the growth path of the country relied on the peace and development climate.

Keynoting the PMMA's 179th commencement exercises, the President said that last June 24, United States President George W. Bush called up and congratulated her for her steadfast desire to root out the Abu Sayyaf.

She said Bush was happy over recent developments and credited the Philippines as very active in the fight against global terrorism while standing up for homeland security.

She also reiterated the help Bush offered to step up the anti-terrorism campaign of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration. She added that Bush considered ongoing military operations against the Abu Sayyaf in their lairs in Mindanao as successful.

The President said Bush further informed American legislators that he called her to reiterate the US government's support for the fight against the Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines.

But she told Bush that what the Philippines needed was the further training of Filipino soldiers to keep them abreast with modern weaponry and strategies to flush out terrorism.

She said Bush was elated over her role in counter-terrorism. "She has proven she is with us (in the war against terrorists)," the President quoted Bush. "And I want to thank her for her leadership," Bush said of her.

“This is how the most powerful leaders of the world look at us. This is how the world looks at us and I pray that the Filipinos could have the same faith in my administration,” the President told the PMMA graduates.

Two days ago, Bush again said the Philippines had the most successes in ending global terrorism. “One of the recent successes is (President) Gloria (Macapagal) Arroyo in the Philippines,” Bush was quoted as saying.

“She’s a part of our vast coalition. She said early on we need to get after the Abu Sabaya group and she did it. And to her credit, it looks like the leader (Abu Sayyaf spokesman Aldam Tilao alias Abu Sabaya) has made his demise. The Philippines is better off for that and so is the world,” she said, quoting Bush.

Earlier, the President ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to call off and leave to an able military unit the search and recovery work on the body of Abu Sabaya.

She said the military’s bigger force should scour the jungles of Sulu for the remaining four leaders of Abu Sayyaf.

These leaders included Amir Khadafi Abubakar Janjalani, Jainal Antel Sali, Jr., Isnilon Toton Hapilon and Hamsitaji Marusi Sali.

“*Sabi ko, imbes na hinahanap ang patay, hanapin ninyo ang buhay. Hanapin ninyo ang apat na buhay na* (Instead of looking for the dead Sabaya, let us look for the remaining living) Abu Sayyaf leaders,” the President said, adding that the military had started doing that.

The President said the military would continue to hunt down the Abu Sayyaf leaders and members until they were all accounted for.

The PMMA is the country’s oldest marine school. It was established on April 5, 1890 under its old name Escuela Nautica de Manila.

During the American time, it became the Nautical School and in 1913, it was renamed the Philippine School of Arts and Trades. Later in 1963, it became the Philippine Nautical School.

In January 1968, the school was transferred to Fort Bonifacio in Makati and transferred to its most recent home, the 60-hectare complex here, on January 31, 1998.

GMA unveils 10-point program to further bring down cost of electricity

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today unveiled a 10-point comprehensive program aimed at “squeezing blood from stone” and bringing down further the cost of electricity to consumers.

In her remarks at the signing of the wholesale electricity spot market (WESM) at the Heroes Hall in Malacañang, the President also promised to lower the cost of electricity by P1.30 starting next month.

The President said she has also issued an executive order on tax equalization as required by the Senate in order to enable the Power Sector Reform Law to push through.

Two days ago, she said the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) promulgated its decision regarding petition of the National Power Corporation (Napocor) wherein the latter had asked for a 17-centavo increase in its rates.

She said the ERC has decided that Napocor should instead reduce its rate by six centavos.

In the same occasion, the President ordered the Napocor to follow that, not within 30 days, but within one week in order to get more relief.

In her 10-point program, first, the President said the government wants to reflect the true cost of service which has been happening now with what ERC did through the unbundling of Napocor and its cease and desist order to Meralco sometime ago which has resulted in lower electricity rate this month.

In view of her instruction to Napocor last May 8, the President said the people will see further reduction of electricity rates starting next month.

Under the first point, the President said the government shall ensure that the consumers shall only be charged the true and fair cost of electric services and only power services they have enjoyed and used.

She said the government will seek the elimination of charges from onerous contracts, stressing the need to review the IPP contracts and other contracts that the ERC is studying as well as regulatory loopholes such as the valuation and appraisal of assets.

Second, she said, is to introduce the declining block rate structure by introducing special pricing incentives for large consumers of electricity specially business and industries, to reduce cost of over capacity and encourage expansion in manufacturing and commerce.

“The more they use, the less unit cost they pay, therefore it will be cheaper to produce more products. Also, therefore they will use more electricity and that will reduce the excess capacity which is the source of the PPA,” she said.

Third, the President said we will optimize the utilization mix of NPC power plants by finding out the different efficiencies of the different plants.

While it requires a lot of homework, the President said she intends to stay put in Malacañang to help do the homework.

Further, she said the government will review and upgrade the country’s power development plan to better distribute generation capacity in relation to load centers, upgrade transmission system and minimize the vulnerability of the power grids from blackouts.

This move will include the transfer of power barges and matured build-operate-transfer (BOT) plants to regions where they can be better utilized and the enhancement of Napocor generation companies by providing them with better markets and quality supply contracts.

Fourth, the President saw the need to accelerate the operation of the wholesale electricity spot market (WESM) to provide a trading platform for power price competition and give power users a fair and transparent way to determine realistic power cost.

Fifth, the President said there must be an acceleration in the implementation of open access, which means that big buyers who buy more than 1 megawatt can choose the generating company they want to buy from.

While the law says that it should be done in four years, she said the open access implementation can be accelerated because consumer choice will certainly provide for greater competition and lower prices.

Correspondingly, she said the government will provide consumers with genuine supplier alternative through competition and encouragement of new players in the electric industry power sector.

Sixth, the President called for the promotion of efficient performance of distribution utilities by prescribing measurable standards of consumer service, shift to new rates setting methods that better protect consumers, assure integrity in procedures, and close all loopholes without necessarily denying the utilities’ right to earn the legal and fair return for their investment and services.

The seventh point of the measures is to strengthen and consolidate rural electric cooperatives, seek long-term solutions and strengthen them as distribution utilities in preparation for deregulation as mandated by the Electric Power Industry Reform Act.

“It is hoped that strengthened electric cooperatives will be able to bring down retail electric rates in the rural areas,” she said.

Eighth, the President sought the review of IPP contracts and reduce contract cost, saying that whatever is completed in the review must already be submitted so that the government can begin the renegotiations.

“We will review the contracts of operating agreement by benchmarking for competitiveness, fairness and onerousness in the context of when the contracts were signed,” she said, adding that the government will also reduce the stranded cost through renegotiation, restructuring or non-renewal of Napocor’s IPP contracts as may be necessary.

Ninth, the President proposed the further exploration of financial engineering methods which the government has been doing and has resulted in the reduction of Napocor’s purchased power cost adjustment (PPCA) to 40 centavos.

This action, she said, will reflect in the electricity bills starting next month.

Lastly, the President said the government will help enhance the institutional capability of the ERC and encourage it to assert its mandate.

Also in her speech, the President noted what her administration has done in more than one year such as the creation of the Transmission Company (Transco), the Power Sector Asset Liabilities Management (PSALM) Corporation which will take care of non-performing assets and dispose them in the most efficient way, and the reconstitution of ERC.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: June 28, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032459/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june28.htm>

The President's Day: June 29, 2002

29 JUNE 2002

- **\$100-M World Bank loan to fund KALAHI program**
- **Palace to come up with a 'win-win' solution to the San Roque dam row**
- **PSG renews vow to protect President; reaffirms support to GMA's peace, development goals**
- **GMA urges speedy social service, economic program delivery in conflict areas**
- **GMA urges PSG to uphold security of nation**

\$100-M World Bank loan to fund KALAHI program

The government's poverty alleviation program *Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan* (KALAHI) will get a big push with the impending approval of a \$100-million World Bank loan by the Investment Coordinating Committee (ICC) of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

The KALAHI program is considered as a springboard for uplifting the lives of poor urban and rural folk throughout the country, empowering communities through enhanced participation in barangay governance.

Program implementation would fall under the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Rolando Tungpalan, NEDA assistant director-general for national development, said the KALAHI program — to be carried out in six years starting 2002 — embodied President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's poverty reduction goals.

However, the only component that needed firming up by the ICC was the multi-year budget cover for the program.

Tungpalan affirmed that the ICC would eventually give its nod, subject to the further determination of the budget cover.

"The budget requirement of the project may exceed the DSWD budget ceilings in future years," he said.

If the project's budget requirement goes higher than the DSWD budget ceiling, the government runs the risk of sacrificing other projects in its ongoing portfolio for the KALAHI to meet its full budget cover.

"To avoid this, the ICC is now working on a corresponding annual budget requirement for the project that must be represented in the national government budget," Tungpalan said.

The KALAHI program will involve the people in the barangay in designing, implementing and managing poverty reduction activities.

It consists of five components: social preparation, mobilization and community organization; capacity building and technical support; seed fund for community development; implementation support; monitoring and evaluation, studies and advocacy.

Under the component on seed fund for community development, Barangays will be given P300,000 grants for anti-poverty projects.

Palace to come up with a 'win-win' solution to the San Roque dam row

Malacanang has assured the families affected by the multi-billion dollar San Roque Multi-Purpose Dam Project (SRMDP) in Pangasinan and Benguet of adequate compensation package, relocation sites and livelihood projects, saying that it is exerting all efforts to come up a “win-win” solution to the problem.

Undersecretary Rene Diaz, presidential assistant for North Luzon, said that “we do not have a plus-minus situation here where one group will benefit while the other group suffers.”

“Our objective is to arrive at a win-win situation for all parties involved,” Diaz said.

Diaz, along with officials of the SRMDP and the National Power Corporation (Napocor), recently conducted a dialogue with representatives of the families affected by the project, including those coming from the upland barangays of Dalupirip and Ampucao, in Itogon, Benguet who are opposed to the project.

He said that families not previously classified as part of those directly affected by the project would be properly compensated if they are forced to leave their homes as a result of the project.

According to Diaz, some 60,000 families, mostly from the farmlands in the lower parts of Pangasinan, Nueva Ecija and Tarlac, will directly benefit from the project through improved irrigation system.

Aside from the improved irrigation system, Diaz said, the project would also help solve the perennial flooding caused by the Agno River, which affects at least 16 towns in Pangasinan and Tarlac, causing losses in the millions of pesos due to lost harvests.

Diaz said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has instructed him to address the concerns of all groups, whether they are lowlanders or highlanders, stressing that it is possible to provide for the welfare of one group without sacrificing the welfare of the other.

He said that the President has also made it clear that sustainable development is not a mere lip service but a statement of policy, adding that any development effort must take into consideration the environmental impact of a project.

“The key is not only to lessen the environmental costs, but to institute mechanisms wherein the project implementers will take an active role in preserving the environment,” Diaz said.

According to Diaz, the San Roque dam offers a long-term solution to the siltation problems of the Agno River. He said that income derived from the project would be channeled to the Agno River Integrated Watershed Management Program and will be used to fund the reforestation along the river’s banks.

The SRMDP is a 200-meter high, 1.2-kilometer embankment dam on the Agno River spanning the municipalities of San Manuel and San Nicolas, Pangasinan, with a reservoir of 12.8 square kilometers extending into the province of Benguet.

The project provides year-round irrigation for about 70,800 hectares of farmlands in Pangasinan, Nueva Ecija and Tarlac.

PSG renews vow to protect President; reaffirms support to GMA’s peace, development goals

Presidential Security Group (PSG) Commander Col. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. today ensured the unit’s continued care and protection for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, as he pledged the group’s support to the Chief Executive’s bid to bring the nation closer to a regime of lasting peace, justice and prosperity.

In a speech during the commemoration of the PSG’s 104th founding anniversary, Esperon said the PSG recognized the President’s determination in winning the war against poverty, criminality and terrorism.

“We commit to be with you everywhere – even in former rebel camps and anytime as you work long hours for glorious ends. We pledge to you: *Pangulo, Sagot ng Grupo* (The President, Our Responsibility),” Esperon told the President, who graced the anniversary celebration at the PSG Grandstand, Malacañang Park.

He noted that the PSG, since its birth on June 23, 1898, has committed itself to protect the President of the Philippines at all cost.

In 1986, the same commitment became the PSG pledge. Every PSG member has firmly vowed to perform his entrusted duty to protect the President to the best of his ability and with the highest sense of courage, valor and patriotism.

Esperon said a PSG member is ready to make the supreme sacrifice when it becomes necessary.

Beyond anything else, a PSG member’s commitment lies in the noble quest of living up to the genuine meaning of the profession of arms and serving the realization of the dreams and aspirations of the Filipino nation, he noted.

He added that the same pledge has become “the ultimate source of strength and grim determination” of a PSG member “when the going gets tough.”

He stressed that from February to December last year, the PSG secured the President in 138 provincial sorties.

Within the first three months of 2002, the President had 121 provincial engagements, all of which were successfully covered by the PSG.

Besides this, the PSG was at the President’s side in an average of 1.3 engagements she made in Metro Manila.

“That we have come through brings us fulfillment and unqualified pride,” Esperon said.

“Certainly, we believe that securing the President is to the well-being of the whole nation. And we can only thank all of you that are here today for the encouragement and guidance and the operational as well as the organizational support that you have extended to the PSG in order to sustain our operations,” he added.

Among those who attended the celebration were Defense Secretary Angelo T. Reyes, National Police Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., Acting Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gregorio Camiling Jr., Deputy Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya, Air Force Chief Gen. Benjamin Defensor, Army Chief Lt. Gen. Dionisio Santiago, Acting Flag Officer in Command Pastor Ramos, Gen. Leo Alvez, Gen. Jose Calimlim, Deputy Executive Secretary Waldo Flores, Public Estates Authority Manager Ernest Villarreal, Philippine Ports Authority Manager Alfonso Cusi, Undersecretary Susana Vargas of the Office of the President and Evangeline Lourdes “Luli” Arroyo.

This year’s parade of PSG troops was highlighted with the demonstration of the unit’s capability in protecting the President and members of the First Family and the seat of government as well.

Fourteen PSG personnel including three civilian friends of the group received various medals and citations from the President.

The awardees included: (Military Merit Medal) Airman First Class Randy Demegello, Seaman 1 Antonio Tambal, Staff Sergeant Percival Perante and Police Officer 2 Richard Daguman; (Plaque of Merit) Captain Emil Cruz, Senior Inspector Lilian Castillo, Sergeant Gerardo Calar, Senior Police Officer 2 Bartolome Marigondon, Airwoman First Class Barby Cabanilla, Police Officer 2 Edeliza Egan and Carolina Bartolo; (Plaque of Recognition) Don Antonio Martel, Dr. Metodio Palaypay and Precy Asuncion.

For the past year, from June 2001 to date, the PSG effectively and efficiently performed a total of 739 local and foreign protective security operations, including providing protective details to visiting heads of state and ambassadors.

The PSG has also involved itself in environmental protection and conservation activities with the planting of 1,062 fruit and non-fruit bearing trees in Malacañang Park.

The unit also carried out a Solid Waste Segregation Program, part of which is the Health Awareness Program dubbed as "*Bantay Kalusugan*."

GMA urges speedy social service, economic program delivery in conflict areas

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called for the immediate delivery of social services and economic programs in conflict-affected areas following military operations.

The President stressed this during the first en banc meeting of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) at the State Dining Room in Malacañang.

She said communities in conflict areas should right away benefit from the anti-poverty Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI) program.

The KALAHI is a project under the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services being implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

"The people must feel that governance is at work (in their areas)," the President said.

The KALAHI program is considered as a springboard for uplifting the lives of poor urban and rural folk throughout the country.

It empowers communities through enhanced participation in barangay governance.

The program involves the people in the barangay in designing, implementing and managing poverty reduction activities.

It consists of five components: social preparation, mobilization and community organization; capacity building and technical support; seed fund for community development; implementation support; monitoring and evaluation, studies and advocacy.

Besides presiding over the NAPC meeting, the President officiated the oath of office of 11 new representatives from the basic sectors.

Sworn in were 11-year old Paul Bernard Sumaya of the Samahang Nagkakaisa ng mga Karapatan ng mga Bata sa Tondo; James Sian, PNRC; Richard Arceno, Bigay-Buhay Multi-Purpose Cooperative; Susanito Tesiorna, Informal Sector Coalition of the Philippines; Zoilo dela Cruz Jr., National Congress of Unions in the Sugar Industry of the Philippines; Fidel Rancio, Urban Land Reform Task Force; Marcelino dela Cruz, Federation of Senior Citizen Association of the Philippines; Rizalino Segundo, Samahan sa Cagayan Valley; Oscar Francisco, Philcos-Visayas; Jose Loreto Proclamos Jr., Misamis Occidental Federation of Coops; and Mary Lou Caharlan, Pilipina National.

They would assist government in creating policies and programs for the poor.

NAPC lead convenor Teresita Deles said the success of the President's anti-poverty programs would lie in the cooperation and participation of the poor from the basic sectors.

Republic Act 8425 or the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act provided the policy framework by which basic sector participation at all levels of social, political and economic decision-making shall be pursued.

The law created the NAPC, a unified body tasked to oversee all government anti-poverty programs. It also institutionalized basic sector participation in the highest level of decision-making and governance.

For the past months, the NAPC has worked on establishing the organizational landscape on which government and basic sector partnership towards social reform and poverty alleviation could be pursued.

GMA urges PSG to uphold security of nation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Presidential Security Group (PSG) for giving it their all in ensuring the safety of the President of the Republic of the Philippines and the First Family.

But the President said the PSG's responsibilities have become broader in time, particularly after the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

In her speech during the 104th anniversary celebration of the unit at the PSG Grandstand in Malacanang Park, the President said that over and above the PSG's duty to protect the President and the First Family, the group should also protect the nation.

"You have other additional duties to be assigned by the President given the exigencies of the moment, given the material conditions of the specific time in our history," she said.

Protecting the nation has become one of the critical tasks of the PSG, she noted, adding that this extra responsibility became a need to fight global terrorism.

In response to continuing challenges, the President said she has prompted PSG Commander Col. Hermogenes Esperon to send some of his senior officers to work on administration's programs in various part of the country.

She said the PSG has successfully hurdled many challenges from the time of the arrest of Congressman Romeo Jalosjos, an extra assignment for then PSG Commander Gen. Jose Calimlim from President Fidel V. Ramos.

"I told (Col.) Jun (Esperon) – you have been a deputy of Gen. Calimlim, I think you have to revive that old machinery so you can do a special assignment for me. It was perfect because he happens to be the head of the special task force on Congressmen Jalosjos," she said.

The President said she sent Col. Delfin Bangit to Sorsogon to oversee the government's anti-insurgency drive in the province.

"And the people there said 'what a big signal that you sent the head of your Presidential Escort to Southern Luzon Command in order to oversee' so to speak, as the representative of the President of the Philippines, the anti-insurgency drive," she said.

From that time, there have been seven successful anti-insurgency campaigns in Sorsogon.

The President also cited Col. Charlie Holganza who, despite being a PSG officer, also held a position in the Presidential Anti-Organization Crime Council.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 29, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032510/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june29.htm>

The President's Day: June 30, 2002

30 JUNE 2002

- **GMA declares special non-working hoilday in Valenzuela**
- **GMA to join Davaoenos in Celebrating 35th foundation day**

GMA declares special non-working hoilday in Valenzuela

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has declared July 11, as a special non-working holiday in Valenzuela City.

The President, in signing Proclamation No. 209 last June 19, said the day will commemorate the 133rd birth anniversary of the city's most illustrious son, the late Dr. Pio Valenzuela.

The city was named after Valenzuela in 1963.

She said the holiday would give the people the chance to "celebrate the event with appropriate ceremonies."

Dr. Valenzuela was born in Polo, Bulacan on July 11, 1869. He died on April 6, 1956.

A major figure during the Philippine Revolution against Spanish colonizers, Valenzuela secretly established Katipunan branches in many areas in Morong and Bulacan.

He helped Emilio Jacinto establish the Katipunan paper, *Kalayaan*, using stolen types from the *Diario de Manila*.

He was chosen to see Jose Rizal in Dapitan to convince the latter to support the revolution. To fool authorities, he was accompanied by a blind man who pretended to be a patient of Dr. Rizal

The doctor exhibited the values of dedication, patriotism and unity.

Historians quoted from him two learning messages: "*Mahalaga sa pambansang katatagan ang ating pangangalaga sa makatarungang adhikain at kalayaan* (A just cause and liberty are important to our national strength)" and "*Ang komunikasyon ay mabisang instrumento sa pagkakamit ng pagkakaunawaan at pagkakaisa*(Communication is an effective instrument in achieving understanding and unity)."

GMA to join Davaoenos in Celebrating 35th foundation day

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is set to celebrate with the people of Davao del Norte their 35th foundation anniversary on July 1.

It was on July 1, 1967 that the then province of Davao was subdivided into three independent provinces: Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur and Davao Oriental.

Similar foundation day celebrations will be held in Digos City, Davao del Sur and in Mati City, Davao Oriental.

Governor Rodolfo del Rosario, also president of the League of Provinces of the Philippines and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, confirmed the President's arrival.

President Macapagal-Arroyo will deliver an anniversary message in a program at the RDR-BSP Training Center, Mankilam, Tagum City. She will later have lunch with local officials and heads of national agencies at the Tahanan ng Punong Lalawigan.

She is also expected to lead officials in inaugurating and blessing the new building of the Davao Regional Hospital.

Before the President's arrival, a cultural and multi-sectoral parade along the streets in Tagum City, the provincial capital, will be conducted as early as 5:30 a.m.

The President's visit will highlight the culmination of the week-long celebration — which bears the theme, “Dabaanon: Panaghiusa, Pakigdait ug Kalambuan Ipadayon!” — of the province.

On the night of July 1, a neo-ethnic musical fashion show will be held at the Tagum Cultural Trade Pavilion. The show will feature the rich cultural heritage of the province through music and art in fashion and a video presentation on the different tourist spots in the province.

Historians claimed that Davao probably derived its name from the ancient Bagobo word “daba-daba” or fire that the people used for rituals. The Tagabaua tribe called the river bisecting the region “Daba” and the Guiangan tribe, “Davoh”.

The Davao region was already an ethnic melting pot way before the Spaniards arrived. Its eastern shores were occupied by the members of the Manobo, Tagacaolo, Guiangan, Bilaan and Aeta tribes. The western part was inhabited by the Bagobo and Mandaya tribes. Samal and Talicud Islands belonged to the Samal tribe.

Davao was first visited by the Spaniards, led by Alvaro de Saavedra, in 1528. Lopez Villalobos explored Manay, Baganga and Sarangani Island later in 1543. The first Spanish settlement was established in 1591 in Caraga (Davao Oriental).

However, the entire region remained under the Sultanate of Maguindanao. It was only in 1844 that the ruling Sultan ceded Davao to Spain.

The Muslim inhabitants refused to be ruled by Spaniards. So Spanish forces, led by Don Uyanguren, quelled the revolt and killed Muslim leader Datu Bago in 1847. Uyanguren became the first governor of Guipuzcoa (an area that now comprising Davao City and environs).

In 1900, the Japanese established extensive plantations of abaca around the Davao Gulf and engaged in fishing, logging and trading. The number of Japanese steadily increased such that the area was called Japan *kuo* (little Japan). It had its own Japanese embassy, school, Shinto shrine, Buddhist temple and newspaper.

The Moro province was organized in 1903 with Davao as its district. In 1914, the Department of Mindanao and Sulu was created and Davao was one of its provinces.

Davao City received its charter when Elpidio Quirino formally inaugurated it on March 16, 1937. The post-war years saw an influx of “pioneers” from all over the Philippines trooping to Davao in search of opportunities.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 30, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032523/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june30.htm>

The President's Day: July 1, 2002

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- **GMA turns over CLOAs, certificate of completion of P21-M bridge in a visit to Magsaysay, Davao Sur**
- **GMA releases some P15.6 million worth of checks for livelihood projects, farm equipment for Davao Norte**
- **GMA continues to enjoy full support and confidence from LAKAS-NUCD-UMDP members**
- **RP is aiming to be world's top banana producing country, says GMA**
- **P700-M in coco levy earnings now available to benefit coconut farmers nationwide – GMA**
- **GMA reiterates vow to help Mindanao prosper**
- **GMA honors former Davao Sur Vice Governor Sunga**
- **GMA leads Cabinet in meetings on growth, peace concerns with RDC-RPOC's in Mindanao**
- **Hybrid rice user gets P30,000 net income per hectare, says GMA**
- **DILG official calls on people to harness people power for national development**

GMA turns over CLOAs, certificate of completion of P21-M bridge in a visit to Magsaysay, Davao Sur

MAGSAYSAY, Davao del Sur – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the turnover of the certificate of completion of a multi-million peso bridge and awarded certificates of land ownership awards (CLOAs) to agrarian reform beneficiaries of Davao del Sur during a brief stopover here

The President was on the first leg of her three-day working visit to Davao del Sur, Davao del Norte, Maguindanao and Cotabato City.

In simple ceremonies here, the President turned over to Hagonoy Mayor Jose Superales, Jr. the certificate of completion of the Balatucan-Lapulabao Bridge.

The bridge was built at cost of P21,620,207 by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) under its Agrarian Reform Community Project and funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

She also turned over a total of 64 CLOAs to 60 agrarian reform beneficiaries covering 91 hectares in the province of Davao del Sur.

To date, DAR said, the Macapagal-Arroyo administration has exceeded its targets on CLOA distribution for the Davao del Sur province as enunciated by the President in her State of the Nation Address last July 2001.

She also distributed assorted medicines worth P50,000 from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) and another P50,000 worth from the Department of Health (DOH) for indigent residents of this town.

The assorted medicines were turned over by the President to Magsaysay Mayor Arthur Davin.

After the awarding rites, President Macapagal-Arroyo and her official party motored to Quezon Avenue in Digos City to attend the wake of former Davao del Sur Vice Governor Antonio Sunga.

From there, the President proceeded to Tagum City to grace the 35th Foundation Anniversary of Davao del Norte and to preside over the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and the Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) of Region XI.

GMA releases some P15.6 million worth of checks for livelihood projects, farm equipment for Davao Norte

TAGUM, Davao del Norte – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded some P15.6 million worth of checks for various livelihood projects and loans for small entrepreneurs as well as farm equipment for qualified beneficiaries in Davao del Norte.

The President was the guest of honor and speaker during the 35th Founding Anniversary of the province of Davao del Norte held at the BSP-RDR Gymnasium, Mankilam in this city.

She also presided over the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and the Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) of Region XI held here.

During the ceremony, the President handed a P10 million check under the cattle distribution scheme of the Department of Agriculture (DA) that would benefit some 2,500 cattle raisers in Mindanao within the period of 10 years.

Under the administration's micro-finance program, which is funded by the Quedan Corporation (Quedancor) and the Ahon Movement, the President turned over checks worth some P3.74 million to benefit a total of 321 women entrepreneurs in Davao del Norte.

She also distributed purchase orders amounting to P4.16 million to 306 farmers under the Quedan/Ahon's self-reliant farmers/fisherfolk program.

The President also turned over 2,000 assorted seedlings to 54 families from the Davao City Tribal Council for Peace and Development under the DA's orchard establishment of indigenous upland farmers program.

Still under the DA, the President turned over the following:

- four units of 4-wheel drive farm tractors under the Ginintuang Masaganang Ani (GMA) corn program;
- seven units of global positioning system (GPS) to 25 fishermen of the seven municipalities of Davao del Norte and Compostela Valley;
- one unit of multi-purpose dehydrator for the Samal Island Mango Producers Multi-Purpose Cooperative;
- four units of power sprayers to the Davao del Norte Mango Growers Council;
- three units of shallow tube wells for farmers of Davao del Norte.

In the same program, the Chief Executive released a check in the amount of P750,000 from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) as endowment fund of the Davao Regional Hospital to be used for indigent patients.

Another check amounting to P125,000 from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) was handed over by the President to Tanglaw Livelihood Sea-K (Self Employment Assistance – Kaunlaran) Association.

To the Kabayangan Sea-K Association, the President also turned over a check in the amount of P125,000.

Under the DSWD's core shelter assistance project, the President also awarded a total of 100 checks at P25,000 each to the same number of beneficiaries from Davao Oriental.

From the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the President turned over a check in the amount of P100,000 to the SUYAPA Farmers Association of Alegria and Compostela, in Compostela Valley for its Quick Response Team (QRT).

The President also awarded certificates for scholarships to 57 technical-vocational scholars administered by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

For the health needs of indigent residents of the province, the President turned over 500 PhilHealth cards, making the total health cards released for Davao del Norte to 17,413 as of July 1.

On top of that, the President also distributed a total of 238 certificates of land ownership awards (CLOAs) to 2,810 agrarian reform beneficiaries from Davao City, Davao del Norte, Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental, covering an area of 1,548 hectares.

According to the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), they have exceeded their target of CLOA distribution for Region XI for the first semester of this year.

Davao del Norte was originally a part of what was then collectively known as Province of Davao until the late Congressman Lorenzo Sarmiento, Sr. authored a bill, which was later passed into law – Republic Act No. 4867 – that divided Davao into three provinces, namely Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur and Davao Oriental, on May 8, 1967.

On June 17, 1972 the name Davao del Norte was changed to Davao under R.A . No. 6430.

All three Davao provinces simultaneously celebrate their anniversary every 1st of July.

GMA continues to enjoy full support and confidence from LAKAS-NUCD-UMDP members

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, chairman of the ruling Lakas-National Union of Christian Democrats-Union of Muslim Democrats of the Philippines (Lakas-NUCD-UMDP), continues to enjoy the full confidence and support of party members.

In a statement, Secretary Gabriel Claudio, chief of the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office (PLLO), said that the party members were not disappointed nor disenchanted with the President over the resignation issue of Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

“There continues to be no doubt about her (the President) as the highest and most deserving symbol of political authority and leadership within the party,” Claudio said.

Claudio, who is also the senior deputy secretary general of Lakas NUCD-UMDP, likewise said party members recognize that the Guingona-DFA issue is not a party matter.

“This is an issue of effective governance, particularly on the composition of the President’s Cabinet, which in the final analysis is the prerogative of the President,” Claudio said.

Claudio also said there is absolutely no truth to reports that some Lakas-NUCD-UMDP members harbor doubts about the President’s loyalty to the party.

He noted that the President assumed the active chairmanship of Lakas, “even as she is titular head of the broader administration coalition of political parties and groups.”

“Lakas members recognize and appreciate the high regard of President Macapagal-Arroyo for them and the party,” Claudio said.

According to Claudio, the members of the ruling party have no cause “to believe the intrigue that she will join or rely on another party as the principal vehicle to support the political and economic programs of her administration.”

RP is aiming to be world’s top banana producing country, says GMA

TAGUM, Davao del Norte—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed the hope that the Philippines would become the number one banana producer in the world as she called on the people of Davao del Norte to work toward that goal.

In her speech at the 35th Founding Anniversary of the province of Davao del Norte held at the BSP-RDR Gymnasium here, the President said the Philippines is now the world's number three banana-producing country after displacing Colombia.

The President congratulated the people of Davao del Norte because their province, according to her, is the center of the country's "strong and vibrant" banana industry.

She said that if the big China market would be added to the traditional markets of the Philippines for its banana exports, then the country might become the world's top banana-exporter.

"We might even become the number two or the number one banana producer in the world, and that is up to the people of Davao del Norte to work for it," the President said.

The President also said that Australia, another potential market for Philippine bananas, is set to announce the result of its regular quarantine inspection service that is being undertaken in consultation with its private sector.

She said that it is very important for the Department of Agriculture attaché to Australia to work with the Australian private sector so that Philippine bananas could finally penetrate the Australian market.

The President said that the Philippines should continue to "work and pray" so that the two big markets—China and Australia—would be opened for Philippine bananas.

Also in her speech, the President congratulated Davao del Norte for being a model province in cooperative development. "Your cooperatives are models of strong leadership and cooperative governance," she said.

Later in the program, the President turned over checks for livelihood projects, farm equipment, and loans for micro-finance programs worth more than P15 million.

P700-M in coco levy earnings now available to benefit coconut farmers nationwide – GMA

TAGUM CITY, Davao del Norte – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that the United Coconut Planters Bank (Cocobank) is now ready to make available some P700 million in coconut levy earnings for the benefit of the country's coconut farmers and the coconut producing provinces.

The Chief Executive made this announcement in her speech before thousands of residents here who attended the 35th Foundation Anniversary of Davao del Norte held at the BSP-RDR Gymnasium here.

The President recalled that during the Independence Day celebration this year, she had announced that the board of the Coconut Industry Investment Fund has approved the release of P86 million as first-year premium under the expanded farmers life insurance program.

"The upgraded life insurance policies for more than one million farmers are ready for distribution to the region," the President said.

She expressed the hope that in Region XI, the Department of Agriculture can supervise the distribution of the new life insurance policies for coconut farmers throughout the country.

The President also said she was elated to know that the price of coconut per kilogram is now P13.50 from its earlier price of P6.00 per kilogram.

“This is the highest price in the last three years. So that by itself, the coconut farmers now have doubled their income,” she stressed.

The President likewise said that she has instructed all concerned government agencies to see to it that the first fruits of the coconut levy fund should go to micro-financing for coconut farmers at P1,000.00 per coconut farmer.

Saying that coconut farmers would like to pull their funds for cattle breeder programs, the President instructed the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) through Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor, to work this out with the different provincial agricultural officers in the coconut producing provinces beginning with the provincial agricultural officer of Davao del Norte.

In the livestock sector, the President said that her administration is now replenishing the cattle population.

“We have come up with the policy to decrease the cattle hectare ratio from one is to one, to one is to six,” the President said.

“We want to make it attractive for coconut farmers to grow cattle underneath your coconut trees here in Davao del Norte,” the President said.

In this connection, the President announced the release of P10 million for the cattle distribution scheme of the Department of Agriculture for some 2,500 cattle raisers in Mindanao “so that they can spread out and develop the cattle industry in Mindanao for the next 10 years.”

GMA reiterates vow to help Mindanao prosper

MAGSAYSAY, Davao del Sur — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called for peace, unity and cooperation among all Filipinos, as she reiterated her resolve to help Mindanao and its people attain socio-economic growth.

Arriving at Barangay Lower Bala here by helicopter from Davao City this morning amidst cloudy skies and an off-and-on drizzle, the President lauded Magsaysay Mayor Arthur Davin for fast-tracking the completion of various projects for the town’s constituents.

In a speech delivered in fluent Cebuano, the President asked the people of Davao del Sur to rally behind government programs and projects meant to uplift the quality of life of all, particularly the poor.

She said she took pride in the completion of the Kilolog Bridge which has started to link people from at least nine barangays in Magsaysay and has spurred agricultural trading activities in the area.

Magsaysay, a palay-producing area, is some 80 kilometers southwest of Davao City.

She thanked the British government for providing a loan to bankroll the construction of the 58-linear meter steel bridge over Bulatukan River and of other bridges in other villages nationwide.

The President said: “Let this project also serve as a bridge for all of us to be united in pursuing peace and socio-economic development.”

She recalled that today’s visit was the second she made in this town. The first was when she was still vice president when she attended a gathering of farmers in the town.

She said that she was the second Macapagal to have recognized the town and its people.

The late President Diosdado Macapagal, father of President Macapagal-Arroyo, was responsible for the creation of the town some 35 years ago, according to Mayor Davin.

In her speech, the President also took note of the faster delivery of basic services — such as those on health care, agricultural development, education, infrastructure, among others — in poorer communities in the country.

“As a child of Mindanao — having lived in the region for many years, I reiterate my resolve to see the region grow economically,” she said.

A huge crowd of townspeople — gathered at the foot of the makeshift stage built alongside the road right after the Kilolog Bridge — applauded the President many times in the course of her short speech.

On her way to Lower Bala, people — most of them schoolchildren in their uniforms — lined on both sides of the main highway and waved at the President and her party.

The President took note of this and thanked the people here for the warm welcome accorded her.

After her speech, the President led officials in turning over some P100,000 worth of branded medicines to Mayor Davin for the use of the townspeople.

Assisted by Cabinet Officer on Regional Development 11 Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez and Davao del Sur governor Reynerio Llanos, she also distributed 90 certificates of land ownership award (CLOAs), covering 91 hectares of farmland, to 60 agrarian reform beneficiaries.

She further gave out bags of agricultural produce worth P1,000 each to the people as part of the government’s “Pagkain ng Bayan” program.

As the program was going on, a medical civic action program was conducted across the stage.

The medical mission, which served some 300 folks, was undertaken under the “Paglilingkod Abot Kamay” of Mayor Davin, in cooperation with the Army’s 25th Infantry Battalion, 601st Brigade; the Presidential Security Group, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office and local government agencies.

Nearby, a National Food Authority-deployed rolling store sold cheap rice and other food products and medicines to the village people.

From here, the President went to nearby Digos City, capital of Davao del Sur, to visit the wake of the late former vice governor Antonio Sunga, who also was Lakas-NUCD provincial chairman and head of the Aguman Ding Capampangan group in the province.

GMA honors former Davao Sur Vice Governor Sunga

DIGOS CITY, Davao del Sur — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today paid tribute to the late former Davao del Sur Vice Governor Antonio Sunga, who had set a shining example of honesty and integrity while in public office.

The President went out of her way from a hectic schedule to motor to the Sunga residence in 272 Quezon Ave. here, where Sunga’s remains lie in state, to condole with the bereaved family — Sunga’s wife Dulia, and children Romeo, John, Anthony and Joseph.

The late former vice governor was supposed to be among those who should have met the President in her visit to nearby Magsaysay town where she inspected this morning the newly-opened Kilolog steel bridge and awarded various socio-economic programs and projects to benefit the town's people.

Sunga, a doctor, would have represented the Aguman Ding Capampangan, Inc. (Davao chapter) group as its president.

The Aguman members have been very supportive of the President in her efforts to bring about growth in the country, particularly the countryside.

Also a native of Pampanga like the President, Sunga succumbed to cardiac arrest last Thursday, June 27.

People remembered Sunga, who also served as chairman of the Davao del Sur Lakas-NUCD-UMDP party, as their three-time vice governor until he lost in his gubernatorial bid in the last local elections.

But more than this, they looked up to the standards set by Sunga in the field of good governance, adding that he was one of the best political leaders the province had.

After the visit, the President flew to Tagum City in Davao del Norte where she attended activities commemorating the province's 35th foundation anniversary.

It was on July 1, 1967 that the entire province of Davao was divided into three — Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur and Davao Oriental.

GMA leads Cabinet in meetings on growth, peace concerns with RDC-RPOC's in Mindanao

DAVAO CITY — Continuing her commitment to give Mindanao what is due the region, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led Cabinet members in attending to development and peace issues in Southern Mindanao (Region XI).

Joining the President in the joint Region XI Regional Development Council and Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) meeting held in Tagum, Davao del Norte this afternoon were at least 34 Cabinet men and other ranking government officials.

Tomorrow, the President and many of her Cabinet members are expected to be in Cotabato City to discuss the same concerns with officials of Central Mindanao (Region XII).

The President arrived here by Lear jet from Manila at about 9:30 a.m. and was given planeside honors.

On hand to welcome the President were Presidential Assistant for Regional Development Paul Dominguez, Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza, Southern Mindanao Police Chief Superintendent Eduardo Matillano, Regional Political Officer Encarnacion Blanco and Davao City International Airport Manager Frederick San Felix.

“Bringing her top-notch men to the regions is one of the best ways by which the President shows her resolve to keep the government closer to and make it more responsive to the needs of the people,” said a local official.

The President's men included Transportation and Communication Secretary and Cabinet Officer for Region XI Pantaleon Alvarez, Presidential Assistant for Jobs Generation Luis Lorenzo, Education Secretary Raul Roco, Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, Local Government Secretary Jose Lina Jr., Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, National Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes;

Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor, Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Heherson Alvarez, Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Science and Technology Secretary Estrella Alabastro, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, Anti-Poverty Commission Lead Convenor Teresita Quintos-Deles;

Official Development Assistance Secretary Marita Jimenez, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo, Press Undersecretary Roberto Capco, Budget and Management Undersecretary Mario Relampagos, Energy Undersecretary Benhur Salcedo, Presidential Assistant for Agricultural Modernization Angelito Sarmiento, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office Chairperson Ma. Livia de Leon;

Irrigation Authority Administrator Jesus Emmanuel Paras, National Police Chief Director General Leandro Mendoza, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Roy Cimatu, Army General Dionisio Santiago, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Director Malcolm Sarmiento, Water Utilities Administration Representative Alfredo Espino, Corrections Bureau Director Ricardo Macala, Presidential Assistant Mona Valisno, Transportation Undersecretary Carina Valera and Local Government Undersecretary Alipio Fernandez.

Hybrid rice user gets P30,000 net income per hectare, says GMA

TAGUM, Davao del Norte — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the introduction of the hybrid rice into the country gives the Filipino farmer P30,000 net income for each hectare that he tills.

Speaking at the 35th founding anniversary of Davao del Norte held at the BSP-RDR Gymnasium in Mankilam here, the President said earlier in Davao del Sur that she met some of farmers “who planted hybrid rice and have already harvested and they are P30,000 richer than they were before they adopted hybrid rice.”

The President said her administration intends to introduce hybrid rice to some 80,000 hectares throughout the country by October this year. In Mindanao, the President noted, hybrid rice has already been introduced to some 37,000 farmers.

She noted that every farmer who adopts the hybrid rice program gets P10,000 loan from the Land Bank of the Philippines through the Quedan Rural Credit and Guarantee Corporation (Quedancor).

The President further noted that the research and development of the hybrid rice has been given a budget of P450 million.

On irrigation, the President said more irrigation facilities are going to be built in the next few months. In the past year, at least 10,000 hectares in Mindanao have been irrigated on top of the total 26,000 hectares nationwide, resulting in the irrigation of more than 129,800 hectares.

The President also said that more than half a million farmers were granted various types of loans during her administration: 36,000 farmers extended crop insurance and 50,000 covered with guaranteed loans.

The President further noted that the Land Bank is restructuring the past due debts of impoverished farmers after two years of impasse.

She said Land Bank President Gary Teves informed her that most of those responsible for the big past due debts are big corporations and not small farmers.

“So I said, since the past due debts of small farmers is just a smaller portion of the past due debt of the Land Bank, be strict on the big corporations but give the small farmers a chance to rehabilitate themselves,” she said.

“Now, the Land Bank is undertaking debt restructuring to small farmers, waiving its penalties and past due interests,” the President said.

The President also noted that under the agriculture and fisheries modernization program of her administration some P250 million have been made available to marginal fisherfolk communities for financing.

During the program, the President distributed purchase orders amounting to more than P4 million to 306 farmers under the self-reliant farmers and fisherfolk program.

She said her administration would continue to construct farm-to-market roads, market halls and stalls, processing plants, laboratories and post-harvest facilities to facilitate the needs of the Filipino farmers.

She suggested the research on bananas be set up in Davao “so that our bananas can enter the very strict market of Australia.”

DILG official calls on people to harness people power for national development

DIGOS, Davao del Sur — Lawyer Wencilito Andanar, Interior and Local Government Undersecretary for Peace and Order, today sought the institutionalization of people power as a way to bring about growth and progress in the country.

In his speech during the commemoration of the province’s 35th foundation anniversary at the Capitol here, Andanar stressed the need for the people to continue harnessing the strength they have gained from the experiences of the past.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was the guest of honor and speaker at the founding anniversary.

“It is high time for all of us to unite and cooperate as we pursue our common aspiration of raising the quality of life of every Filipino,” Andanar said.

He noted that government resources are not that big to meet all the requirements of building the nation.

“Thus all sectors of society should consider being partners of government in nation-building,” Andanar said.

Andanar stressed that the strength of a nation lies in its people. “The voice of a united people will always be heard,” he said.

“We have seen this before, during the times when we all clamored for the ouster of a dictatorship and wanted democracy to live on in the country,” Andanar recalled.

“We have had a similar experience in EDSA 2, when we sought for good governance and morality in public service,” he added.

In both instances, people power prevailed, Andanar said.

“People empowerment is a means by which we, united and cooperating with each other, can achieve national development,” he said

Andanar cited the unity shown by local officials, led by Governor Reynerio Llanos, and the people of Davao del Sur in transforming their once sleepy agricultural province into a more progressive production and trading hub in southern Philippines.

“Good governance gets its inspiration and strength from an empowered citizenry,” he said.

Davao del Sur, Davao del Norte and Davao Oriental were carved out of the big province of Davao on July 1, 1967.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 1, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032611/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july1.htm>

The President's Day: July 2, 2002

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- **GMA accepts Guingona's resignation as Foreign Affairs secretary 'with regrets**
- **GMA lauds Davao City officials for City's low crime rate**
- **Canlas cites Region XI's impressive growth in agriculture sector**
- **GMA turns over checks amounting to P6.7 million to speed up rehabilitation of Camp Abubakar**
- **GMA wants to transform Abubakar into a civilian-military camp for peace and development**
- **GMA receives released Korean kidnap victim in Cotabato City**
- **GMA thanks U.S. for assistance to former MNLF rebels**
- **GMA turns over some P422.6 M worth of checks for gov't assistance, livelihood projects in Region XII**
- **GMA spells out 3 main components of her Mindanao policy**

GMA accepts Guingona's resignation as Foreign Affairs secretary 'with regrets

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has accepted "with regrets" the resignation of Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. as secretary of foreign affairs, effective July 15.

The President and Guingona had a heart to heart talk in Davao City Monday evening where the President rested overnight after visiting Davao del Sur and Davao del Norte.

A joint statement released this morning said that Guingona's resignation from the Cabinet "stemmed from an honest difference of opinion concerning policy."

"Since the President is the chief architect of foreign policy, the Vice President yields. The Vice President continues to hold the President in high esteem, and is committed to good governance," the joint statement said.

The full text of the joint statement signed by the President and the Vice President:

"The Vice President had a heart to heart talk with the President in Davao City last night. The Vice President tendered his resignation as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, which the President accepted with regrets, effective July 15, 2002.

"The resignation stemmed from an honest difference of opinion concerning policy. Since the President is the chief architect of foreign policy, the Vice President yields. The Vice President continues to hold the President in high esteem, and is committed to good governance.

"The Vice President expressed his appreciation to the President for the opportunity to serve as Secretary of Foreign Affairs. The President thanked the Vice President for his patriotism and devotion to duty in implementing the nation's foreign policy.

"The President shall continue to support the following programs initiated by the Vice President in his capacity as Secretary of Foreign Affairs:

1. The Overseas Filipino Investment Bond project undertaken in coordination with the Department of Finance, envisioned to generate savings for overseas Filipinos and empower them with skills training to enhance their occupations or professions;
2. The housing program, coordinated with HUDCC, intended to provide shelter to the OFWs and their families; and
3. The rehabilitation and establishment of an integrated National Steel in Mindanao."

GMA lauds Davao City officials for City's low crime rate

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has lauded the city government of Davao City for attaining one of the lowest crime rates in the country.

The President made this statement during the 12th Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) meeting held Monday at the CAP Development Center in Tagum, Davao del Norte.

In this report to the President and the RDC-RPOC members, Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, chairman of RPOC XI, said the province has achieved a decrease of 124 incidents or 12.09 percent from January to May 31 this year as compared to the same period last year.

Duterte said crime volume distribution for the said period shows that crime incidents decreased in Compostela Valley, Davao del Sur, and Davao City.

Based on the crime volume recorded, Duterte said the computed average monthly crime for the period of January to May 2002 is 5.63 incidents per 100,000 population per month.

More importantly, Duterte noted that Region XI has been spared of such major crimes as kidnapping, bombing, major armed robberies and terroristic activities.

Duterte said the region is investing a lot in their intelligence gathering activities against the perceived presence of threat groups such as the local communist movement, the secessionist groups and organized criminal syndicates such as the Pentagon group.

In varying degrees, these factors, according to Duterte, can affect the peace and stability in the region, including those drug-related criminal groups.

He also reported that a small Pentagon satellite group previously identified to be operating in the region, specifically in Davao City, has moved elsewhere.

In the overall context, however, he attributed the improvement in crime situation to the collective vigilance of the people of the region, its officials, the police and the military.

“On the whole, our crime situation in terms of the average monthly crime rate and crime solution efficiency is certainly much better than the rest of the country and we are determined to continue doing our best,” Duterte told the President.

The RPOC XI chairman and Davao City mayor also assured the President that under her leadership, “we will continue to strive to sustain peace and stability in our region so that our people can productively pursue their individual and collective endeavors, enjoy the fruits of their labor and continue to contribute in nation building.”

Canlas cites Region XI's impressive growth in agriculture sector

Socio-economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas has cited Region XI's impressive growth in the agriculture sector for the first quarter of year 2002.

In his report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during the 12th Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) held Monday at the CAP Development Center in Tagum, Davao del Norte, Canlas told the President that production of palay and corn significantly grew by 56 percent and 42 percent respectively, during the first quarter of the year.

Canlas, who is also the director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), said majority of the provinces in Region XI planted early this year in anticipation of the El Niño next month.

Region XI, or what is now known as Davao Region, is composed of the provinces of Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur and the cities of Davao, Digos, Panabo, Samal and Tagum.

Canlas noted that production levels of major fruits such as banana, pineapple, mango, and durian followed a similar upward trend due to increased number of fruit-bearing trees.

In his report, Canlas said that banana and pineapple production grew by 2.9 percent; mango by 6.7 percent; and durian by 9.3 percent.

He said that durian used to be a seasonal crop but can now be enjoyed in abundance all year round due to more intensive propagation.

Canlas stressed that the region's strength lies in the agriculture sector as it supplies most of Mindanao's and the country's requirements, notably banana and cacao production, which accounts for 61 percent and 70 percent respectively of Mindanao's total output.

Accordingly, banana exports remain to be the Davao Region's top dollar earner.

During the first three quarters of year 2001, Canlas said banana exports had a total value of US\$221.8 million, followed by coconut oil at US\$57.1 million and coconut refined at US\$27.1 million.

Significantly, he said the exports of portland cement reached US\$5.1 million, making it to the top ten of the region's export products.

As of 2001 to the present, Japan and the United States are the region's major buyers of top exports such as banana and coconut crude oil while Palau and New Zealand have emerged as new promising markets for its products.

GMA turns over checks amounting to P6.7 million to speed up rehabilitation of Camp Abubakar

CAMP ABUBAKAR, Barira, Maguindanao—Putting flesh into her avowed policy of turning the ruins of this former stronghold of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) into a zone of peace and prosperity, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today turned over checks totaling P6.7 million to finance various infrastructure projects in the area.

The President, who arrived in this former MILF encampment by land from Cotabato City, also assured the local officials of Barira, Buldon and Matanog that she will extend all her support to the Iranun Development Council (IDC), which will spearhead the development of the area under the government's Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI) program.

The Iranuns are the natives that reside in the area before it was taken over by the MILF.

The President and her official party were supposed to come here by helicopter but inclement weather forced them to instead travel by land. Because of the change in travel plans, the President's schedule was delayed by about two hours.

During her one-hour visit here, the President was joined by United States Ambassador Francis Ricciardone and top Cabinet officials, which included Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor, Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza, Lead Convenor Teresita Quintos-Deles of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, and AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu.

In her remarks at the formal launching of the IDC, the President said that henceforth the area should no longer be called Camp Abubakar but Sitio Bumbaran, Barangay Tugaig of this town.

After her remarks, the President turned over a check amounting to P5.48 million from the Philippine-Canadian Development Fund to Matanog Mayor Naser Imam for various infrastructure projects in the town.

From the Department of Social Welfare and Development of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DSWD-ARMM), the President also turned over a check in the amount of P340,000 to Mayor Naser Imam of Matanog and another check worth P720,000 to Barira Mayor Alex Tomawis.

The checks would be used for barangay projects in Barira and Matanog, the two towns hardest hit by the all-out military offensive against the MILF in 2000, resulting in their recovery by government forces.

The President also turned over 12 units of agricultural implements like corn shellers, rice threshers and floating tillers for the farmers of Barira, Buldon and Matanog.

Also for the 34 barangays of the three municipalities, the President distributed planting materials under the government's household enhancement project for Muslim communities.

The mayors of the three towns also received from the President assorted medicines worth P120,000 donated by the Philippines Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) and to be distributed to poor residents.

After the awarding ceremonies, the President returned to Cotabato City where she presided over the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and the Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) of Region XII.

GMA wants to transform Abubakar into a civilian-military camp for peace and development

CAMP ABUBAKAR, Barira, Maguindanao — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said her administration is in the process of transforming Camp Abubakar, the former main enclave of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), into a civilian-military camp for peace and development.

In her remarks at Sitio Bumbaran, Barangay Tugaig here where Camp Abubakar used to stand, the President said the area would be a new model of a peace and development zone.

“In other words, any Filipino could live here,” she said.

The President noted that the Iranun tribe, which claims part of the camp as their ancestral land, is a good example that people here just want to live in peace.

“This place also belongs to the Iranun and I think today (there) should be a closure. I think we should no longer call this place Camp Abubakar. I think we should call it what the Republic of the Philippines calls it, a sitio or a barangay,” the President said.

She said that henceforth, Camp Abubakar should now be known simply as Sitio Bumbaran, in Barangay Tugaig, Barira.

The President said that one of objectives of her visit to this former MILF stronghold is to dispel the rumors spread by the political opposition that her government is returning the camp to the MILF.

She said she has ordered the Philippine Army's 603rd Brigade to be permanently stationed here.

“Itoy upang ipakita sa buong Pilipinas at sa buong mundo, lalo na iyong mga nagdududa na baka ibalik ang kampo sa mga rebelde ng ang Camp Abubakar ay buong nasa kamay ng Republika ng Pilipinas (This is to show to the whole Philippines and to the whole world, particularly to those who have doubts that the camp might be returned to the MILF, that this camp is now entirely in the hands of the Republic of the Philippines),” the President said.

The President noted that the Iranun tribe has always been a productive and progressive people long before the armed conflict with the MILF started in the early 1970s.

“During the MNLF war, they (Iranuns) were forced to leave their communities as it was destroyed. Afterwards, MILF, that took control of the area, occupied their communities,” she said.

On efforts to bring peace and development to the area, the President said her administration is committed to rehabilitate the 34 barangays of the three towns of Barira, Buldon and Matanog that comprise the former camp.

She said that the government has brought electricity to the towns and has built farm-to-market roads costing some P7 million.

The construction of the roads was done by the 54th Engineering Brigade of the Armed Forces of the Philippines headed by Col. Eduardo Lena.

Earlier, the President launched the Iranun Development Council (IDC), which will spearhead the development of the area under the government’s Kapit- Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI) program.

GMA receives released Korean kidnap victim in Cotabato City

COTABATO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presented to the media released kidnap victim Jae Keon Yoong, a Korean national who was abducted last February by an unidentified armed group in the province of Maguindanao.

The President, who was presiding over the joint 13th Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) meeting here, briefly interrupted the proceedings to present the Korean kidnap victim before the local and national media.

“Welcome back!,” the President greeted the kidnap victim as the latter was presented to her by incoming Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. and Presidential Adviser for Mindanao Jesus Dureza.

In turn, the President handed over the rescued victim to a consular official of the Korean Embassy who was here in Cotabato City to receive their national.

“I am now turning you over to your embassy official safe and sound,” the President told the Korean national.

The President congratulated all those who have worked for the release of the victim who had spent more than five months in captivity.

In an interview, Dureza said the Korean’s release from his abductors was made possible by the joint efforts of the PNP, the military, local government units in the province, as well as certain officials of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Both Dureza and Ebdane assured the public that no ransom has been paid for the release of the victim, saying they have strictly maintained the no-ransom policy of the government in seeking his release.

GMA thanks U.S. for assistance to former MNLF rebels

CAMP ABUBAKAR, Barira, Maguindanao — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked the United States government for supporting the rehabilitation of 300 former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) combatants to have a new lease on life under peaceful conditions.

In an extemporaneous speech during her visit to this former Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) camp here, the President announced that the US government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is also willing to provide assistance to former MILF combatants, especially those residing in this area so that they can go back to normal life.

The President said that US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, who was with the presidential party that visited Abubakar, informed her of the willingness to help another batch of 300, this time former MILF combatants.

The President, quoting the US Ambassador, said “it is in this part that the Philippine government won the war against the MILF.”

The Chief Executive said that the USAID is ready to rehabilitate these former rebel combatants so that they will understand that they can also achieve development if they join the mainstream of the Filipino society.

The USAID assistance to former rebel combatants is provided in the memorandum of agreement, the signing of which was witnessed by the President when she visited the United States in February this year.

GMA turns over some P422.6 M worth of checks for gov’t assistance, livelihood projects in Region XII

COTABATO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today distributed a total of P422.6 million worth of government assistance and livelihood projects for residents of Region XII in an effort to help improve their economic condition and way of life.

The Chief Executive, assisted by representatives of concerned government agencies, personally turned over the various government assistance to qualified beneficiaries during awarding rites held this afternoon at the Regional Government Center grounds here.

From the Philippine Coconut Authority, the President handed over a Group Insurance Certificate amounting to P413.38 million for some 41,338 coconut farmers in Region XII. The certificate was given to Norberto La Paz, president of the Coconut Farmers Federation, on behalf of the coconut farmer beneficiaries.

From the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), she distributed four sets of computers to four state colleges and universities in Central Mindanao.

The other DOST assistance turned over by the President were the following:

- Meat processing equipment consisting of meat grinder, corned beef shredder, tie linker, meat stuffer and meat slicer, for 97 members of the SANGKAP under the Livelihood Enhancement for the Poor, Vulnerable, Disabled and Women Sector. Recipient: Phoebe Ardinas, president of SANGKAP.
- Two units of jack loom for 45 loom weavers of the Kutawato Cultural Heritage Foundation, Inc. Recipient: Bai Mompong Mentang, president of the Kutawato Cultural Heritage Foundation, Inc.
- A check amounting to P200,000.00 for the establishment of feedmill for the farmers and livestock growers in PALMA Complex, Midsayap, Cotabato. Recipient: Engineer Benjamin Ontal, president of the Midsayap Livestock, Poultry and Aqua Producers Association.
- A check amounting to P91,520.00 for the upgrading of muscovado processing in San Pedro, President Quirino, Sultan Kudarat. Recipient: Joel Pedral, president of San Pedro Sugar Cane Planters Association.

From the Department of Labor and Employment, the President awarded three checks amounting to P50,000.00 each under the Tulong Alalay sa Taong May Kapansanan (TULAY) 2000 program for augmentation capital of disabled persons who are engaged in livelihood projects.

The President likewise distributed the following DOLE assistance for the benefit of the poor beneficiaries of Cotabato City:

- A check amounting to P268,125.00 for the construction of municipal building Phase III in Aleosan, Cotabato under the Rural Works Program. Recipient: Aleosan Mayor Vicente Sorupia.
- A check amounting to P300,000.00 representing first release for the construction of Bagsakan Public Market Building Phase I in Maitum, Sarangani under the Rural Works Program. Recipient: Maitum Mayor George Yabes.
- A check amounting to P100,000.00 for duck egg production project of the Samahan ng mga Magulang ng mga Batang Manggagawa ng Barangay Impao. Recipients: Isulan Mayor Ernesto Matias and Bartolome Licor, president of the Samahan ng mga Magulang ng mga Batang Manggagawa ng Barangay Impao.
- A check amounting to P50,000.00 to the United Laborers Association of Tinaugan for re-lending to its members. Recipients: President Quirino Mayor Rodolfo Erese and Gina Pacaunces, United Laborers Association of Tinaugan.

She also awarded from the Technical Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA) 79 grantees of the checks representing stipend and book allowance (P2,750.00 each) to 79 Private Education Student Financial Assistance (PESFA) in Cotabato City.

The President handed over 25 checks from the Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA) with a total amount of P15,000.00 at P600.00 each representing payment of allowance to grantees of its skills for employment program.

Also from OWWA, President Macapagal-Arroyo awarded various assistance as follows:

- Six checks amounting to P1,000.00 representing payment of monthly allowance to the grantees of the Sagip-Batang Manggagawa Project. Recipients: Nehad Nehad, Prince Aldan Agom, Unayzah Kasan, Adziz Herb Nor, Jameel Pacal, and Nasser Utto.
- A Check amounting to P3,500.00 under the Migrant Workers Scholarship Program. Recipient: Bai Lejanie Diocolano
- Five checks at P3,000.00 per grantees under the Sagip Batang Manggagawa Project (Tulong sa Pamliya ng OFWs). Recipients: Saima Abdullah, Norlaila Ascar, Alham Camsa, Samrah Malik, and Jayson Nueva Espana.

The President also distributed from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) two checks from the Philippine Canadian Development Fund for barangays Simone and Pedtad, municipality of Kabacan: P1,875,000.00 for the Undungan Sudang and another (P1,875,000.00) to the president of Mads Giamil.

She distributed Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs) from the Department of Agrarian Reform to beneficiaries from barangays Kenram and Mapantig, Isulan, Sultan Kudarat.

From the Department of Agriculture, the President awarded the following:

- Certificate of turn-over for two units of tractor with accessories under the Inter-Act Mindanao Project to the Provincial Government of Cotabato. Recipient: Cotabato Governor Emmanuel Pinol.
- Two Certificates of Completion of the communal irrigation projects in the municipalities of Columbio and Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat. Recipient: Sultan Kudarat Governor Pax Mangudadatu.

She also turned over certificates of Completion for farm-to-market road projects in Sultan Kudarat and Cotabato.

Lastly, the President awarded three checks amounting to P98,933.57 to Pag-IBIG Housing Loan borrowers from Kidapawan City.

GMA spells out 3 main components of her Mindanao policy

COTABATO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today spelled out three components of her administration’s policy towards Mindanao: one, that peace and development should go together; two, that the quest for peace should always be based on the recognition of Philippine sovereignty; and third, the realization that Philippine society is a multi-ethnic one.

In her speech at the Regional Government Center where she officiated an awarding ceremony, the President noted that there could never be real peace without development.

“To bring progress to Region XII, there should first be peace in the region,” the President said.

On the quest for peace, the President said this should be pursued with due consideration to the Philippine Constitution.

She noted that there were rumors that she was going to Camp Abubakar in Maguindanao to give back the camp to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. “That’s not true, I came here to give the camp to the Philippine Army,” she said.

The President said the third consideration should be that Filipinos should acknowledge the fact that its society is a multi-ethnic one.

“This is the beauty of our race. We are very rich in tradition because of our diverse culture. We should acknowledge our different cultures and strive for social justice for everyone,” she said.

In emphasizing the need for peace and development, the President noted the recognition given by the Organization of Islamic Conference on the Moro National Liberation Front headed by Southern Philippine Development Authority chairman and Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema.

The President likewise led the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and Regional Peace and Order Council RDC-RPOC for Region XII in Cotabato City.

Earlier in the day, the President was in Camp Abubakar where she extended support for the Iranun Development Council and reiterated that she’s not giving away the camp to the MILF.

She also turned over checks totaling P6.7 million to finance various infrastructure projects in the area.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: July 2, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032629/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july2.htm>

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Camp Duma Sinsuat to erase grim image of Camp Abubakar

BARIRA, Maguindanao — Camp Abubakar is history. So is its image of being an impregnable camp of the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Retaken by government troops in July 2000, this sprawling 10,000-hectare mix of clearings and thick forests shall be called by its geographical name: Sitio Tugaig, Barangay Bambaran, Barira town, Maguindanao province in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Since the camp's recapture and henceforth, no other flag except the Philippine tricolors will be hoisted in the area, which is bounded by the towns of Barira, Matanog and Buldon in Maguindanao.

Further, the former MILF camp will be known as Camp Duma Sinsuat, in honor of the first Muslim member of the Cabinet who served during the term of former President Diosdado Macapagal and who distinguished himself as a man of honor and integrity in the public service.

The infamous Bedis Academy, a two-hectare camp clearing where the MILF trained its armed forces and where MILF Chairman Salamat Hashim and his lieutenants used to live in and hold office, shall soon be the springboard for peace and development in the area.

The academy complex will permanently host the headquarters of the Philippine Army's 603rd Brigade under Col. Antonio Romero. The brigade headquarters is located in Pigkalan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao.

Thus ordered President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who braved intermittent heavy rains as she motored through a long stretch of bad muddy roads and crossed two bridgeless rivers to visit this town Tuesday.

The President's move, a local official here said, would totally renew the image of the former MILF camp.

From being a rebel training center, the area will be transformed to a Philippine civilian-military camp with twin goals — that of maintaining peace and pushing development in the area.

The President had earlier considered asking the Army's 54th Engineering Brigade under Col. Eduardo Lena to move in with the 603rd Brigade.

But she noted that the military's engineering group — which has done so much in building and improving infrastructure support facilities like roads and bridges in the area in the last two years — is based in Manaoag, Pangasinan.

During her recent visit to the engineering camp in Pangasinan, the families of the builder-troopers asked the Chief Executive when she would recall their loved ones back to their home base, she recounted.

The move to put the military permanently in the Camp Abubakar area, for all its worth, outweighs perceived disadvantages.

For one, this will finally “tell the whole country and the world” that the MILF main camp is wholly “nasa kamay ng pamahalaan (in the hands of the government).”

Secondly, the presence of the military in the former MILF stronghold will finally make its imprint that the government has no intention to return any captured lair to any rebel group.

This thus dispels the notions and claims of critics and detractors that the government is returning to the rebels the latter’s self-proclaimed territories.

Thirdly, it will reassure that Filipino civilians affected by the Mindanao conflict will get immediate government help.

“Hindi natin ibinabalik ang mga kampo sa MILF. Ang ginagawa natin ay kaunlaran (We do not return camps. What we do is development),” the President stressed.

The Iranon and other communities in the area will settle in the perimeters of Camp Duma Sinsuat.

The President took note of the sacrifices of the people of Barira, Matanog and Buldon during the conflict. She said the Iranons claimed the former MILF stronghold as their ancestral land.

“Itinatayo natin ang mga bahay ng mga naapektuhang mamamayan (We are rebuilding the houses of conflict-hit Filipinos),” she said, adding that more efforts would be made to also rebuild their lives.

Fourthly, it will push forward ongoing peace talks between the government and the MILF in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Just recently, the peace panels of both sides signed an agreement to push the development of the area and the soonest reintegration of conflict-affected civilians to the mainstream of Philippine society.

But people do not have to wait for signings to bring about development.

It is the government’s duty to promote and see to it that the people, especially the poor, get the most out of government social services and economic opportunities, the President stressed.

“Pilipino tayong lahat (We are all Filipinos),” she said, as she urged unity and cooperation in rebuilding Camp Duma Sinsuat, in particular, and the nation, in general.

GMA authorizes issuance of optional motor vehicle plates with preferred inscription thru public auction

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has authorized the Department of Transportation and Communications, through the Land Transportation Office, to issue optional motor vehicle plates bearing preferred inscriptions through a system of public auction.

The President issued Memorandum Order No. 65, dated June 20, 2002, upon the recommendation of the Land Transportation Office (LTO), to address the need to regulate the issuance of motor vehicle plates bearing preferred inscriptions.

Under this order, all proceeds received by the LTO in excess of the cost incurred in issuing and processing these special vehicle plates shall accrue to the general unappropriated funds of the national government.

Subject to the approval of the Department of Finance and the Department of Budget and Management, the President mandated the LTO to promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to implement the objectives of the Memorandum Order.

GMA issues E.O. closing Nayong Pilipino, transferring land to MIAA for new terminal

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has issued Executive Order No. 11 closing down the Nayong Pilipino and authorizing the transfer of 8.6 hectares of the Nayong Pilipino Foundation property in Pasay City to the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA).

The foundation and the MIAA earlier entered into a memorandum of agreement to effect the transfer of a portion of the land occupied by the Nayong Pilipino park for redevelopment as part of the new passenger terminal at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport known as the International Passenger Terminal 3.

In the executive order, the President explained that the construction of an additional parallel taxiway and surface road connection between NAIA Terminal 2 and Terminal 3 requires the 8.6 hectares of land, covered by TCT No. 18445 of the Register of Deeds of Pasay City, and the closure of the park for the safety of the general public and the security of the premises.

The construction of the taxiway and road link is in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization flight standards to ensure the safe and efficient movement of passenger, baggage and cargo at the NAIA.

The transfer of the land occupied by the park to another person or entity requires authorization from the President under Section 7 paragraph (a) of Presidential Decree No. 27, which created the Nayong Pilipino Foundation.

GMA underscores need for gov't, private sector cooperation in fighting poverty

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today underscored the need for a continued partnership between the government and the private sector in the country's total fight against poverty.

"I would especially like to seek your support in increasing employment opportunities for the poor," the Chief Executive said in her speech at the Asian Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility held this morning at the Dusit Nikko Hotel in Makati City.

The President said more than 24 million of the 75 million Filipinos, or one out of every three, are poor. "And they will likely remain poor unless we and they themselves do something about it," she said.

The philosophy behind the corporate citizenship is that the Filipino people are more than consumers, more than laborers, more than hired help but part of one society and that "we are all responsible for the well-being of one another beyond business and beyond politics."

The President thanked the organizers for initiating the Asia Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility and for advancing positive approaches to solve the country's social problems.

"Your consolidated program is an appropriate strategy as we in government are also seeking to converge our own social programs. This assures us of maximum reach and cost effectiveness," she declared.

According to the President, the single biggest problem of the country today is unemployment, saying that 13 percent of the country's work force, or almost five million people in absolute number, is out of work.

"I believe that the most important imperative for corporate social responsibility today, and for government programs for that matter, is to attend to this army of unemployed. Either providing them with emergency employment or

empowering them to become self-employed or re-engineering them to qualify for the jobs available or providing them maximum basic needs if they absolutely cannot find work,” the President said.

The President also said that the specific pledges made by the members of the corporate community can help push forward the “*Kapit-bisig Laban sa Kahirapan*” (KALAHÍ) and it can also inspire similar acts of generosity from the private enterprise.

“We are bent on working closely with the private sector and with the people’s organization and non-government organizations (NGOs) to make a dent in finding jobs and livelihood for our people so as to fight poverty,” she said.

In her meetings with the Regional Development Councils in the country, the President said she discovered “an irony that the most progressive regions in our country are the ones with the highest unemployment.”

The President expressed the hope that the members of the corporate community in the country will “help fund or even run the KALAHÍ programs for some 1,000 communist-influenced or infiltrated barangays in Regions 3, 4 and even 5.

“Our KALAHÍ programs must enter those barangays immediately because KALAHÍ is the face of the government for those deprived areas,” the President said

The President said that if KALAHÍ fails to come in immediately for lack of funds, or lack of manpower or lack of machinery, a vacuum will be created once again and the insurgents will just return. “So, this is where, I hope, corporate social responsibility will be directed at this time,” she added.

She told participants to the forum that their commitment to enhance their level of exposure in various social development programs could provide government with the flexibility it needs to focus its resources on other urgent national priorities, particularly in bringing down the power rates and enforcing peace and order in Metro Manila.

GMA will assume DFA post if no replacement for Guingona is named by July 15 — Palace

Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. today said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will assume the post of foreign secretary in a concurrent capacity if by July 15, the date when the resignation of Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. as foreign secretary takes effect, no replacement has been named yet.

In his regular press briefing, Afable said the President will assume the post until such time that the special search committee she has formed has finally recommended a nominee and appointed to the vital post.

“With the kind of communication facilities that the Office of the President has, she can run DFA from here,” Afable said.

In a separate interview, Joey Rufino, presidential adviser for political affairs, also said there would be no problem with the President assuming the foreign affairs portfolio since she is, after all, the chief architect of the country’s foreign policy.

But Rufino said he is confident before July 15, the President would be able to appoint the new foreign secretary.

A joint press statement issued Tuesday by the President and Guingona said that the latter’s decision to leave the Cabinet stemmed from “an honest difference of opinion concerning policy.”

“Since the President is the chief architect of foreign policy, the Vice President yields,” the statement said.

According to Afable, the special search committee created by the President is different from the regular search committee in the Office of the President that screens presidential appointees.

The function of this special search committee is specifically to go over the qualifications of nominees for the post soon to be vacated by Guingona, Afable said.

He added, however, that the composition of the special search committee has not been completed yet.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 3, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032639/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july3.htm>

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- **GMA bares 8-point foreign policy guideline**
- **GMA orders Mendoza to solve Metro Manila traffic problem, clear piers of smuggled, goons**
- **Eliminate kidnapping in one year, GMA tells new PNP chief**
- **GMA sees more decreases in electricity bills**

Statement of the President

I am pleased to announce that the IPP Interagency Review Committee, chaired by the Secretary of Finance and established by the EPIRA (Electric Power Industry Reform Act), has now completed their review of all thirty-five (35) IPP contracts with the presentation of their report to me yesterday.

Of the 35 contracts, the Committee found that –

1. six (6) contracts had passed their review with no legal or financial issues;
2. eleven (11) contracts, while passing the review, have some remedial financial issues that need to be addressed to assure that the government and the public are not being financially prejudiced;
3. two (2) of the contracts, while having some remedial policy issues, were found to be financially sound;
4. eleven (11) contracts have some financial issues that may require re-negotiation of the financial terms;
5. lastly, five (5) contracts were found to have both legal and financial issues that need to be referred for appropriate study, renegotiation and possible legal action.

On the latter (5) contracts, I have instructed the DOJ and PSALM to work together to formulate a plan of action.

For the twenty-two (22) contracts requiring the study or re-negotiation of certain financial terms, I have instructed the DOE and PSALM to initiate the necessary steps to arrive at an acceptable solution to the issues or work out a plan of action for the same.

For the two (2) contracts with remedial policy issues. I have instructed NEDA, in coordination with the DOJ to review these contracts.

I have given these agencies three months to take action on these contracts and come up with results.

It is the overall objective of our administration to reduce the cost of electricity for the consumer, while respecting valid commercial contracts and the Rule of Law. I am confident that the steps to be taken by the relevant government agencies will be consistent with the mandate of EPIRA and our goal of rationalizing the power industry and bringing about lower electricity rates.

GMA bares 8-point foreign policy guideline

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that on July 15, she will assume the post of Secretary of Foreign Affairs in a concurrent capacity.

Addressing the 33rd National Marketing Conference at the Westin Philippine Plaza, the President said that as such she will make sure to strengthen the international linkages not only to fight terrorism and uphold the law everywhere but to be able sell the country's goods and services.

The President said there are eight realities of the regional and international environment which will guide her foreign policy. These are the following:

1. The paramount influence of China, Japan and the United States in the security and economic evolution of East Asia.
2. The growing context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in global affairs.
3. The role of the international Islamic community.
4. The looming importance of inter-regional organizations.
5. The protection of the environment, natural resources and maritime territory.
6. The drive for foreign markets and foreign investments in which Europe is also a major source along with the US, Japan, China and Asean.
7. The importance of international tourism, and;
8. The crucial role of the overseas Filipinos in the socio economic stability.

The President said that these eight realities will shape the foreign policy of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

To make our country competitive and attractive to investors, the President said the country must be on the ball in world affairs.

“Why did Malaysia become competitive? Because (Prime Minister) Mahathir was there in world affairs as well as internal reforms,” the President said.

GMA orders Mendoza to solve Metro Manila traffic problem, clear piers of smuggled, goons

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed newly-appointed Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza to work with Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman Bayani Fernando in solving the traffic problem in Metro Manila.

The Chief Executive issued the directive during the Philippine National Police (PNP) change of command, where Mendoza, as outgoing PNP Director General, handed over the PNP command to Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. in ceremonies held this morning at Camp Crame in Quezon City.

The President also tasked Mendoza to work with Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo “to cleanse the waterfronts all over the Philippines of smugglers and goons.”

According to the President, Bernardo had informed her that unlike Internal Revenue Commissioner Rene Banez who has to deal with white-collared crooks, the Customs Bureau crooks are blue-collared cooks.

“They’re not only smugglers; they’re goons,” she stressed.

This is the reason, the President said, why she decided to have a “top cop to help him there.”

“I need a top cop in the streets of Metro Manila and the ports of the other cities. That is why Larry Mendoza is now the Secretary of Transportation (and Communications),” she added.

In her speech, the President also paid tribute to Mendoza for his stint as PNP chief.

She said Mendoza came well prepared for the top post of the PNP, adding that he is well prepared to be the top enforcer of the streets and waterfronts, carrying a diploma from the Philippine Military Academy, a round of assignments along the entire breadth of police duties, and two masteral degrees.

What makes Mendoza a cut above the rest, the President said, are his outstanding trustworthiness, steadfastness and a tenacious drive to perform his duties well. These, she stressed, are “qualities that came into public view in the

tense days of Edsa 2 and also in the May 1 riot last year and in several other occasions that tested the inner strength of many police officers.”

As a top cop, the President added, Mendoza led his men well. He also cared and loved the men and women of the PNP, she added.

The President announced during her speech that as Mendoza leaves his post in the PNP this month, the policemen and policewomen, including the police officers, “will feel their pay increases this July.”

Specifically, the President said, a police master sergeant, starting July, will be receiving a higher pay than the salary of the military brigadier generals.

The President thanked the congressmen for having passed a law increasing the soldiers’ pay. “Incidentally, we will begin to phase in the implementation of that military salary increase at the end of the year,” she said.

She recalled that during Mendoza’s term as PNP chief, she sought from him the further professionalization of the PNP.

“So, in order to increase police visibility and deter crime, especially kidnapping, during Larry’s term, he hired new policemen, all college graduates,” the President said, adding that Mendoza had these policemen and policewomen, old and new, trained and retrained as needed.

The President expressed the belief that the salary increase and the professionalization of the PNP will make the PNP “an attractive force for our good elements in the community to join.”

She also noted that the country’s crime solution efficiency index now stands at 90 percent in kidnap-for-ransom cases.

“The resolution rate was better in the year 2001, Larry’s year, than the year before, with 63 percent of the cases solved compared to 48 percent the year before. And this 63 percent solution rate is so far the highest solution efficiency for kidnap-for-ransom cases in the last five years,” the President said.

At the same time, the President said the market for illegal drugs was significantly downgraded in the year 2001.

“We had our biggest haul in the drug trade last year. We confiscated 500 kilograms of shabu in Quezon province,” she said.

In the case of the shabu raid in Quezon, the President praised the provincial director, Col. Roberto Rosales, and his men for resisting bribery, temptation and catching the biggest fish caught so far in the whole history of the country’s drug war.

She also said the raid on the laboratories in Batangas and Zambales, which netted a total haul of 1,300 kilograms of shabu, and the Quezon drug raid are the largest drug busts ever in the history of the government’s crime-fighting efforts.

Eliminate kidnapping in one year, GMA tells new PNP chief

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today challenged the new chief of Philippine National Police (PNP) to eliminate kidnapping in one year.

Speaking at the formal installation of Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. as the 10th chief of the PNP during the traditional turnover ceremonies at Camp Crame, the President said the “better news was that General Ebdane accepted the challenge.”

The President, however, said Ebdane will not be without expert help in his battle against kidnapping syndicates and against drug lords. She said Ebdane will be assisted by a special task force headed by Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

With Ebdane’s ascendance to the top post of the PNP, the President said she has abolished the anti-kidnapping task force under the National Anti-Crime Commission (NACC) and, for that matter, the NACC.

“I am giving Jun (Ebdane) total accountability and responsibility for kidnapping,” the President said.

The President also directed Ebdane to call a summit on kidnapping this coming Tuesday.

The President said she expects this summit to clearly define, once and for all, all the parameters of command responsibility in the police, including the application of due process which, she pointed out, the whole PNP organization must understand and accept.

“After this there will be no more excuses,” the President said.

The President said Ebdane comes very well endorsed by the Chinese-Filipino community and two former Presidents.

In addition to his seniority, and in addition to her own assessment of his loyalty and capability, the President said Ebdane impressed the Chinese-Filipino community with his outstanding integrity when he was head of the Western Police District.

“It was the special trust of the Filipino-Chinese community that I considered when I named Jun Ebdane the head of the controversial Presidential Anti-Organized Crimes Task Force (PAOCTF), and even the head of the NACC, which I especially created to fight kidnapping after the abolition of the PAOCTF,” the President said.

The President said that the anti-kidnapping task force under Ebdane has improved the resolution rate of kidnap cases with its two-pronged approach to kidnapping, which are neutralizing the enemy and educating the community.

GMA sees more decreases in electricity bills

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today took more firm steps to rationalize the power industry and bring about lower electricity rates.

Following the receipt yesterday of the report of the Independent Power Producers (IPP) Interagency Review Committee which conducted a reappraisal of all 35 IPP contracts, the President issued a series of directives that are expected to further reduce the cost of electricity for the consumers while at the same time respecting the rule of law and the validity of legal contracts.

The review committee is headed by Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho and includes Justice Secretary Hernando Perez among its members.

She ordered the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Energy (DOE), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (PSALM) to re-negotiate the contracts, institute policy remedies and take legal action within three months.

“I hope that now that you have a big decrease in your electricity bills, these actions will result with more decreases along the way,” the President said.

Negotiations don’t happen overnight, the President said, adding that “at least there is something to look forward to over the long or short term, depending on how easy or how difficult the re-negotiations will be.”

“We cannot unilaterally just change the rates,” the President said. “Where there is a legal issue, we must go to court. Where there is no legal issue...negotiations.”

Of the 35 contracts, six passed the review with no legal or financial issues, “so they can go and operate and the rates are more or less fair,” the President said.

The six are the Limay (Bataan) Combined Cycle Gas Turbine A; the Navotas Gas Turbine Plant Unit 4; the Ambuklao Hydroelectric Plant; the Toledo Thermal Plant; and the Paragua Diesel Plant.

The President also said 11 contracts passed the legal review but have some financial issues that need to be addressed to assure that the government and the public are not financially prejudiced.

“Maybe in this review, we might be able to find room for some more centavos decrease,” the President added.

The 11 contracts involve the Pagbilao Coal-Fired Plant; the Panamucan Diesel Power Plant; the Leyte-Cebu Geothermal Plant; the Naga Power Plant Complex; the Leyte-Luzon Geothermal Plant; the Mindanao I Geothermal Plant; Malaya Thermal; Zamboanga Bunker-C Fired Diesel Plant; Gen. San. Bunker-C Fired Diesel Plant; Bakun Hydroelectric Plant; and the Mindanao Coal-Fired Thermal Plant.

Two of the contracts reviewed by the committee, while having some remedial policy issues, were found to be financially sound. These are the Benguet Mini-Hydro Plant and the Caliraya-Botocan Kalayaan Project.

“Probably we cannot squeeze any blood anymore from those stones,” the President said.

The President added that 11 other contracts have some financial issues that may require renegotiation of financial terms. “Maybe these renegotiations might bring about some bigger decreases in power rates,” the President said.

The contracts involve the Navotas Gas Turbine Plant Plant Units 1-3; Mindanao Power Barges; Ormat Binary Cycle Geothermal Plant; Bunker C-fired Diesel Generating Plant Iligan I; Bunker C-fired Diesel Generating Plant Iligan II; Subic Bunker-fired Diesel Plant; Bauang Diesel Plant; Bataan EPZA Power Plant; San Pascual Cogeneration Facility; Iligan Natural Gas; and the Mindanao II Geothermal Plant.

Five contracts, according to the President, were found to be both legal and financial issues that have to be referred for appropriate study, whether re-negotiations or possible legal actions, or both.

The five involve the Binga Hydroelectric Plant; the Cavite EPZA Diresel Plant; the Sual Coal-Fired Thermal Plant; the Casecnan Multipurpose Project; and the San Roque Multipurpose project.

Of the five contracts that are both legally and financially problematic, two are not operating, the President said. “So, even if we renegotiate and file legal actions, they won’t result in lower rates,” she added.

The President ordered the DOJ and PSALM to work together to formulate a plan of action on the five contracts.

For the 22 contracts requiring study or renegotiation, she instructed the DOE and PSALM initiate the necessary steps to arrive at an acceptable re-negotiation of the issues.

For the two contracts with remedial policy issues but which are financially sound, the President instructed the NEDA to coordinate with the DOJ in reviewing them.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 4, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032652/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july4.htm>

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Gov't to meet deficit ceiling for 2002, GMA assures business community

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the business community that the government would be able to meet its deficit ceiling for this year as she cited positive economic indicators during the past six months.

In her keynote speech at the opening of the 59th Council Meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations-Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN-CCI) held this morning at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang, the President said if her administration was able to meet its target deficit ceiling last year, it will also be able to achieve its target of P130 billion for 2002.

"We believe we will be able to achieve (the target) this year because our five-month deficit so far is smaller than the five month deficit that we had last year at this time," the President said.

The President said that one proof that the government could meet its deficit target is that the bonds recently floated by the Department of Finance at 12 percent, which she said is too high, were oversubscribed.

"And so, that's why we're quite liquid. And even if we have a deficit right now, the liquidity is there to finance it. And that's why we have interest rates going down again," the President said.

For the first five months of this year, the deficit stood at P107.5 billion, or almost 83 percent of the full year 2002 target. .

Earlier, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said he too is confident that the government will be able to achieve its deficit target of P130 billion for this year, saying that the situation would reverse before the end of the year through improved tax collections.

"The wider gap between revenue and expenditures for the five month period in 2002 is not indicative of our full-year performance," Camacho said.

Aside from the low interest rates, the President said the June inflation rate went down to 3.0 percent from the 3.6 percent in May, which is even below the projected 4.5 to 5.5 percent average target for this year.

The President said that interest rates are at their lowest during her administration in the last 15 years, adding that she has lowered the cost of capital by developing and strengthening the country's financial markets.

She said that in her government's quest for more jobs, it has improved the competitiveness of industries and services in a number of ways.

For example, the President said, the government has taken measures to reduce the cost of power, transportation and communications, which are the lifeblood of commerce.

The President said that with these measures, the ranking of the Philippines from being number six among the most expensive country in Asia in terms of electricity rate, will improve to number two.

To further increase productivity, the President said, the government is strengthening labor-management relations, working to eliminate corruption and red tape, and expanding retraining programs to prepare the country's work force for the demands of the new global economy.

ASEAN remains as cornerstone of Philippine foreign policy, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that more and more foreign policy decisions of her more than 18-month-old administration will have to be made in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In her speech at the 59th ASEAN-Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) Council Meeting and 15th ASEAN-CCI Conference held this morning at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall, the Chief Executive said the commitment to ASEAN "is a cornerstone of Philippine foreign policy."

The President, who will assume the position of a Foreign Affairs Secretary in a concurrent capacity effective July 15, thanked the officers and members of the ASEAN-CCI led by its president, Jose Concepcion, Jr., for its efforts in pushing for the causes and concerns of the developing world.

The President said she places great importance to regional trading arrangements. "I have faith in the viability of the ASEAN Free Trade Area," she added.

"We cannot generate adequate investments unless we become part of a larger, integrated regional market. This is the only way we can compete for markets and investments with the giants elsewhere in the world," the President stressed.

The President said that ASEAN member-countries are also "looking beyond our immediate borders to extend the benefit of regional integration to our major trading partners in the region – the so-called ASEAN plus Three with China, Japan and South Korea."

At the beginning of the year, the President said, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) process reached a significant milestone when the first signatories of the AFTA agreement — namely, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand – "achieved tariff levels of zero to five percent on almost all goods traded among us."

The President pointed out that the Philippines will remain firm in implementing its commitments to ASEAN as a strategy to achieve global competitiveness towards attaining sustainable growth and development.

However, she said, that AFTA has a long way to go before becoming an effective means for strengthening the region's competitive position in the global market.

It is for this reason, the President said, why she supports ASEAN's resolve to go beyond tariff cutting. She added that the leaders of ASEAN are now meeting and working on the elimination of non-tariff trade barriers.

"We are harmonizing our product standards and developing mutual recognition arrangements. We are negotiating the liberalization of trade in such important areas as financial services, telecommunications, construction, air and maritime transport, and tourism," she declared.

The President also cited the efforts of ASEAN in binding the region together by expanding the transportation and energy networks and easing the flow of goods, people and power throughout the region.

“We are drafting an agreement to make it easier and less expensive for tourists to come and travel within ASEAN. Closer integration is necessary for the long-term survival and prosperity of each of the ASEAN countries,” she said.

The President lauded the organizers of the conference for having successfully brought together the leaders of the various chambers of commerce and industry of ASEAN.

She also congratulated the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Cambodia for their accession to the ASEAN-CCI. “All 10 ASEAN countries are now part of the ASEAN Chamber of Commerce and Industry,” she said.

Earlier, ASEAN-CCI vice president Miguel Varela announced the accession of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Cambodia as members of ASEAN-CCI. Concepcion presented copies of the joint accession documents to the representatives of Laos and Cambodia.

GMA: China, Japan, U.S. will be determining influence in security situation, economic evolution of East Asia

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that China, Japan and the United States and their relationships “will be the determining influence in the security situation and, therefore, the economic evolution of East Asia.”

Keynoting the 59th Association of Southeast Asian Nations-Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN-CCI) and the 15th ASEAN-CCI Conference opening ceremonies held this morning at Malacañang’s Ceremonial Hall, the President said that this aspect is one of the primary realities of the regional and international environment that drives her eight-point foreign policy guidelines.

“With China’s entry into the WTO (World Trade Organization), the nations of ASEAN and ASEAN as a region must reflect on our own economies to determine how we can best position ourselves to ensure the continued competitiveness of our exports and capitalize on the opportunities presented by a more open China,” the President said.

The President, who will assume her post as Foreign Affairs Secretary on July 15 in a concurrent capacity, said the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area will create a market of 1.8-billion people and a combine of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$2 trillion.

“It is projected that this would boost ASEAN exports to China by 48 percent and increase ASEAN’s GDP by nine-tenths of one percent,” she stressed.

According to the President, the Philippines will benefit from expanding exports to the rapidly growing Chinese market and developing, manufacturing and service facilities in ASEAN that can feed the expanding mainland operations of Chinese and multinational companies.

“This is an excellent opportunity for our logistic service, manufacturing and commodity firms to develop strong business links with post-WTO China,” she added.

The President said Japan’s trade with ASEAN totaled more than \$120 billion last year.

In this connection, the President announced that the outline of an ASEAN-Japan economic partnership is “being worked out.” But in the meantime, she said, a so-called New Age Partnership arrangement with the Philippines is under study.

The President noted that this has become more significant now that Japan is out of recession.

“The rapid phase, depth and breadth of global integration is the foremost reality we face,” she said, adding that this involves not just the flow of goods but also of services, people, ideas, best practices of governance, doing business and investing.

The President pointed out that this factor is linked to another reality in the regional and international environment that guides her foreign policy – “that the country’s economic growth will continue to heavily involve direct foreign investments.”

The President said the Philippines will maintain its economic ties with the rest of the world to the extent that these ties are consistent with the country’s commitments and the welfare of the Filipino people.

GMA views Asean as vital in promoting common goals

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the growing importance of multilateral and inter-regional groups in pushing common interests, particularly trading.

In a speech before the 59th ASEAN-Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) council meeting and 15th ASEAN CCI Conference at the Malacañang Ceremonial Hall, the President said the recognition she placed on multilateral and inter-regional groups was one of the factors that “drives my foreign policy.”

She stressed the importance of ASEAN, a regional grouping whose members are the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

She said she supported the ASEAN’s “rules-based multilateral trading system.”

This is what “the World Trade Organization (WTO) is supposed to be,” she said. “Our support is pragmatic, not ideological. We want what works for the people.”

“It is imperative that the rules underpinning the system ensure economic growth, employment and development for all,” she added, pointing out that everyone should benefit from trade.

If this does not happen, developing nations may be unable to sustain the imports of capital equipment and raw materials. Further, the benefits of trade liberalization will be put in doubt.

“The system itself could lose credibility. This could undermine our ability to mobilize support for trade policy reforms. And it does not help when developed countries persist in maintaining protectionist barriers against products of interest to developing countries like the Philippines and many of the ASEAN countries,” she said.

The products include textiles and garments and tropical, agricultural and fishery products.

The President lamented that while developed countries promote the virtues of a market-driven economy, they subsidize their farm production with billions of dollars.

This prejudices the global commitment to trade flow while emboldening protectionists and complicating the work of officials in developing nations.

The President also stressed that the Philippines would remain focused on several goals that would make the Doha Round — or the 4th WTO Ministerial Conference conducted in Doha, Qatar from November 9 to 14, 2001 — live up to its billing “as truly a development round.”

She said one of the goals focused on how to do away with “tariff escalation and tariff peaks for products of interest to developing countries.”

Philippine trade officials and negotiators should “make these part of the early harvest of results,” she said.

They should likewise convince the WTO to “make corollary efforts to lessen the burdensome requirements for developing countries to meet the stringent standards in developed country markets,” she added.

She noted that compliance, in many cases, has proven to be onerous and expensive.

She noted that Philippine mangoes and bananas have a hard time penetrating the markets in some developed countries that seek exhaustive data collection and certification requirements lasting for years.

She said that “sanitary requirements and technical standards seem to be the weapon of choice of protectionists.”

The Chief Executive also sought greater liberalization of the temporary entry of service providers in the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

She said this has a lot of potential for developing countries and where support for such liberalization is strong such as in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector.

Further, she asked trade negotiators to work on “raising the requirements for the initiation of anti-dumping actions and rationalizing the standards for determining injury” due to dumping.

Dumping occurs when a company exports a product at a price lower than what it normally charges for the same product in the home market.

Another goal she stressed was how to “make special and differential treatment truly operational by providing more funds and resources for capacity building to enhance supply-side capacities, improve private sector competitiveness, implement trade agreements and meet continuing obligations under those agreements.”

The trade negotiators should also focus in assessing the feasibility of providing for the further differentiation of treatment among developing countries.

She stressed that this was imperative, given the wide range of levels of development from the current two categories of least developed and developing. “Because even in the developing category, there are wide variations and circumstances,” she said.

The President said the Philippines would remain supportive of the consensus of the Cairns Group – a coalition of 18 agricultural exporting countries — “that export subsidies in the agricultural sector should be eliminated.”

But she said that “we will make a strong case for special and differential treatment on other agricultural issues to enable us to have sufficient flexibility to pursue vital development goals.”

She cited poverty alleviation as one of the Philippines’ development goals and as a cornerstone of her administration.

Late last May, during the ASEAN Free Trade Area conference in Makati City, the President noted that she placed great importance in regional trading arrangements which she viewed as building blocks towards a more open multilateral trading system.

“They prepare us to compete effectively and give us the confidence to take on multilateral commitments,” she said.

The WTO Ministerial Conference is the organization’s highest-level decision-making body that meets at least once every two years, as required by the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the global trade grouping.

The Doha Round declaration mandates negotiations on a wide range of subjects, and other work including issues concerning the implementation of present agreements.

The negotiations take place in the Trade Negotiation Committee and its subsidiaries. Other work under the work program takes place in the WTO councils and committees.

GMA's PPA order lowers inflation rate for fuel, light and water in Metro Manila

As a result of the order of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to reduce the Purchased Power Adjustment (PPA), the inflation rate for fuel, light and water (FLW) in the National Capital Region (NCR) significantly went down by 19.7 percentage points for the month of June, the National Statistics Office said yesterday.

In a report, the NSO also said this is on top of the decrease in the year-on-year inflation from 3.6 percent in May to 3 percent in June as the inflation rates of all the commodity groups also slowed down.

Notably, the NSO said, the 3.0 percent inflation rate in June is the lowest year-on-year rate registered since May 2000.

In its summary inflation report on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the months May and June, the NSO also noted that inflation rate of FLW went down by 19.7 percentage points at 7.1 percent in June from 26.8 percent in May.

The NSO said the decrease is "mainly due to the 14.3 percent annual reduction in the PPA for electricity (from P2.38 per kilowatt per hour in June 2001 to 2.04 per kwh in June 2002)."

Meanwhile, the inflation rate of food, beverages and tobacco (FBT) slid to 1.1 percent in June from 1.4 percent in May; housing and repairs (H&R), to 6.8 percent from 7 percent.

But inflation rates of clothing and services have slightly increased to 3.5 percent and 5 percent in June from their May rate of 3.4 percent and 4.4 percent respectively.

Inflation in the NCR decreased by 1.4 percentage points at 3.7 percent in June from 5.1 percent in May, the lowest inflation rate since July 2000.

According to NSO, this was mainly effected by the 19.7 percentage points decline in the inflation rate of fuel, light and water (FLW).

The inflation rate of food, beverages and tobacco (FBT) eased to 1.8 percent in June from 2.3 percent in May; clothing, 2.6 percent from 2.7 percent; housing and repairs (H&R), 5.0 percent from 5.1 percent; FLW, 3.7 percent from 10.1 percent; services, 4.8 percent from 5.0 percent; and miscellaneous items, 1.8 percent from 1.9 percent.

Meanwhile, inflation rate in Areas Outside NCR slowed down to 2.5 percent in June from 3.0 percent in May due to the decline in the inflation rates of all the commodity groups except for FLW.

GMA cites four realities in regional, int'l environment that drive foreign policy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today outlined four important realities in the regional and international environment that drives her administration's foreign policy.

In her speech before the 59th council meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN-CCI), the President stressed that first of these realities is that more and more Philippine foreign policy decisions have to be made in the context of ASEAN.

ASEAN is composed of the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

She said the country's commitment to ASEAN is a cornerstone of Philippine foreign policy, citing in particular the role of the ASEAN-CCI in pushing for the causes and concerns of the developing world.

"We cannot generate adequate investments unless we become part of a larger, integrated regional market. This is the only way we can compete for the markets and investments with the giants elsewhere in the world," she said.

The second and primary realities, according to the President, is that China and Japan and the United States and their relationships will be the determining influence in the security situation and economic evolution of Asia.

With China's entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the President said the nations of ASEAN as a region must reflect on their own economies to determine how they can best position themselves to ensure the continued competitiveness of their exports and capitalize on the opportunities presented by a more open China.

The President pointed out that this reality has become more significant now that Japan is out of recession.

She said the rapid phase, depth and breadth of global integration is the foremost reality that the region is facing.

"This involves not just the flow of goods but also of services, people, ideas, best practices of governance, doing business and investing," the President said.

The third reality that guides her foreign policy is that the country's economic growth will continue to heavily involve direct foreign investment.

Each of the ASEAN member, she explained, is taking an enlightened and balanced approach to the third reality, saying that for the Philippines, "this starts with our vision of winning the battle against poverty within the decade which is mainly by creating jobs and that is mainly by having investments."

Fourth, the President said is that the coming years will see the growing importance of multilateral and inter-regional organizations to promote common interests.

In this context, the Chief Executive said her administration is supportive of the rules-based multilateral trading system which the WTO is supposed to be.

"Our support is pragmatic, not ideological. We want what works for our people," she said.

Moreover, the President said it is imperative that the rules underpinning the system ensure economic growth, employment and development for all.

"Because if we don't benefit from trade, we may not be able to sustain the imports of capital equipment and raw materials," she said.

COMELEC now all set for July 15 polls, GMA, Cabinet told

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today was assured by officials of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) headed by Chairman Benjamin Abalos that the COMELEC, with the assistance of its deputies, is ready and capable of ensuring the conduct of free, honest, orderly, peaceful and credible Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections on July 15.

Briefing the President and the members of her Cabinet in today's Cabinet meeting on the preparations for the synchronized elections, to be held in ten days, Abalos said that in 41,935 barangays, there will be a total of 671,120 officials to be elected, with more or less 40-million voters going to the polling places on election day.

For these elections, there will be separate ballots, separate election returns and separate tally sheets, with one board of election tellers, and one ballot box per precinct for the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections.

The COMELEC has reactivated its different working committees and has promulgated resolutions to implement the Omnibus Election Code, RA 9164 and other elections laws, Abalos said.

Abalos also said the COMELEC has also strictly implemented the gun ban.

"We have likewise provided safeguards and ensure the timely delivery of election form supplies and paraphernalia to the field offices," Abalos said.

The COMELEC head said it has deputized other government agencies to help them ensure an orderly conduct of the upcoming elections.

To ensure peace and order, Abalos said the COMELEC has deputized the Department of National Defense, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and its four major services, as well as the Department of Interior and Local Government, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Penology and Jail Management.

On election duties, the COMELEC has deputized the Department of Education, whose members will compose the board of election tellers.

And for custody and safekeeping, COMELEC has deputized the Department of Finance.

Other agencies, such as the Department of Transportation and Communications, among others, have also been deputized so that the COMELEC will be able to use their facilities and utilities during and after the elections.

OIC keen on giving RP observer status, says Ermita

The powerful Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has found no problem in granting the Philippines an observer status.

In a report during the Cabinet meeting, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said OIC Secretary General Dr. Abdelouahed Belkeziz has proposed the formation of a team to visit the country.

Ermita said the OIC team would assess the implementation of the 1996 peace accord between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The team would be composed of the Committee of the Eight headed by Indonesian Foreign Minister Nur Hassan Wirayuda and other members.

Ermita said a positive OIC report would merit consideration on the country's application for observer status during the 30th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) in Tehran, Iran in June 2003.

Ermita, together with Governor Parouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), met with Belkeziz on June 25 during the three-day (June 25 to 27) ICFM in Khartoum, the Sudan.

During the Khartoum ICFM, the OIC Final Draft Resolution on the "Question of Muslims in Southern Philippines" noted that the Islamic group:

- Recognized the successful conduct of the plebiscite in the ARMM on August 14, 2001 and the election of Hussin as the new regional governor;
- Renewed its support for the 1996 GRP-MNLF peace pact and called on both parties to preserve the gains achieved as a result of its signing;
- Reaffirmed its position that the question of the MNLF leadership is an internal concern of the MNLF;
- Adopted a forward-looking position in relation to the implementation of the peace pact based on actual conditions on the ground;
- Maintained the observer status of the MNLF;
- Stressed the necessity for the Philippines to finalize the remaining procedures for the full integration of MNLF members into the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police;
- Welcomed the ceasefire between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the agreement for unity between the MNLF and the MILF;
- Urged all OIC member-states and subsidiary organs, including the Islamic Development Bank, to increase their economic, financial, technical and material assistance for the rehabilitation and development of Southern Philippines through the ARMM;
- Appealed to all Islamic and other charitable organizations in OIC member-states to continue extending economic, humanitarian and other assistance through appropriate channels to help displaced people in conflict-affected areas; and
- Commissioned the Committee of the Eight and the Secretary General to continue the necessary contacts with the government and the MNLF to define a timetable to finalize the implementation of all the articles of the peace pact.

The presidential adviser said he also had discussions with Wirayuda on the status of the remaining three Indonesian hostages taken by pirates in Philippine waters.

He said he had assured the Indonesian official that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the military to pursue the kidnappers and recover the hostages.

Ermita said Wirayuda reiterated Indonesia's stand to pull out its monitoring team from Mindanao as "it believes that Phase I of the (1996 GRP-MNLF) Peace Agreement has already been completed."

The Indonesian foreign minister also disclosed that the peace talks between the GRP and the MILF" were not "covered by the mandate of the OIC Committee of the Eight," he added.

Ermita told the Cabinet that on June 26, the Committee of the Eight convened with Belkeziz in attendance, a first in the organization's history, "which showed his real concern over the GRP-MNLF issue."

Besides the positive outlook of OIC member-nation's on the country's efforts to uplift the lives of Muslims, Libyan Foreign Minister Ali Treki disclosed the establishment of the Islamic Development Foundation that would extend assistance to Muslims in the Philippines, Ermita said.

The Philippine delegation to the Khartoum ICFM included Ermita, Hussin, Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Rafael Seguis and his Third Secretary Ezzedin Tago, Philippine Embassy in Egypt Consul General Sahid Glang, Sulu Governor Yusop Jikiri, ARMM Regional Legislative Assembly member Hatimil Hassan, Abdul Sahrin, Office of Muslim Affairs executive director Mujahab Hashim, Abu Amri Taddik, Amil Hamsa Manda, MILF negotiating panel chief Hadji Murad Ebrahim, Ustadz Abdulaziz Mimbantas and Abu Sarip.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 5, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032705/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july5.htm>

The President's Day: July 6, 2002

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GMA shows Filipinos made of sterner stuff in Barira visit

BARIRA, Maguindanao — Tough, decisive, committed.

This was how people described President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo following her visit to Barira, Maguindanao Tuesday.

Dato Akhmad, 63, of Sitio Tugaig, Bambaran, Barira could not believe that he would live to see a President of the republic who is tough enough to go through the daily grind of Iranons in the village.

Akhmad was among over 2,000 men, women and children who patiently waited for the arrival of the President at a clearing in the two-hectare newly-named Camp Duma Sinsuat while drizzles developing into heavy rains fell from time to time, aggravating already bad conditions of the dirt road that snaked its way — through two shallow rivers — to the camp from the national highway in Langkong, Matanog some 9.5 kilometers away.

Camp Duma Sinsuat is the new name of the Bedis Academy where Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels used to train in warfare. It is located at the center of the 10,000-hectare Camp Abubakar, erstwhile MILF stronghold, which is bounded by the towns of Barira, Buldon and Matang, all in Maguindanao province. A recipient of planting materials given under the state's Pagkain ng Masa (Food for the Masses) program, Akhmad came with other folk from different parts of Barangay Bambaran and its environs.

Most, if not all, of them were wet and dripping, their bodies barely covered by banana leaves used as emergency umbrellas and their feet covered with mud.

Like him, 10-year old Zorayda, donned in her blue and white public school uniform, shivered as she tagged at her mother's dress.

Having waited in military tents from 8:00 a.m. until the President arrived near noon, Zorayda shared with her townmates the eagerness to witness a very rare appearance of a President who would visit her place for the first time (although the President had been in Barira poblacion late last year).

"*Mabuhay ang Presidente ng Pilipinas* (Long live the President of the Philippines)," she, along with some 50 other children, cheered when the Chief Executive arrived.

The cheer was earlier rehearsed, but more than the cheer was the inspiration Zorayda and her peers felt when the President, barely shielded by an umbrella from the downpour, walked through a muddied path dotted with puddles, warmly smiling and waving at her near cold welcomers.

“Matapang siya (She is brave),” was the only comment Zorayda gave. After running like mice to escape the horrors of war in the area as they fought for survival and dear life, the people must have looked up to bravery as a prime virtue.

At about 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, talks went around that the President, supposed to have been flown in by helicopter from Davao City at 9:55 a.m., might cancel her trip to Camp Duma Sinsuat because of the bad weather.

Not even the most experienced chopper pilot would dare fly across a hemisphere of rainclouds nestling on thick foliage of Barira’s mountains.

But throughout the waiting, visitors — including United States Ambassador Francis Ricciardone and his wife – and Barira folk stood their ground, as military radio crackled to know where the President was and if she would come.

Near noon, it was announced that the President was on her way. From Davao, she was flown to the Air Force base in the Awang Airport complex in Dinaig, Maguindanao. She stayed there for several minutes with her party, and led a convoy of about 30 vehicles to Barira, some 70 kilometers away.

The Awang airport is 6.8 kilometers south of Cotabato City. From the city to the Narciso Ramos Highway-Langkong, Matanog crossing is about 54 kilometers. The road stretch from Awang to the highway is paved. A 9.5-kilometer “first class bad road,” however, snakes its way from the crossing inward to Barira.

“She will come?” an awed official of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said in the Maguindanaon dialect after hearing the announcement

“She’s stern and decisive! She’s fit to be our President,” she noted, as grateful Barira folk applauded upon hearing the announcement.

“We are happy. The President is willing to experience what we go through day in and day out here and comprehend our sacrifices to keep the place secure from rebels and have it developed into a productive area,” an Army soldier of the 54th Engineering Brigade commented.

But more than braving her way through the rain, the bad roads and perceived security risks, people here will remember the President for her commitment to stabilize peace and deliver socio-economic programs and projects to the area and its people.

A barangay official simply nodded his approval as the President later announced that the Army’s 603rd Brigade – based in Picalagan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao – will have to move into Camp Duma Sinsuat.

He averred that existing in a state of war, uncertain of any good future, has never been the cup of tea of the people in Barira. “Now, with the military permanently based here, we can start sleeping soundly, ready and strong to do what we must do to grow as a community,” he said.

He also noted the many improvements — including the roads built, houses and mosques put up and repaired, farmlands made productive again, among others – the military and state agencies have undertaken in Barira.

Officials saw the President’s visit as her way of bringing to the fore her resolve and commitment to find a lasting and meaningful resolution to the problems faced by the people of Mindanao, of which many areas continue to wallow in the quagmire of poverty.

But in her speech, slightly baffled by on-and-off rainfall, the President lauded the toughness of Barira’s people for surviving the sacrifices brought about by conflict and underdevelopment; their decisiveness to ward off the influences of rebellion and distrust to support government initiatives; and their commitment to work hand-in-hand to make themselves more peaceful and more productive citizens of the nation.

Entrepreneurship to narrow ranks of jobless in Metro

In keeping with the commitment of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to provide gainful employment to the citizenry, the Million Jobs Office headed by Luis Lorenzo Jr. is pushing for entrepreneurship and self-employment to generate jobs in Metro Manila

In a statement, Lorenzo said the entrepreneurship program is a multi-agency effort from both government and private sectors.

Lorenzo said he is tapping the Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corp. (Quedancor) to train and finance 50,000 women entrepreneurs in Metro Manila, who will be lent an average of P10,000 after undergoing training on values and the proper handling of finances for businesses they would run.

On July 12, 17 and every 10 days thereafter until it reaches the quota of 50,000 new women entrepreneurs, Quedancor's five offices in the National Capital Region (namely in Roosevelt, Quezon City, Antipolo, Pasay, Dasmariñas, Cavite, and Malabon) will provide capability-building skills for processing, training and lending services to these future entrepreneurs, Lorenzo said.

The President has confirmed attendance in the July 12 and 17 checks distribution.

Lorenzo is also tapping the private sector through Donald Dee of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), Sergio Luis Ortiz of the Philippine Exporters Association and Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), and Dante Liban of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) on a "skills level program for marketable jobs matched with job fairs and domestic export market-based opportunities."

This particular endeavor will provide market-oriented livelihood opportunities for garments, furniture, stuffed toys and processed food and is envisioned to create 10,000 jobs in depressed areas like Commonwealth and Holy Spirit in Quezon city and other metropolitan slums, Lorenzo said.

Lorenzo is working out with ECOP/PCCI leaders and organized labor groups for the reinstatement of some 300,000 workers in labor subcontracting. Discussions are now centered in "allowing this accommodation under agreed parameters," Lorenzo said.

Additionally, the Jobs Office is also working with the city government of Makati City for the dispersal along Ayala area by August of some 114 food trailers for the livelihood program of the city.

"This pilot program will generate 218 jobs to man the trailers and another three workers per trailer (352 jobs) to handle marketing, cooking and delivery. If it works, we can roll it out all over Manila. Again this is private sector led," Lorenzo stressed.

On July 15, 50 company stores of ECOP will allow their 20,000 employees and families to purchase basic commodities at 20 to 50 percent less than retail market rates.

Lorenzo said he expects that a hundred stores will be put up in a year.

GMA renews call for Filipinos to unite and support the gov't in solving the country's problems

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today renewed her call for the Filipino people to unite and support her administration in solving the country's problems, especially in the fight against poverty and criminality.

In her nationwide radio address this morning, the President said that despite the reduction of the cost of electricity to consumers after she ordered the state-owned National Power Corporation (Napocor) to cut its purchased power cost

adjustment (PPCA), the President said there are still a lot of work to do, particularly in maintaining peace and order, generating jobs, and eradicating poverty.

“Kaya humihiling po ako sa inyong lahat—huwag sana tayong mainip, at patuloy tayong magkaisa at magtulongan (That is why I implore all of you—don’t get impatient but unite and cooperate with each other),” the President said.

The President stressed that in order to attract more investments and generate jobs for the Filipino people, the country needs peace and order.

That is why, the President said, she has ordered Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, new chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), to step up the campaign against all criminal elements, particularly those involved in drug trafficking and kidnapping.

She said that she has given General Ebdane one year to finally put an end to the activities of kidnapping syndicates throughout the country.

The President also said that she has asked Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, a known crime-buster, to help General Ebdane in the campaign against criminal syndicates.

“At sa inyo, mga kababayan, akoy nanawagan na tulungan ang ating mga awtoridad sa ating kampanya laban sa krimen (And to you, my countrymen, I call on you to help our authorities in the campaign against criminality),” the President said.

On PPCA issue, the President said as a consumer herself, she knows the burden that high electricity cost has put on consumers but added that she only inherited the problem from the past administration.

According to the President, her administration is undertaking both short-term and long-term solutions to the problem.

“It is the overall objective of our administration to reduce the cost of electricity for the consumer, while respecting valid contracts and the rule of law,” the President said.

The President said that with the adoption of a 10-point program in solving the power problem, the Philippines hopes to be competitive in electricity rates among its Asian neighbors.

From being second only to Japan in having the costliest electricity rate in the region, the Philippines could slide down to number six with the reforms that she has ordered implemented in the power sector, the President said.

Starting this month, the President said, the cost of electricity in the Philippines would be less than those in Singapore, Hong Kong, Cambodia and Brunei Darussalam.

With reduced electricity rates, more confidence from foreign investors in the Philippine economy can be expected and this would mean more investments. “And new investments, my countrymen, mean more jobs,” the President said.

According to the President, there is now a need to generate jobs for some 4.5 million unemployed Filipinos and that is why the country needs additional investments.

“Kaya kailangan natin ang mas maraming new investments, at kailangan nating maging competitive ang presyo ng ating kuryente, at ng kapayapaan (That is why we need plenty of new investments, and we need to be competitive in the cost of electricity, and to have peace and order),” the President said.

No gov't posts offered to Puno, Policarpio, says Palace

Malacañang today said that no presidential or government appointments have been offered to Messrs. Ronaldo Puno and Jaime Policarpio, two former officials of the administration of deposed President Joseph Ejercito Estrada.

In a statement, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said even if President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has not offered any position to the two, she welcomes any offers of assistance to her administration, made in a private capacity, by well-meaning and competent individuals.

“The President reaffirms good governance as core value of her administration,” Afable said.

Earlier, there were reports that the two former officials were offered posts in the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Puno was a former undersecretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) while Policarpio was the former chief of the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office (PLLO).

GMA asks Ermita to follow up RP request for observer status in O.I.C.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has directed Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita to follow up the request of the Philippine government for an observer status in the influential Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

In a statement, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. today said that the President gave the directive to Ermita in Friday's marathon Cabinet Meeting in Malacañang.

Afable said that in yesterday's meeting, the Cabinet received the report of the Philippine delegation to the 29th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held last June 26-27 in Khartoum, Sudan headed by Secretary Ermita.

According to Afable, the President described the OIC as the United Nations of the Islamic world and welcomed the support of the OIC for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) now headed by Governor Parouk Hussin.

The President said that having an observer status in the OIC would enable the government to access assistance from Islamic financial institutions, which can be used for rehabilitation and development in Mindanao.

According to Ermita, the OIC has found no problem in granting the Philippines an observer status.

He said OIC Secretary General Dr. Abdelouahed Belkeziz has proposed the formation of a team to visit the country preparatory to the granting of an observer status to the Philippines.

Ermita said the OIC team would assess the implementation of the 1996 peace accord between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The team would be composed of the Committee of Eight headed by Indonesian Foreign Minister Nur Hassan Wirayuda and other members.

Ermita said a positive OIC report would merit consideration on the country's application for observer status during the 30th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) in Tehran, Iran in June 2003.

GMA orders DA, police to strictly enforce on ban on illegal fishing

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the Department of Agriculture and police authorities to strictly enforce the ban on illegal fishing to protect the country's fishery resources.

In a statement, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said today that the President's directive was issued after Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor presented the National Fisheries Plan in Friday's Cabinet Meeting in Malacañang.

Afable said that the President also ordered a stop to fishing in over-fished and severely degraded areas, and the immediate provision of alternative sources of livelihood to small fisherfolk in these areas, particularly aquaculture.

The priority areas where this directive will be implemented are in the Southern Tagalog and Bicol regions, Afable said.

The President has also ordered that marine parks, which play a significant role in eco-tourism, will continue to be protected areas, Afable said.

Ateneo cites GMA as "Most Distinguished Alumna in Economics"

The Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) today conferred on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo the title of "Most Distinguished Alumna in Economics."

The President was given a plaque with the citation by ADMU President Fr. Bienvenido F. Nebres, S.J. in simple rites at the Henry Lee Irwin Theatre at the ADMU campus in Loyola Heights, Quezon City.

In the citation, the school noted the President was one of its first female faculty members who went on to acquire her doctorate on economics while she continued teaching in the Department.

The school noted that Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo went on to become a member of the Aquino Cabinet, senator, vice president and now, President of the Republic."

The Economics Department of ADMU started out as a sub-department of Social Science. When it was finally established in 1953, it had only one faculty member, Rev. Michael McPhelin, S.J., who became the first moderator of the Economics Society of Ateneo when it was founded in 1962.

Today, the department is widely recognized as one of the most important academic groups in the country. It boasts of faculty members who not only provide analytical assistance to government agencies, multilateral organizations and non-government organizations, but also lead their students into careers that are dedicated to the improvement of the country's economy and national well-being.

In her keynote speech, the President said she hopes that many of her fellow Atenean economists would join her in her bid to improve the economy and specifically lower the electricity rates.

Accompanying the President in the event were daughter Evangeline Lourdes "Luli" Arroyo and Presidential Adviser on Jobs Generation Luis Lorenzo.

On hand to welcome the President at the campus, aside from Fr. Nebres, were Social Sciences Dean Fr. Jose Cruz, S.J., Doctors Leonardo Lanzona (Department Chair), Luis Dumlao (graduate program director) and former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito (Economic Research and Development Director).

GMA says 10-point program to reduce electricity cost and reform power sector

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that ten-point strategy that she had earlier announced would reduce the high cost of electricity and reform the country's power sector.

In her keynote speech marking the 50th anniversary of the Economics Department of the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City, the President noted the need to make the country competitive in attracting investments.

“We all know (that) in a free enterprise economy, to create job, the primary means is to encourage investments. And to encourage investments, we must be competitive, including in our electricity rates,” the President said.

The President, who was cited as ADMU's Most Distinguished Alumna in Economics, said power consumers could expect lower electricity bills this month due to her instructions to the National Power Corporation (Napocor) to lower the purchased power cost adjustment (PPCA).

Starting this month, the President said, the cost of electricity in the Philippines would be less than those in Singapore, Hong Kong, Cambodia and Brunei Darussalam.

In her 10-point program, first, the President said the government wants to reflect the true cost of service which has been happening now with what Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) did through the unbundling of the electricity rate and its cease and desist order to Meralco sometime ago which has resulted in lower electricity rate this month.

Under the first point, the President said the government should ensure that the consumers should only be charged the true and fair cost of electric services and power that they have used.

She said the government will seek the elimination of charges from onerous contracts, stressing the need to review the contracts with the independent power producers (IPPs) and other contracts that the ERC is studying as well as regulatory loopholes such as the valuation and appraisal of assets.

Second, she said, is to introduce the declining block rate structure by introducing special pricing incentives for large consumers of electricity specially business and industries, to reduce cost of over capacity and encourage expansion in manufacturing and commerce.

Third, the President said we would optimize the utilization mix of Napocor's power plants by finding out the different efficiencies of the different plants.

Further, she said the government would review and upgrade the country's power development plan to better distribute generation capacity in relation to load centers, upgrade transmission system and minimize the vulnerability of the power grids from blackouts.

This move will include the transfer of power barges and matured build-operate-transfer (BOT) plants to regions where they can be better utilized and the enhancement of Napocor generation companies by providing them with better markets and quality supply contracts.

Fourth, the President saw the need to accelerate the operation of the wholesale electricity spot market (WESM) to provide a trading platform for power price competition and give power users a fair and transparent way to determine realistic power cost.

Fifth, the President said there must be an acceleration in the implementation of open access, which means that big buyers who buy more than 1 megawatt can choose the generating company they want to buy from.

While the law says that it should be done in four years, she said the open access implementation could be accelerated because consumer choice will certainly provide for greater competition and lower prices.

Correspondingly, she said the government would provide consumers with genuine supplier alternative through competition and encouragement of new players in the electric industry power sector.

Sixth, the President called for the promotion of efficient performance of distribution utilities by prescribing measurable standards of consumer service, shift to new rates setting methods that better protect consumers, assure integrity in procedures, and close all loopholes without necessarily denying the utilities' right to earn the legal and fair return for their investment and services.

The seventh point of the measures is to strengthen and consolidate rural electric cooperatives, seek long-term solutions and strengthen them as distribution utilities in preparation for deregulation as mandated by the Electric Power Industry Reform Act.

Eighth, the President sought the review of IPP contracts and reduce contract cost, saying that whatever is completed in the review must already be submitted so that the government can begin the renegotiations.

Ninth, the President proposed the further exploration of financial engineering methods which the government has been doing and has resulted in the reduction of Napocor's PPCA to 40 centavos.

This action, she said, will reflect in the electricity bills starting next month.

Lastly, the President said the government would help enhance the institutional capability of the ERC and encourage it to assert its mandate.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 6, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032735/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july6.htm>

The President's Day: July 7, 2002

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- **EO 110 places PDTF under PCFC to spur microfinance projects for poor**
- **GMA orders study on expansion of drug rehab center in Region 12**
- **GMA urges more aggressive campaign to make Philippines top producer of bananas, mangoes**
- **GMA quest for PAF anniversary tomorrow**

EO 110 places PDTF under PCFC to spur microfinance projects for poor

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has issued Executive Order (EO) 110 directing the People's Credit and Finance Corporation (PCFC) to administer the People's Development Trust Fund (PDTF) and ensure the delivery of microfinance services to the poor and help them develop enterprises.

In signing the EO last June 20, the President said the PDTF was set up under Republic Act. 8425, also known as the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act.

She said the PDTF should be used to develop a nationwide network of viable and sustainable micro-finance institutions and micro-enterprise business development service groups.

But the PDTF should also provide a supportive and appropriate policy environment and institutional framework for a private-led micro-financial market, she said.

Under RA 8425, the President was empowered to assign the administration of the PDTF to the PCFC, a government-controlled corporation registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission pursuant to Administrative Order 148 dated September 8, 1994.

The PCFC is tasked to mobilize financial resources from both local and international funding sources for micro-finance services for the exclusive use of the poor.

The act also assigned the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) to monitor the utilization of the PDTF.

As such the, NAPC shall source funds for establishing and augmenting the PDTF and recommend to the PCFC the accreditation of groups and institutions that shall act as resource partners in conducting institutional development and capability-building activities for accredited organizations and beneficiaries of micro-finance and micro-enterprise programs.

It shall further ensure that validation and monitoring activities are conducted for funded institutional development and capability building projects/programs/beneficiaries; and promote research and development work on livelihood and micro-finance technology and publications/communications programs that assist beneficiaries.

The PDTF has been allotted P4.5 billion over a span of 10 years and other additional amounts provided through voluntary contributions, grants and gifts from both local and foreign sources as may be accepted or decided on by the NAPC.

“Any amount added to the PDTF shall form part of the Corpus of the PDTF, unless the donor, contributor or grantor expressly provides as a condition that the amount be included in the disbursable portion of the PDTF,” she said.

The PCFC directly administers the utilization of the trust fund. “With the approval of the Department of Finance, the PCFC shall deposit the PDTF in a duly authorized banking institution; and /or invest the PDTF in government securities.

The PCFC shall not have the authority to invest the PDTF in other securities or assets, ” she said.

As provided under Section 11 of RA 8425, PDTF income should be used for:

- Consultancy and training services for micro-finance institutions and their beneficiaries on the establishment of the necessary support services, social and financial preparation of beneficiaries, preparation of plans and programs including fund sourcing and assistance, establishment of credit and savings monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
- Scholarships or training grants for micro-finance staff and officers, and selected beneficiaries;
- Community organizing for micro-finance, livelihood and micro-enterprise training services;
- Livelihood/micro-enterprise project/programs, and other similar facilities;
- Information and communication systems, such as baseline surveys, development monitoring systems, socio-economic mapping surveys, organizational assessments and other similar activities;
- Legal and other management support services such as registration, documentation, contract review and enforcement, financial audit and operational assessment;
- Information dissemination of micro-finance technology and
- Other activities to support micro-finance, as approved by the PCFC.

The EO also provides that the PDTF may be accessed by registered micro-finance organizations engaged in providing micro-enterprise services for the poor, local government units (LGU) providing micro-finance and micro-enterprise programs to their constituents; and LGUs with self-help projects where at least 25 percent of the total earnings of the PDTF shall be used exclusively for the provision of materials and technical services.

As PDTF administrator, the PCFC shall not qualify as a PDTF grantee.

The EO shall take effect 15 days from publication in two newspapers of general circulation.

GMA orders study on expansion of drug rehab center in Region 12

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has directed Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Juliano Soliman to study the possibility of expanding the capacity of the drug rehabilitation center in Davao City to accommodate the reported increasing number of drug users in Region 12.

The President made this directive during the 13th Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) meeting in Cotabato City last Tuesday.

Region 12 is composed of the provinces of North Cotabato, Sarangani, South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat and the cities of Cotabato, General Santos, Kidapawan, Koronadal and Tacurong.

During the meeting, RDC Region 12 chairman and Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema told the President that while there is lack of information on the magnitude of the drug problem, “there is an apparently increasing number of drug users, especially among the youth in the region.”

Sema noted that most of these drug users are coming from poor families who could not afford to pay for rehabilitation-related expenses.

“They need to be rehabilitated to keep them from making further troubles in the community,” Sema said.

The nearest rehabilitation center is situated in Davao City, which is about 250 kilometers from the center of Region 12.

According to Secretary Soliman, the Davao rehabilitation center only serves as a “halfway house” for first-stage drug addicts and can only accommodate about 50 patients at one time.

The President also ordered all other agencies such as the Department of Health (DOH) and the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) to assist the DSWD in the proposed expansion program of the Davao rehabilitation center.

She said there is no need at the moment to set up another rehabilitation center elsewhere in the region since rehabilitation cases are not necessarily emergency cases.

GMA urges more aggressive campaign to make Philippines top producer of bananas, mangoes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is battling for a more aggressive campaign to make the Philippines the top producer and exporter of bananas and mangoes in the world.

During her visit to the Davao region last week, the President urged the people of Davao del Norte to work towards the goal of making the Philippines as the number one banana producer even as she congratulated the province for being the center of the country’s “strong and vibrant” banana industry.

Aside from the upward trend in the banana industry, the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) has reported that mango output in Region XI has increased in the first quarter of this year by 6.77 percent.

Davao del Sur remained by far the region’s biggest producer, accounting for more than 50 percent of total production with 1,640.4 metric tons, followed by Davao Oriental at 715 metric tons. Davao City at 560 metric tons. Davao del Norte at 322 metric tons and Compostela Valley at 175.037.

For the first quarter of year 2002, the entire Davao region accounts for the production of 482,553 metric tons of banana and 3,462 metric tons of mango.

As compared to the same period last year, banana and mango production grew by 2.9 percent and 6.7 percent, respectively.

In a report to the President, Regional Development Council (RDC) Chair for Region XI Jesus Ayala said they are pushing for a fully integrated mango industry cluster to enable them to establish a strong niche for both domestic and export markets by year 2004.

Ayala said they have just recently started branding the region’s mangoes, some of which have already found their way in the stringent Taiwanese and Australian markets, thus providing that they have reached world standards.

Further, Ayala said they are also pushing for the strengthening of tropical fruit research and mango information network, engage in investment promotion, and undertake more aggressive market promotion and development.

As for the banana industry, Ayala informed President Macapagal-Arroyo of plans to encourage investors to go into banana processing and packaging.

During her visit to the Davao region, the President disclosed that the Philippines is now the world’s number three banana-producing country after displacing Columbia.

She said that if the big China market would be added to the traditional markets of the Philippines for its banana exports, then the country might become the world's top banana-exporter.

"We might even become the number two or the number one banana producer in the world, and that is up to the people of Davao del Norte to work for it," the President said.

GMA quest for PAF anniversary tomorrow

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will be the guest of honor and speaker during the celebration of the 55th anniversary of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) tomorrow.

During the program, the President will lead in the traditional parade and review, inspection of troops and the awarding of different medals to 21 distinguished men and women of the PAF.

After her speech, the President will receive a memento from Lt. Gen. Benjamin Defensor, Jr., PAF commanding general.

Prior to the program, spectators will be treated to a sky-diving, fly-by aircraft exhibition and an all-female silent drill.

Among this year's PAF honorees are the following; former Western Command chief, Maj. Gen. Santiago Madrid who died in a helicopter crash in Palawan last year; Maj. Gen. Marciano Ilagan as commander of Tactical Operations Command for taking charge of the air attack in Kabatangan against a group of some 300 MNLF renegades; First Lt. Ma. Rita Fabian as pilot of an OV-10A aircraft during a major air strike and close air support mission against armed MILF guerillas in Maguindano; First Lts. Gaudencio Laureon and Jun Samilin, pilots of an UH-1H helicopter that recovered the hostage victims held by the Abu Sayyaf in Sirawai, Zamboango del Norte;

Col. Jose Saplan for his distinguished service in the development of the retrofitted "Layang II" aircraft project; T/Sgt. Virgilio Dris, munitions and armament technician; Col. Jose Nano, officer-in-charge of 15th Strike Wing; Col. Valentino Prudencio, officer-in-charge, 3rd Tactical Operations Wing (TOW); Brig. Gen. Rodante Joya, wing commander, 220th Airlift Wing; Col. Vladimir Trino, wing commander, 2nd TOW; Lt. Col. Carlix Donila, Tactical Operations Group XII; Maj. Raymundo Elefante of 206th Tactical Helicopter Squadron; T/Sgt. John Redota, Engineer Abraham Acosta, Rosalinda Bilog, Cadet Major Rodel Curaza and ROTC cadet Capt. Loraine Pilingen.

For the past year, the PAF has completed 20,898 flying hours, a 40- percent increase from year 2000.

PAF records showed that the bulk of these sorties directly supported government initiatives to re-establish and preserve peace by way of close air support, combat air patrol, air interdiction, transport of logistics and personnel, ferry of VIPs, search and rescue missions, medical evacuation and support to the May national elections.

During the PAF's anniversary celebration last year, General Defensor introduced the new title, "First Force," which aims to transform the PAF into an institution, focused on the completion and development of its core competencies.

First Force is both an operational and development strategy, combining the objectives of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) national military strategy, the focus of PAF's airpower strategy and the thrusts of AFP modernization.

PAF's path to modernization includes aircraft upgrade projects, acquisition projects, bases support and system development and real estate management.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 7, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032745/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july7.htm>

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- **GMA directs PAF to help in drive vs. kidnapping, other high crimes**
- **GMA orders crash program to check depletion of fisheries resources, poverty in six bay areas**
- **GMA acts to ensure entry of RP pineapple exports to Australia**

Future Balikatan to have heavy dose of night flying exercises, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today disclosed that the future Balikatan exercises will have a heavy dose of night flying and other capabilities that will enhance the expertise of the military, particularly the Philippine Air Force (PAF).

In her speech during the 55th anniversary of the PAF at the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City, the President also stressed that while the coming Balikatan will have a Sulu component, the joint Philippine-United States military exercises should come back to Luzon, to Clark Air Base in Pampanga, to Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, and to Camp Capinpin in Tanay.

“The Balikatan exercises of 2001 and 2002 breathe new life into our training programs. Future Balikatan and other programs under our various bilateral and multilateral agreements will have a heavy dose of night flying and other capabilities that will enhance the expertise of the Philippine Air Force,” she said.

A large part of this year's Balikatan exercises, according to the President, will be concentrated on maintenance training and other measures that will ensure the safety of Filipino pilots.

The President recalled that several aircraft accidents have claimed the lives of pilots such as Capt. Daniel Policarpio, Lt. Mary Grace Tenorio and Lt. Rizza Simon.

Also in her speech, the President saw the need for reliable air surveillance equipment as highlighted during the conduct of the Balikatan exercises.

“Balikatan showed us how indispensable these are. Our pilots need electronic eyesight when navigating in bad weather or at night,” she said.

In view of the \$10-million pledge of military assistance from US President George W. Bush, the President instructed Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu to make sure that the drawdown will include electronic eyesight equipment that will enable PAF pilots to fly at night and in bad weather.

The President recalled that in her speech during the PAF anniversary celebration last year, she committed the selling of the Presidential plane to augment the PAF modernization funds.

“We have put that plane on the block, but so far there have been no takers,” she said.

During the occasion, the President took the opportunity to thank Sen. Loren Legarda, Rep. Gilbert Teodoro as well as the other senators and congressmen for paving way for the passage of a law that would increase the salary of soldiers to the level of the teachers.

She said the phase-in implementation of the law raising the salary of soldiers will be realized using the savings at the end of this year.

GMA congratulates PAF men for role in rescue of Gracia Burnham

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the gallant members of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) for their significant role in the rescue of American missionary Gracia Burnham from the hands of the Abu Sayyaf Group.

“Because of you, Gracia Burnham is alive today,” the President said in her speech during the 55th anniversary celebration of the PAF at the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City.

In her speech, the President recalled a story told to her by Gracia Burnham when she was rescued by the military during the encounter with the group of Abu Sabaya in Sirawai, Zamboanga del Norte.

The President said Gracia recounted to her how she was extricated by Air Force helicopter within one hour from the start of the firefight in the heavily forested area in Sirawai.

According to the President, Gracia told her how the Air Force men attended to her and comforted her during the helicopter flight to the Southern Command headquarters in Zamboanga City.

“She said she was so touched when one of them kept tapping her cheek lightly to revive her and pleading, ‘Don’t die, don’t die,’ and she didn’t die,” the President said.

“Gracia Burnham told me after telling the story of the men in the helicopter ministering to her, ‘Madam President, you must be very proud of your men,’” the President said.

For that very momentous occasion, two of the Air Force helicopter pilots who participated in the rescue of Gracia Burnham were awarded in yesterday’s ceremony with Gold Cross Medals. The pilots were Lt. Gaudencio Lauron and Lt. Jun Samilin.

“Both braved hostile fire, treacherous terrain and hazardous weather to bring Gracia Burnham to safety,” the President said.

At the same time, the President paid tribute to the other awardees in this year’s PAF anniversary celebration led by the late Maj. Gen. Santiago Madrid who died in a helicopter crash in Palawan shortly after last year’s elections.

She also cited Lt. Maria Rita Fabian, one of the first to see action in Buldon, Maguindanao, for personifying the power and capability of female combat pilots and all other female combatants of the AFP.

“Our female pilots are outstanding. They make it easier for our male soldiers to deal with a female Commander in Chief,” the President said.

Furthermore, she commended the vigilance of the Tactical Operations Command under Maj. Gen. Marciano Ilagan for pre-empting a rebel attack last November in Cabatangan Complex in Zamboanga City.

The President also cited the innovative spirit of the Air Force research and development under Col. Jose Saplan, the heroic rescue efforts of Lt. Col. Edgar Fallorina in the Sirawai operations, as well as the effective non-combatant support provided by T/Sgt. Virgilio Dris to air strikes against the enemy in Mindanao.

She also acknowledged the exemplary service provided by the 250th Presidential Airlift Wing for taking care of her safety while conducting sorties in the different provinces and regions throughout the country.

After her speech, PAF commanding general Lt. Gen. Benjamin Defensor presented to the President a memento in recognition of her inspiring effort in taking the lead in building a faster and stronger and better Air Force.

Among those who attended the PAF anniversary celebration were Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Sen. Loren Legarda, Rep. Gilbert Teodoro, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu, AFP Vice Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gregorio Camiling, and Philippine Navy Flag Officer-in-Command Vice Admiral Victorino Hingco.

GMA directs PAF to help in drive vs. kidnapping, other high crimes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed the Philippine Air Force (PAF) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to jointly embark on a high mission to fight kidnapping and other similar heinous crimes.

Speaking at the 55th PAF's anniversary celebration at the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City, the President also directed the 730th Civil Security Group (CSG) and the Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (AKTAF) to attend the anti-kidnapping summit to be held tomorrow at the Manila Hotel.

The said summit, which is being spearheaded by the Philippine National Police (PNP), will be mainly focused on kidnappings, illegal drugs and command responsibility.

In order to have more investments and provide more jobs, the President urged both the AFP and the PAF to pursue not just the terrorists but also members of kidnap-for-ransom gangs.

During her speech, the President suggested that the PAF's civil security group should now be attached to AKTAF, the anti-kidnapping task force of the AFP, which was formed last year shortly after the rescue of American kidnap victim Jeffrey Schilling.

The President said AKTAF was originally created to help the police fight urban kidnapping.

The 730th CSG is the group that helped quell the May 1, 2001 riot in Malacañang. It was later attached to "Task Force Libra" to beef up the security of the seat of power.

"But since the threat of destabilization has died down and Task Force Libra is mainly to protect the seat of government against destabilization, I think that the group should now be attached to AKTAF," the President said.

The President noted that when the Dos Palmas kidnapping occurred, the AKTAF devoted much of its effort in the year-long siege against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

"With the ASG now largely degraded, the AKTAF should now go back to fighting urban kidnapping," the President said.

According to the President, a relentless pursuit of terrorist has won the country praise from the international community.

However, she stressed that what the country needs is not just praise from the international community as well as from the national community but "investments to create more jobs for our people and earn not only their praise but also their investments."

"I commend all our airmen for their year-long achievements, and I hope that you will also join in the fight against kidnapping and crime because I consider these as serious threats to our national security," the President stressed.

GMA orders crash program to check depletion of fisheries resources, poverty in six bay areas

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to undertake a crash program in six bays to address the depletion of fisheries resources and persistent poverty among the fisherfolk in these areas.

In a press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable Jr. said the instructions were issued by the President during an Executive Committee Meeting which she presided over this afternoon at Malacañang.

Afable identified the six bays as Calauag Bay, Tayabas Bay, San Miguel Bay, Ragay Gulf, Lagonoy Gulf and Sorsogon Bay, all in the Southern Tagalog and the Bicol Regions.

Afable said the President also ordered the Agriculture Department to release P16 million for the training of fishermen in these areas in aquaculture and seaweed farming and to get them alternative sources of livelihood.

Afable noted that the crash program for the fisherfolk will start within the next few days.

The President did this, he said, because during her trips to the regions she saw that “there was really very extensive poverty among the fisherfolk in the marine degraded areas.”

According to Afable, the DA presented the National Fisheries Program during the last Cabinet Meeting in the Palace.

“The President wanted this program focused and telescoped on these six areas immediately,” Afable said, adding that “this will really be a crash program on these areas because she feels that the fisherfolk there are really in need of some relief from the government.”

GMA acts to ensure entry of RP pineapple exports to Australia

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the Department of Agriculture, Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Foreign Affairs to work together to collate all the technical papers to bolster the position of the Philippine government and to come up with a stand within 30 days to ensure the entry of the country’s pineapple exports to Australia.

Briefing reporters at Malacañang, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said the President issued the directive during an Executive Committee Meeting, which she presided over at the Palace this afternoon.

“As we know, there have been sanitary standards that are being imposed by Australia on Philippine pineapple,” Afable said.

Afable stressed that this technical position “will, in effect, seek reconsideration of the standards or constraints imposed by Australia on Philippine pineapple.”

Asked whether the Philippines will also export bananas to Australia, Afable said the Australian position on bananas is still on the draft stage.

“It is not yet final. The position on pineapple is final,” he said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: July 8, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032823/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july8.htm>

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- **PNP vows stepped-up war against drugs**
- **Gov't prepared to fund contingency measures in calamity-stricken areas, says Boncodin**
- **GMA gets briefing on policies on command responsibility**
- **GMA visits flooded areas in 2 Pampanga towns**
- **Explosives supplier of Metro bombing suspect arrested, presented to GMA**

GMA orders all-out war against 21 kidnap syndicates

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered an all-out war against 21 kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) syndicates operating in the country.

“We target 21 KFR syndicates... It is all-out war against the 21 KFR syndicates,” the President told the top police commanders of the country, from the newly-installed Philippine National Police chief, Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., down to the regional and provincial commanders gathered at the Manila Hotel for the Summit on Illegal Drugs, Kidnapping and Command Responsibility.

Three of these 21, which are considered the most active, will be the biggest target, the President told the audience, which included not only the nation's top police commanders but also leaders of non-government organizations actively involved in anti-crime campaigns.

Intelligence efforts will be concentrated on these syndicates, she said.

Earlier, the President asked Ebdane what the government is up against and how many KFR syndicates are now operating in the country.

Ebdane replied: “As of this time, we have 21 kidnap-for-ransom syndicates. Compared to last year, we had 26. So we actually neutralized five for year 2001 up to the middle of this year.”

The President ordered the all-out war against kidnapping syndicates in an effort to ensure peace and order in the country, attract more investments, particularly from abroad, generate more jobs for the people and, ultimately, win the war against poverty.

The President stressed that the effort will not be limited to the 21 identified KFR rings. If there is new information on other syndicates, these gangs will also be targeted, she added.

In his briefing on the kidnapping situation in the country, Ebdane vowed that the PNP will work harder to improve on the 63-percent solution rate of kidnapping cases in 2001.

“The first six months of 2002 reflect the results of our hard work: a 33-percent decrease in reported KFR incidents and 63 percent less victims from the Chinese-Filipino sector,” he said.

Ebdane stressed that the overall directions against kidnapers are contained in the National Anti-KFR Campaign Plan which, he said, provides comprehensive action parameters for key operational areas.

He also said that information on KFR groups and their members have been inputted into what is now a growing KFR Database.

On the need for modern surveillance and operational equipment, Ebdane said that part of the allocation from the President of P200 million for anti-kidnapping operations has been utilized for this purpose.

Ebdane likewise thanked the Chinese-Filipino community for the generous support they have extended in the form of new equipment.

In Washington, United States President George W. Bush expressed anew his appreciation for efforts of the Philippine government led by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to take action and get results in the international war against terrorism.

“There’s a lot of action that take place that you’ll never see,” Bush told White House correspondents during a press conference Monday (Tuesday in Manila).

“Some of it will continue to take place as a result of the actions of our friends, such as that which took place in the Philippines – Abu Sayyaf, the leader evidently was killed by Philippine troops. And that’s positive. That’s a positive development,” the US President said.

PNP vows stepped-up war against drugs

The Philippine National Police (PNP) today vowed to step up its campaign against illicit drugs as it vigorously implements Presidential Letter of Instructions No. 1 or the National Anti-Drug Program of Action (NADPA) issued by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on July 4, 2001.

“The government may be waging an uphill battle against the drug menace. But with the full and sustained implementation of the National Anti-Drug Program of Action, we are optimistic that we shall realize our vision of a drug-free Philippines earlier than 2010,” police Chief Superintendent Ruben Cabagnot said in his report to the President during the Summit on Illegal Drugs and Kidnapping and Command Responsibility held this morning at Manila Hotel’s Centennial Hall along Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

Cabagnot, who is officer-in-charge of the PNP Anti-Narcotics Group, said the year 2001 and the first semester of 2002, which marks the salvo of NADPA, “is characterized by large seizures of illicit drugs.”

NADPA is a unification of efforts of the different national government agencies, local government units and non-government organizations. It provides for a holistic approach in combating and eradicating the drug menace.

Cabagnot said Presidential LOI No. 1 proved its importance in the campaign against illicit drugs.

“This was realized with a greater arrest rate in the year 2001 as compared to the preceding year,” he said.

He noted that the Anti-Drug Enforcement Units nationwide, with the PNP Narcotics Group in the forefront, conducted a total of 36,070 positive narcotics operations.

According to Cabagnot, a total of 32,227 people were likewise arrested and 22,012 cases filed.

“The total confiscation and seizure of illegal drugs are 1,561,145 grams of shabu; 22 pieces of Nubain ampules; 263 kilograms of Ephedrine; 39 tablets of ecstasy; 2,184 tablets of Bangkok pills; 2,050 grams of cocaine; 706,418 grams of dried marijuana leaves; 2,684,413 pieces of fully-grown marijuana plants; 73,023 grams of marijuana seeds; 5,607,646 pieces of marijuana seedlings, 10 grams of hashish and 10 grams of heroine or a total market value of P3.9 billion,” he said.

Cabagnot also reported that from January to May 31 this year, the Anti-Narcotics nationwide conducted a total of 9,940 positive narcotics operations. He added that 12,276 people were arrested and 8,127 cases filed in court

A total of 28,430 grams of shabu; 2,977,371 marijuana plants; 625,446 marijuana seedlings; 1,009,119 dried marijuana leaves; 265,000 grams of hashish; 15,331 grams of marijuana seeds; 6,308 kilograms of cocaine; and 465 liters of Ephedrine were seized. All these have an estimate value of P801.5 million.

He told the President that the strategy being adapted by the PNP in the war against illicit drugs is prescribed in the Master Plan SANGBANAT: BANAT (Barangay Against Narcotics Abusers and Traffickers).

Cabanot defined BANAT as a sustained campaign against the use, distribution/trafficking and manufacture of illicit drugs, and the rehabilitation of drug dependents.

“The strategy empowers the barangay as a self-policing entity in clearing itself of drug affectation,” he stressed.

Records show that as of May this year, 4,006 or 9.5 percent of the 42,061 barangays nationwide are affected by drugs involving 1.8 million regular users and 1.6 million occasional users.

He also said that while the emergence and discovery of clandestine laboratories indicate a daring shift in strategy by drug traders to expand local production, shabu supply suffered a major setback during the months of February and March after the interdiction of 853 kilograms in Quezon City and Zambales and the dismantling of the San Juan clandestine laboratory.

Cabanot said that based on intelligence reports, there is a lull in illegal drug trade which is “attributed to the anticipation and fear of the new drug law.”

“The PNP foresees a drastic downtrend of the illegal drug market in the coming months due to Republic Act No. 9165 and the imposition of stringent responsibility and public accountability check on drug enforcers,” he said.

Gov’t prepared to fund contingency measures in calamity-stricken areas, says Boncodin

The government is prepared to finance contingency measures to speed up the relief and rehabilitation of areas in Metro Manila and other parts of Luzon hit by continuous rains brought about by monsoon rains and typhoon “Gloria.”

In a radio interview, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin noted that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had already alerted various government agencies to use, if necessary, their individual Quick Response Fund (QRF).

“*At kung kukulangin ay magsabi lang sa amin sa DBM* (And if it’s not sufficient, they need to only inform the Department of Budget and Management),” Boncodin said.

To date, Boncodin said, she considers the government’s calamity fund as very much adequate.

“So far, *ang nakikita ko, yung calamity fund natin ay sapat na sapat pa* (I deem that the calamity fund is very much sufficient),” she said.

On Monday, the President ordered the release of P300 million to various national government agencies engaged in relief and rehabilitation activities in calamity-stricken areas.

Boncodin said that out of the P300 million QRF, P100 million will go to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), P80 million to the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), P60 million to the Office of Civil Defense, and P60 million to the Department of National Defense.

According to Boncodin, arrangements are now being made to formally transfer funds for flood control projects in the National Capital Region (NCR) from the DPWH to the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) as ordered by the President.

She said that funds for flood control projects in Metro Manila are adequate.

In a related development, the DSWD said that as of Tuesday, it has released, through local government units, non-government and government organizations, the amount of P3,073,887.23 in their efforts to help those affected by the typhoon.

The DSWD also attended to a total of 58,276 families of which 4,667 families or 20,651 individuals were accommodated in 96 evacuation centers.

Relief operations are continuously being conducted through the concerted efforts of the member-agencies of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC).

GMA gets briefing on policies on command responsibility

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was presented today with the situation briefing on the policies on Command Responsibility in the Philippine National Police.

PNP Director for Personnel and Records Management Virtus Gil gave the lecture during the Summit on Kidnapping, Illegal Drugs and Command Responsibility at the Manila Hotel.

During the briefing, Gil recounted the background of command responsibility through the series of executive orders and memorandum circulars.

Gil defined the doctrine of command responsibility as the accountability of every police commissioned officer (PCO) to closely supervise, coordinate, control and monitor the discharge of duties by subordinates as well as the responsibility to control and monitor the activities of others who are operating within his area of jurisdiction and to take preventive or corrective measures as may be warranted.

Gil also underlined the accountability of any government official and supervisor, or officer of the PNP or that of any other law enforcement agency in the principle of “neglect of duty” in the doctrine.

He said this official shall be held accountable if “he has knowledge that a crime or offense shall be committed, or has been committed by his subordinates, or by others within his area of responsibility; and, despite such knowledge, he did not take preventive or corrective action either before, during or immediately after its commission.”

Gil also stated the principle of “presumption of knowledge” under the doctrine, which defines that a government official or supervisor or PNP commander, is presumed to have knowledge of the commission of irregularities or criminal offenses in any of the following circumstances:

- When the irregularities or illegal acts are widespread within his area of jurisdiction;
- When the irregularities or illegal acts have been repeatedly or regularly committed within his area of responsibility;
- When members of his immediate staff or office personnel are involved.

Also under the doctrine, the director or commander of a unit or chief of office in general shall have command responsibility over personnel under his direct supervision and control.

“He shall assume the responsibility for all that his unit accomplishes and fails to accomplish. This principle shall apply down to the supervisor of the smallest functional unit of the PNP. He is also responsible for every breach of discipline, lapse in security, abuse of authority or violation of human rights or law committed by the men under him,” Gil stated.

In a situation where a police commissioned officer of a higher echelon is present in the area and has knowledge of a commission of misconduct or its imminent act but fails to take appropriate action, he is administratively liable and accountable for the said misdemeanor or unlawful act.

Likewise under the doctrine, responsibility for an improper act of a PNP officer ends at the level of a director/commander having found responsible according to the rule as specified and to the extent of effect of consequence of the improper act to the police organization or particular area of jurisdiction.

“If the outcome affected the whole PNP or the whole country, two or more regions or an area more than the limit span of one region, the responsibility and liability may be determined through the conduct of investigation up to the level of the director general,” Gil said.

If the affected organization is a regional officer or a national support unit, the PNP chief shall determine the responsibility.

If the consequence affected a region, responsibility may be determined through investigation up to the level of the regional director and in case of the lowest units, responsibility may be determined through the conduct of investigation up to the level of chief of police as the chain of command starts with him, Gil added.

Based on Memorandum Circular No. 95-03 of the National Police Commission, the rules in determining the level of command responsibility are as such:

The commander shall be held responsible not only for the misconduct, abuse of authority, or criminal offense committed by his subordinates but also for gross inefficiency and vicious or immoral habits of the officers and personnel under him.

He would also be held liable and responsible in such instances: when the commander cooperated in the commission of abuse of authority, improper or unlawful act by subordinates;

When the commander used his command authority or position to force or induce his subordinates to perform the improper or unlawful act; and

When the commander has previous knowledge of his subordinate’s improper or unlawful act but tolerated or failed to do anything to prevent the occurrence of the same.

GMA visits flooded areas in 2 Pampanga towns

GUAGUA, Pampanga—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today visited the evacuation centers in this town and nearby Sasmuan to personally assess the damage wrought by monsoon rains and typhoon “Gloria” in her home province of Pampanga.

From the Manila Hotel where she attended the Summit on Illegal Drugs, Kidnapping and Command Responsibility organized by the Philippine National Police, the President motored directly to Barangay San Pablo of this town.

Then the President and her party proceeded to Barangay Sta. Lucia in Sasmuan.

The President waded through floodwaters in going to the public school buildings in the two barangays that served as evacuation centers.

Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), who accompanied the President, distributed relief goods to families housed in the two evacuation centers.

Aside from Soliman, those who accompanied the President in her visit to evacuation centers here included Executive Director Melchor Rosales of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), Northern Luzon Command chief Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, and provincial officials led by Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid and Vice Governor Juan Miguel “Mikey” Arroyo.

On Monday, the President also made a surprise visit to flooded areas and evacuation center in Barangay Catmon, Malabon City and in Valenzuela City.

Late Saturday night, at the height of the heavy downpour, the President also visited the Tatalon Estate in Quezon City.

The President has earlier ordered the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to release the initial amount of P300 million for relief and rehabilitation efforts in calamity-stricken areas in Metro Manila and some parts of Luzon.

Explosives supplier of Metro bombing suspect arrested, presented to GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated newly designated Philippine National Police chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. and Philippine Army chief Lt. Gen. Dionisio Santiago for the arrest of the alleged supplier of explosives of an Indonesian who claimed responsibility for the series of bombings in Metro Manila on December 30, 2000.

The suspected explosives supplier, Hussain Ramos, 35, alias Ali Ramos/Abu Ali, of Barangay Caloocan, Marawi City, was presented to the President in Malacañang by Ebdane and Santiago.

During the presentation of the bombing suspect, the President said it is a “buena mano” (a first) for the new chief of PNP who officially took over as the officer in charge of the PNP only last July 4.

According to the President, joint Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police personnel arrested Abu Ali by virtue of Warrant of Arrest No. 15859 issued by Judge Marivic Trabajo Daray on July 8 for violation of Section 1 of Republic Act 8294.

Abu Ali was implicated by Rohman Fathur Al-Ghozi alyas Abu Saad as his source of more than one ton of explosives and accessories stashed in Gen. Santos City.

The explosives were to be transported to Singapore when recovered by the elements of the AFP and the PNP last January 2002 at the house of a certain Datu Malagat.

Al Ghozi is the Indonesian member of the Jima’ah Islamiah arrested last January 2002 in Manila. He admitted in a signed sworn statement his participation in the December 30 bombings and the procurement of more than one tons of explosives and accessories.

During the initial tactical interrogation, Abu Ali admitted his participation in the procurement of boxes of explosives sometime during the recent Ramadan (November 15-November 17 2001) to be transported to Singapore.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: July 9, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032833/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july9.htm>

The President's Day: July 10, 2002

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- **GMA declares July 15 special non-working holiday**
- **GMA to continue meeting with local execs, check on implementation of projects**
- **GMA to attend PNP "Order of Battle" workshop**
- **Strong republic cannot afford termites from within, says President**
- **Shahani taking part in UNESCO roundtable**
- **GMA still waiting for search committee recommendation on DFA Secretary**
- **Sophisticated U.S. gear to be left behind for RP soldiers when Balikatan ends**
- **CIQS issues discussed in Davao meet**

GMA declares July 15 special non-working holiday

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today issued Proclamation No. 217 declaring Monday, July 15, 2002, as a special non-working holiday throughout the country.

The Sangguniang Kabataan and Barangay Elections will be held on that day.

The President said she issued Proclamation No. 217 "to give the people the fullest opportunity to participate in the said elections and exercise their right to vote."

GMA to continue meeting with local execs, check on implementation of projects

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today she will continue to meet with local government officials, particularly the governors, and personally look at the implementation of projects on the ground.

"I must look at the implementation (of projects and directives) not at the Cabinet level any more but at the level of local governments," the President told members of the Malacañang Press Corps during a luncheon meeting.

The President shifted her system of governance and turned to joint Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) meetings in the provinces on May 2 in Tuguegarao, Cagayan.

But even before that, the President had been conducting frequent trips to remote areas in the provinces to bring the government closer to the people and to personally heed the concerns of the people and act on them on the spot, whenever possible.

She said she intends to carry on these provincial consultations and project inspections even after she delivers her State of the Nation address before Congress on July 22.

The President said she has still two more Regional Development Council meetings to attend before she delivers her second State of the Nation address. These are in Metro Manila on July 16 and in Bohol on July 17.

The President explained that in the RDC meetings, a lot of problem solving is being done when major projects are presented and their implementation discussed, including bottlenecks and prioritization of projects.

"So I think that these were very, very useful," she said, stressing that she will continue meeting with the governors regularly, as regularly as she would be meeting with members of her Cabinet.

The President also said that Cabinet members concerned with the "issues on the ground" take part in these RDC-RPOC meetings.

Before the RDC-RPOC joint meetings in the provinces, the President pointed out that a program usually consisted of a pattern of Cabinet members distributing the benefits to the poor such as PhilHealth cards, hybrid seedlings, and livelihood assistance.

During lunch with the Malacañang reporters, the President also disclosed that she will inaugurate the Basilan Airport on July 31, when the joint Balikatan exercises in Basilan and Zamboanga are scheduled to be terminated.

“It is very important that the people see the airport in Basilan, because that is very obviously a fruit of the Balikatan,” she said.

She also said that the people must see that her policy to push Balikatan and bring it to Basilan and Zamboanga was the correct policy.

GMA to attend PNP “Order of Battle” workshop

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will be attending the “Order of Battle” workshop organized by the Philippine National Police (PNP) at Camp Crame tomorrow, July 11.

“I will not make a speech, but I will sit down with them and work out the order of battle,” the President told the members of the Malacañang Press Corps during lunch at Malacañang.

The President, however, emphasized that she will not tell them (PNP officers and men) the order of battle “but I will listen to their order of battle so that we can trace the progress.”

The President said the workshop is a follow-up on the Summit on Illegal Drugs, Kidnapping and Command Responsibility held yesterday at the Manila Hotel.

During the summit, the President ordered an all-out war against 21 kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) syndicates operating in the country, three of which will be the biggest targets.

The President ordered the all-out war against these KFR syndicates in an effort to ensure peace and order in the country, attract more investments, generate more jobs for the people and, ultimately, win the war against poverty.

The Chief Executive said that the order of battle workshop tomorrow “is still part of the baseline.”

“The baseline condition was how many are they and then the next step is how do you prioritize,” the President said.

Strong republic cannot afford termites from within, says President

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed that a strong republic under her administration cannot afford to have “termites from within.”

The President made this reaction following reports that Council for Philippine Affairs (COPA) head Pastor “Boy” Saycon had criticized her administration for the alleged recruitment of certain personalities closely identified with the previous dispensation.

“He (Saycon) will have to make his choice. A strong republic cannot afford termites from within,” the President told reporters during an informal luncheon meeting in Malacañang.

Saycon’s accusation came following a meeting last Monday between several Cabinet officials and certain members of the various civil society groups.

The President said she asked her Cabinet members to arrange the meeting with the civil society groups and other members of several non-government organizations.

She explained that the meeting is part of the new politics of institutionalized consultation with the people.

She added that those Cabinet members who attended the meeting were “quite disappointed” with the way media has played up the issues that evolved during the discussion.

Among the Cabinet members who were present in the consultation meeting were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) chair Teresita Quintos-Deles, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) chair Michael Defensor, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. and Presidential Adviser Marita Magpili-Jimenez.

“They (Cabinet members) called me up and they were flustered. Basically, they would like to be able to be interviewed to give their version because they were all there and they called the meeting,” the President said.

The President pointed out that Saycon was not in the meeting because his organization (COPA) was never invited.

Although there were COPA members who attended the meeting — namely Tracy Sison and Boy Montelibano — the President said the two came as representatives of the Couples for Christ (CFC).

Shahani taking part in Unesco roundtable

Presidential Adviser on Culture Leticia Ramos-Shahani will represent the Philippines in the Roundtable of Ministers of Culture under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Government of Turkey in Istanbul on Sept. 16-17, 2002.

Shahani, along with the ministers of culture of other UNESCO member-countries, will participate in the two-day meeting to share their views and discuss the themes, “Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Development: What Challenges for the Intangible Cultural Heritage”; and “Mobilizing International Solidarity to Safeguard, Transmit and Promote Intangible Cultural Heritage: Policies and Mechanisms for Implementation at the Local, National and International Level.”

Intangible cultural heritage refers to music and oral literature, among other things, of which the Philippines, in view of its numerous ethno-linguistic groups, is particularly rich.

Shahani, a career ambassador and former undersecretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), has had a long experience in the United Nations.

She was formerly a member of the steering committee of the UNESCO World Commission then headed by former UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

UNESCO was established on November 16, 1945. It has its headquarters in Paris, France and 73 field offices and units in different parts of the world.

The main objective of UNESCO is to contribute to peace and security in the world by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science, culture and communication in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.

GMA still waiting for search committee recommendation on DFA Secretary

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she has to wait for the Search Committee to come up with its recommendation for the position of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs to be vacated by Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. on July 15, 2002.

During a luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President clarified that the Search Committee helps her make a decision.

“It does not make a decision for me,” the President.

The President ticked off the names of those she called “very good products” of the Search Committee – Jose Isidro Camacho of the Department of Finance, Manuel Dayrit of the Department of Health, Lina Alabastro of the Department of Science and Technology and Vicente Perez, Jr. of the Department of Energy.

The President also disclosed that all of the Chief Operation Officers (COOs) of the government financial institutions and banks are products of the Search Committee.

The President likewise said that her decisions to appoint individuals who were not the Search Committee’s recommendees, to several Cabinet posts, “turned out very well.”

These are Richard Gordon of the Department of Tourism, Raul Roco of the Department of Education and Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council.

Sophisticated U.S. gear to be left behind for RP soldiers when Balikatan ends

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said some of the sophisticated equipment used by the United States soldiers in the Balikatan 02-1 in Basilan will be left behind when the current military exercise ends in July 31.

In an informal luncheon meeting with the members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said she told the US government to make sure that some of the night-flying equipment will be left behind for the use of the Philippine military.

“That’s very, very valuable to us,” the President told reporters.

She explained that the equipment to be left behind by the US soldiers will be part of the \$10-million military assistance that US President George W. Bush recently announced.

The President recalled that in the year 1999-2000, the total amount of US military assistance to the Philippines was only about \$1.9 million.

At the same time, she announced that the Basilan airport will be inaugurated at the expiration of the current Balikatan exercise on July 31.

During the luncheon meeting, the President said the construction of the circumferential road in Basilan is a US contribution and not part of the \$10-million military assistance.

“I told them to make sure to build that circumferential road,” she said.

Also on the Balikatan, the President stressed that the Sulu component in the next joint military exercise is an idea from the United States side.

She said there is nothing firm on the details of the Sulu component until they present to her the curriculum on the next Balikatan exercises.

“The Sulu component came from the US side because my own concern is that it goes back to Fort Magsaysay (Nueva Ecija) and to Tanay,” she said.

CIQS issues discussed in Davao meet

The Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCo) and the Bureau of Immigration (BI) are jointly holding the First BIMP-EAGA (Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East ASEAN) Customs, Immigration, Quarantine and Security (CIQS) Conference today and tomorrow at the Marco Polo Hotel in Davao City.

MEDCo chairman Jesus Dureza said the two-day conference is in line with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s policy of revitalizing the BIMP-EAGA.

He said a total of 80 foreign delegates have confirmed their participation in the conference.

The conference aims to provide a venue for the discussion of CIQS-related issues and concerns to harmonize and streamline CIQS rules, regulations, and procedures to facilitate freer movement of people, goods and services within the sub-region.

Dureza also said that the gathering hopes to draw common action agenda on CIQS in collaboration with private sector leaders and representatives, to promote trade, investments and tourism initiatives within EAGA.

“The conference expects to gather a total of 250 participants composed of officials from CIQS agencies as well as heads and representatives of various private sector organizations from all over BIMP-EAGA,” he said.

MEDCo is the Philippine Coordinating Office of BIMP-EAGA.

The conference is also being held in cooperation with other institutions such as the Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bureau of Animal Industry, Bureau of Quarantine and International Health Surveillance, and the Philippine National Police-Maritime Group and Aviation Security Group.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: July 10, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032849/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july10.htm>

The President's Day: July 11, 2002

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- **Salceda notes gov't positive SONA target achievements**
- **GMA congratulates PNP for arrest of 5 kidnap suspects**
- **GMA okays creation of new PNP anti-kidnap force**
- **Administration will deliver on what it says, GMA assures**
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Salceda notes gov't positive SONA target achievements

A 104-page report the House of Representatives Committee on Oversight published last July 5 was "positive" on the government's performance in accomplishing the commitments made by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her July 2001 State of the Nation Address (SONA).

This Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda, chairman of the House Committee on Oversight, stressed to clarify media accounts that the report gave or suggested a negative overall rating for the administration.

Salceda said committee findings showed "the Arroyo administration's SONA accomplishment record, has been, on the whole, positive, contrary to some media accounts."

In a press statement, he said the committee "noted 'technical or substantial compliance' with 22 targets, while only 13 were underperforming, based on preliminary data" on the 35 SONA targets.

But more recent information from the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) noted that "several targets that seemed to be behind will now be achieved," he added.

The targets included the distribution of 100,000 hectares of public land, construction of classrooms in villages not served by nearby schools, distribution of textbooks in key subjects for Grades 1 to 4 and Years 1 to 2, emergency hiring of out-of-school youth, and the release of the P500-million Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) fund.

Salceda said the House committee "will continue to monitor the government's compliance with the SONA targets."

"We will review and validate new data from the PMS," he said.

GMA congratulates PNP for arrest of 5 kidnap suspects

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the Philippine National Police (PNP) for the early resolution of the kidnapping of the principal of the Labasan Elementary School in Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro.

The President also commended the unwavering support of Bongabong Mayor Alex Enriquez and Vice Mayor Hercules Umali in the successful PNP operations against the kidnapers.

The five principal suspects in the kidnapping were presented to the President during the Order of Battle Workshop at Camp Crame.

The President called the feat another "*buena mano*" or first for newly-designated PNP chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. Just the other day, the President congratulated Ebdane for another "*buena mano*," the arrest of alleged terrorist bomb supplier Hussain Ramos.

The five kidnapping-for-ransom gang members were arrested by joint elements of the PNP intelligence group and Police Regional Office 4 through the active cooperation and assistance of local officials of Bongabong, led by Mayor Enriquez and Vice Mayor Umali.

The President likewise commended the officers and men of the PNP Intelligence Group and the Police Regional Office 4 for painstakingly following up several leads that led in the arrest of the five suspects.

The five suspects – Pepito Manago Iglecerio, Rico Mendoza Iglecerio, Rolando Soriano Labay, Redentor Bagaporo Paquita, and Sulpicio Murada Fajutag, were arrested on July 6 and 7 in the towns of Pinamalayan, Bansud and Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro.

According to Ebdane, the suspects were positively identified by witnesses as the ones who abducted Romeo Bayanay, principal of the Labasan Elementary School, on July 1 at Barangay Labasan, Bogabong.

The principal was released on July 4 after his family paid P1 million as ransom.

The President said that out of the P1-million ransom money, the joint elements of the PNP was able to recover P98,410.

GMA okays creation of new PNP anti-kidnap force

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo approved today the creation of a new anti-kidnapping task force in the Philippine National Police (PNP) recommended during the one-day Order of Battle Workshop the PNP conducted at Camp Crame.

The President said the members of the new police task force, dubbed as the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (PACER), are those considered “*magagaling sa dati*” (better members of the former anti-kidnapping task force).

The President said PACER would go after kidnapping, drugs, and holdup and robbery syndicates.

The Order of Battle workshop, the President said, has already identified who the most active kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) syndicates are, where they are operating, and their probable headquarters and safe houses.

Of the 21 KFR syndicates, three are very active.

The President suggested that the operation against the KFR groups should be “military style.”

“Neutralize the kidnapping syndicates, so that there will be no more kidnapping crimes in the future,” the President said.

The specific plans on how to accelerate manhunts, the next step after identifying the kidnappers, would be presented to the President tomorrow, July 12, by PNP Chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr.

What the PACER need as support from the Office of the President would also be included in the report, the President said.

Administration will deliver on what it says, GMA assures

“Huwag kayong mawalan ng pag-asa dahil itong gobyerno ninyo ay tinutupad ang sinasabi (Don’t lose hope; this administration will do its job and deliver on what it says).”

This was the assurance made today by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during the launching of the United Laboratories' RiteMED Philippines at Watsons Drugstore in SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

The President said the launching of pharmaceutical industries like RiteMED Philippines, Inc. exemplified the administration's commitment to improve the health and welfare of the Filipinos, particularly the poor.

The President recalled that during her State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July last year, she pledged that her administration would bring down the price of medicines by half.

"Ito ay natutupad na sa mga botika ng government hospital dahil sa pagsisikap ni Mar Roxas na unang nag-pioneer niyan dahil sa DTI ginawa ito para sa probinsiya niya sa Capi (Pharmacies in government hospitals now sell medicines at lower prices because of the efforts of Secretary Manuel Roxas II of the Department of Trade and Industry who initiated the move in his home province of Capi)," she said.

A monitoring report of the Presidential Management Staff, headed in a concurrent capacity by Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr., said that as of July 6, at least 72 Department of Health (DOH)-retained hospitals were dispensing more brands of medicines at cheaper prices.

Some P22.4 million worth of medicines would be delivered to 61 local government unit hospitals by the 3rd quarter of 2002. Herbal and selected over-the-counter drugs are also being sold in 990 rolling stores and 2,500 Botika sa Barangay (village drug stores) nationwide.

The President congratulated United Laboratories (Unilab) for the successful launching of RiteMED Philippines, which is in line with her administration's vision to make health requirements such as medicines accessible to most Filipinos, especially the poor, at cheaper cost.

The President said that with RiteMED, even shoppers in malls and those who go to their private doctors can now avail themselves of medicines at half the price.

RiteMED Philippines, Inc. is a new pharmaceutical company specializing in high quality yet economical off-patent drugs.

In his remarks, Joselito Campos, Jr., chairman and chief executive officer of Unilab, expressed his profound thanks to the President for her presence in the launching rites of their new affiliate company, RiteMED Philippines.

"This new company will market nationwide affordable medicines of the highest quality," he told the President.

"We have spared nothing to ensure that RiteMED get the widest coverage and the strongest presence to reach as many end-users as possible," Campos said, adding that his company has assembled a portfolio of medicines that answers the most pressing health needs of our countrymen.

While RiteMED is a permanent commitment, Campos said, it is also a grand project that is made feasible primarily because of the vision and leadership of the Macapagal-Arroyo government.

"Our plan is to build on what we have right now by putting on stream off-patent drugs as quickly as possible to increase the people's health benefits further," he said.

After her speech, the President, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, Secretary Roxas and RiteMED officials witnessed the dispensation of RiteMED medicines to the first lucky customer.

RiteMED medicines are said to be more economical than the leading brands.

GMA stressed on gov't policy, Afile clarifies

Malacañang today said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo only insisted on the adherence by officials to government policy and never criticized anyone or any group.

Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afile, Jr. today made this clarification following news reports that the President engaged Pastor "Boy" Saycon, secretary general of the Council on Philippine Affairs (COPA), and the civil society group in a "word war."

"The President was not talking about criticisms; she was talking about policy," Afile said in a press briefing.

"What the President was saying is that once there is a government policy and you are in the government, you either adhere to that policy or get out of government. That was the thrust of her position," he explained.

He said the President, in a luncheon meeting Wednesday with members of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines and the Malacañang Press Corps, reechoed the policy that "every executive department really has to uphold that kind of discipline."

He added that the executive department has a set of policies to follow.

Part of the discipline in the executive department is to make sure that everybody down the line follows the policy of the President as long as it is in accordance with law.

"So the President was saying that if you cannot stick to the policy or if you cannot support the policy, you really have no business being in the government," Afile said.

He also brushed aside talks that a loyalty check is being conducted on officials and that Cabinet members are submitting resignation letters.

He said there was no need to conduct loyalty checks since the President merely stressed on adherence to policy.

Meanwhile, Afile confirmed that on July 15, the President is scheduled to take over the post of Foreign Affairs Secretary following the resignation of Vice President Teofisto Guingona from the post effective that date.

Afile admitted that the search committee headed by former Presidential Management Staff head Vicky Garchitorena, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman and Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas has not yet finished its selection of the next Department of Foreign Affairs chief.

He said the President did not issue a timetable for the search committee to give it the leeway to widen the range of their choices. A shortlist of probable candidates has been submitted to the committee.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 11, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032905/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july11.htm>

The President's Day: July 12, 2002

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- **Set aside subculture of divisiveness, GMA urges various sectors of society**
- **Guingona still enjoys trust and confidence of GMA, says Palace**
- **Bataan officials express full support to GMA**
- **Gov't, private groups release P11.6 million for relief efforts for typhoon and flood victims**
- **GMA lauds PNP, AFP for role in conviction of Indonesian national for possession of explosives**
- **GMA seeks more investments, jobs to eliminate poverty**

Set aside subculture of divisiveness, GMA urges various sectors of society

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the Filipino people to set aside the subculture of divisiveness among the various sectors of the society in order to further strengthen the country's human development index.

In her keynote address at the launching of the Fourth Philippine Human Development Report in Malacañang, the President cited the important role being played by the civil society in building a "strong Republic."

"We must strive to finally dismantle a subculture of divisiveness and self-centeredness and transform our families, our communities and other civil society organizations into engines for national prosperity," she said.

The vibrant civil society, according to her, is a "cornerstone of a strong Republic," of which the community, the non-government organizations (NGOs), the media and the churches have vital roles in building the republic, as well as in doing some of the state's tasks to improve the conditions of every citizens

She added that it is also civil society here, as anywhere in democratic countries in the world, that has the prime responsibility of developing and advancing Philippine culture.

In addressing the event's theme, the President noted that the Philippine Human Development Report is a fruit of the continuing dialogue between the civil society and government.

"We may not always agree with each other but dialogue makes us understand each other," he President said.

One clear example of that understanding, she said, is the use of the human development index (HDI) as the basis for the computation of the country's growth, the very first country to ever do so.

The President added that the HDI is a product of institutionalized consultation for the common good.

She explained that the politics of institutionalized consultation with the people as espoused by her administration requires a vibrant civil society.

"But civil society, a warrior in toppling a dictatorship and corrupt government, must now learn to forge its swords into hammers for building the Republic," she said.

Also in her speech, the President commended the author and the publishers of the Human Development Net (HDN) report, which is a very useful guide in pursuit of her administration's efforts to create more jobs as a primary means to fight poverty.

Guingona still enjoys trust and confidence of GMA, says Palace

Malacañang today said that although Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. has resigned as foreign secretary, he still enjoys the full trust and confidence of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as an ally in the ruling Lakas-NUCD-UMDP party.

In a statement, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said that aside from being an ally in the ruling party, the Vice President has also the full trust of the President in governance and nation building.

The President is chairman of the Lakas-NUCD-UMDP while Guingona is president.

In announcing his resignation from the Cabinet last July 2, the Vice President said that he will continue to hold the President in high esteem and is committed to good governance.

In accepting his resignation “with regrets,” the President also assured the Vice President that she would continue the latter’s programs at the Department of Foreign Affairs, including those that would benefit the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

Malacañang also strongly denied that Vice President Guingona has asked for political or personal concessions from the President in connection with his resignation as foreign secretary.

“Allegations and reports on this matter are malicious and unfair to everyone involved,” Afable said.

Afable said that the Vice President resigned from the Cabinet in “view of honest differences of opinion with the President.”

“There are no concessions or conditions attached to his resignation, or discussed in the course of events leading to it,” Afable stressed.

Guingona’s resignation as foreign secretary takes effect on July 15, after which the President will assume the foreign affairs portfolio in a concurrent capacity until such time that she can choose a successor to Guingona.

A special search committee created by the President is now in the process of screening a short list of probable contenders to the post, Afable said.

Bataan officials express full support to GMA

The provincial officials of Bataan today expressed full support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, extending wholehearted, unconditional and continuing assistance to the “Leader of the Times.”

In a letter they signed and sent to the President, Bataan Gov. Lenardo Roman, Vice Governor Rogelio Roque and Rep. Antonino Roman, municipal mayors and the Sangguniang Panlalawigan said “we are one with you in the challenges besetting our country.”

“We derive strength in the union borne out of faith in you. We emulate the virtues in governance that you exemplify. We pursue the programs you have formulated for your people,” the Bataan officials said.

The officials said they cannot but admit the daunting tasks ahead, especially for the President.

“We believe that your assumption into office was spurred by the dictates of the times. The Omnipotent Power intervened, the threshold of the nation demanded and the voice of the people cried for a happenstance in you,” they said.

The officials said they earnestly hope for the success of the people under her administration.

“We humbly pray for you and for the fulfillment of the dreams of generations of Filipinos under your stewardship. We eagerly await the realization of the Leader of the Times,” they said.

The letter was also signed by Bataan Mayors Liberato Santiago, Jr. (Abucay), Nelson David (Limay), Jose Alejandro Payumo III (Dinalupihan), Estrella Santos (Pilar), Efren Pascual, Jr. (Orani), Norberto Ricardo (Bagac), Efren Cruz (Hermosa), Angel Peliglorio, Jr. (Mariveles), Teodorico Albelda (Samal) and Norberto Linao (Morong).

Among board members who signed were Wilfredo Apostol, Eduardo Calimbas, Reynaldo Muli, Dante Manalaysay, Edwin Enrile, Sergio Mariano, Rodolfo Salandanan, Melanio Banzon, Lucila Payumo and Fernando Austria and Sangguniang Kabataan president Junilene Viesca.

Gov't, private groups release P11.6 million for relief efforts for typhoon and flood victims

A total of P11,601,075.23 has so far been released for relief and rehabilitation efforts of concerned government agencies, in cooperation with the private sector, for families affected by the monsoon rains and typhoon “Gloria”.

An update released this morning by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said that the amount was extended to flood victims through the combined resources of the DSWD, local government units (LGUs), non-government organizations (NGOs), and government organizations (GOs).

The relief and rehabilitation efforts are being coordinated by the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) and its provincial and municipal chapters.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has earlier ordered the Department of Budget and Management to release the initial amount of P300 million for relief and rehabilitation efforts in calamity-stricken areas in Metro Manila and some parts of Luzon.

In its latest report, the DSWD said the government was able to extend assistance to a total of 104,743 families, or 473,377 individuals.

Out of this number, 6,983 families or 31,813 individuals were accommodated in 184 evacuation centers set up in Metro Manila and some provinces of Central and Southern Luzon.

The DSWD said that as the floods have subsided in some areas, only 75 evacuation centers have remained while 109 have been closed.

Since the start of the heavy rains and the subsequent flooding, the number of affected families totaled 355,749 or 1,644,199 individuals.

Most of the victims came from 1,613 barangays in 26 cities and 15 provinces, the DSWD said.

The DSWD said that 566 families were left homeless at the height of the disaster, while 2,363 others had their houses partially damaged.

Though the rains stopped and the floods subsided, relief operations are continuously being conducted through the concerted efforts of the member-agencies of NDCC.

The President has personally visited flooded areas and evacuation centers in Metro Manila and nearby Pampanga to personally assess the damage wrought by rains and typhoon.

GMA lauds PNP, AFP for role in conviction of Indonesian national for possession of explosives

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and other government law enforcement agencies following the conviction of Indonesian national Agus Dwikarna for illegal possession of explosives.

In a brief ceremony at the PNP-Intelligence Group (IG) office in Camp Crame, Quezon City this afternoon, the President said the conviction of Dwikarna was a “victory for the country’s criminal justice system as well as to the government’s fight against terrorism.”

Dwikarna was presented to the President by top-ranking government officials led by Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, PNP chief, Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., and PNP-IG head Chief Superintendent Robert Delfin.

Earlier today, Pasay Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 117 Judge Henrick Guingoyon meted Dwikarna with 10 years of imprisonment for violation of Presidential Decree No. 1866 or the illegal possession of firearms and explosives law.

The PNP said Dwikarna was arrested by police authorities at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) last March 14 while in possession of two pieces of oval-type C-4 explosives and five detonators.

GMA seeks more investments, jobs to eliminate poverty

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the Fourth Human Development Report for raising interesting points on the country’s human development efforts, as she stressed the need to create more jobs to raise the human development index of over 80 million Filipinos.

In a speech at the launching of the Fourth Human Development Report at the Malacañang’s Heroes Hall, the President said the report would serve as a useful guide in her administration’s pursuit of providing “more jobs for our people as a primary means of fighting poverty.”

She commended the report’s authors, the Human Development Network and the United Nations Development Program for publishing the document, adding “the report is a fruit of the continuing dialogue between the civil society and government.”

One of the report’s interesting points the President cited was that “unemployment and poverty do not amount to the same thing.”

“I now see jobs as basically solving unemployment ... as our main means of fighting poverty in a free enterprise economy,” she said.

The President said Sulu, the poorest province in terms of per capita income as mentioned in the document, also happened to have the second lowest unemployment rate. But she believed that Sulu would double its efforts to attain peace and development.

She said that while Sulu’s unemployment rate was 3.1 percent, Tawi-Tawi, the second poorest in per capita income, had the seventh lowest unemployment rate of 4.2 percent.

On the other hand, Metro Manila, the most prosperous region in the country, had the highest unemployment rate of 17.5 percent.

She added that Cavite and Tarlac, two relatively rich provinces, were among the 10 provinces with the highest unemployment rates.

“On the macroeconomic level, this helps me to understand why our economy is the best performing in Southeast Asia and the third best performing in Asia, and yet, it has more than 4 million people out of work,” she declared.

Another report highlight the President noted was that some provinces had very high levels of underemployment.

She said it was sad to see the underemployment rate in at least 10 provinces going over 40 percent.

Bukidnon and Camarines Sur had unemployment rates of more than 50 percent. In these provinces, “more than half of the workers are looking for additional work and it is most likely because of inadequate pay,” she said.

Under the conditions, “we need to have a more competitive investment climate. Part of this investment climate is grounded on objective, quantitative reality which is making our power rates more competitive,” she added.

She spelled out the measures her administration has been doing to shore up business confidence in the country, including bringing in investments and creating better paying jobs for the people.

The President said eight of the top 10 provinces in the country’s human development index (HDI) are in Luzon that makes up 60 percent of the population.

She said Mindanao had bright potentials. “It is encouraging that two of its provinces, Davao Oriental and South Cotabato, are among the top 10 gainers in human development.”

Misamis Oriental, she said, had the highest HDI, aside from being a top-performing province in the area of education.

She stressed the need to address the low HDI of the bottom five provinces as quickly as possible, explaining that if these provinces also have low unemployment rates, “it is because the unemployed of those provinces quickly migrate to the provinces with the highest development and look for jobs there.”

“They just stay there. They don’t go back home again. This explains why the richest regions also have the highest unemployment rates. So, I still believe it is still jobs, jobs, jobs we must create to raise the HDI of our people as a whole,” she said.

“In a free enterprise economy, this is a tall order because in the end, jobs will be created not by government economic activity but private sector investment decisions.” the President said.

“We need an effective law and the necessary infrastructure. We need an effective state to uplift its poorest and weakest citizens, empower them and dismantle the structures that make them poor and weak,” she said.

The President urged everyone to work together to raise the country’s HDI. “Let us make faith an important part of our indices. Let us move as one with stout heart and strong republic. God will make us victorious.”

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: July 12, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032913/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july12.htm>

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GMA wraps up Zambo, Basilan visits with historic Independence Day flag-raising in Lamitan

ZAMBOANGA CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ended her visits to Zamboanga City and Lamitan, Basilan on a historic note.

For the first time in the nation's history, the President led the flag-raising ceremony for the celebration of Philippine Independence Day in Mindanao, specifically at the municipal hall grounds in Lamitan, Basilan.

By raising the Philippine flag in Lamitan to signal the start of activities for the country's 104th Independence Day anniversary, the President echoed the common aspiration of the people of Basilan, of Mindanao and of the entire Filipino people to be finally free from the bondage of terrorism and poverty.

The President raised the flag at exactly 7:00 a.m., simultaneous with other flag-raising rites conducted nationwide.

She was assisted by Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu, Basilan Governor Wahab Akbar and Lamitan OIC-Mayor Arleigh Eisma.

Immediately after the flag-raising rites in Lamitan, the President was flown by helicopter to the Edwin Andrews Air Base (EAAB) here where she took off for a flight to Manila where she is expected to grace Independence Day activities at the Rizal Park.

In Lamitan where she stayed overnight and braved security risks, the Chief Executive convened the joint meeting of the Regional Economic Planning and Development Board and Regional Peace and Order Council

of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Tuesday afternoon.

Following the meeting, the President attended a short program where she awarded a Community-Based Forest Management Agreement Utilization Permit to Sarri Bolon, president of the Maligue Multi-Purpose Cooperative.

The permit allowed the extraction of 500 cubic meters of forest products worth some P1.5 million in three barangays of Isabela City.

The President also gave out checks aggregately amounting to P1.285 million for core shelter, potable water, post-harvest, educational, skills training and other projects in different towns of Basilan.

She further distributed Philhealth insurance cards and turned over medicines to officials of Lamitan.

The helicopter bearing the President landed in Lamitan shortly after noon Tuesday.

From the landing site at the Claret High School grounds, she went directly to the Jardin de Infancia inside the compound of the Lamitan Parish to attend the wake of slain Abu Sayyaf hostage and nurse Ediborah Yap.

Yap, who the President declared a heroine, was one of the hostages killed in the encounter between the military and the Abu Sayyaf in Siraway, Zamboanga del Norte last June 7.

The President earlier came from this city where she visited soldiers and a militiaman healing from wounds they got in gunbattles against the Abu Sayyaf in Siraway, Zamboanga del Norte.

At Camp Navarro, Southern Command Hospital, the President talked casually with the wounded soldiers and extolled their bravery and gallantry in defense of freedom and democracy.

She distributed cash assistance worth P50,000 each to the soldiers who were part of the troops that engaged in a search-and-rescue operation to get back American missionaries Martin and Gracia Burnham and Filipino nurse Ediborah Yap from the hands of the Abu Sayyaf.

Following her hospital visit, the President had lunch with members of the local media with whom she shared insights on various topics, including the conduct of the Balikatan 02-1, in an informal conversation.

With the President were Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, Presidential Assistant on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita,

Official Development Assistance Secretary Marita Jimenez, Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo, Presidential Assistant for Jobs Generation Luis Lorenzo, Presidential Assistant on Muslim Affairs Nur Jaafar, Electrification Deputy Administrator Edita Bueno, and Local Water Utilities Administrator Lorenzo Jamora.

Baselco takeover beneficial to Basilan power users

LAMITAN, Basilan — People in Basilan province and Isabela City can consider frequent power outages and poor electric services a sordid thing of the past.

After the National Electrification Administration (NEA) took over Tuesday the management of the Basilan Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Baselco), Basilenos will soon see the light at the end of the dark tunnel.

In a report to Malacañang, the Department of Energy (DOE) said the NEA takeover of Baselco sought to end the daily brownouts power users in the province have been experiencing for several months now due to insufficient power supply from Baselco.

The DOE report said Baselco has a peak load of six megawatts, but it could only produce four megawatts and deliver power by consumer sectors in six towns of Basilan and Isabela City.

The DOE said Baselco has also been experiencing frequent line tripping brought about by damaged insulators, unbalanced load per phase, right-of-way clearing and uncoordinated protection setting between the National Power Corporation's (Napocor) relay and Baselco's recloser.

It is a pity that while the national, regional and local governments have pushed hard to change the people's perception of Basilan as a lair of terrorists to that of an area of peaceful co-existence among its culturally-diversified people, of agricultural productivity and of tourism, unstable power conditions have stymied growth in the province.

Basilan officials have been implementing various support infrastructure projects to give tourism and agricultural trade in the area a boost in a bid to raise the standard of living of their constituents.

This has led Isabela City's Sangguniang Panlungsod to pass last April 17, Resolution 02-1146 recommending the NEA takeover of Baselco's management to save the cooperative from folding up and to protect the interests of member-consumers.

"It is unfortunate that while the local governments of Basilan are doing their best to improve (the people's) living conditions, they are experiencing the poorest electricity service," said Energy Secretary Vicente Perez.

"We have to exercise available options to ensure that the people of Isabela City and Basilan get efficient and reliable power service," Perez stressed.

The DOE report said NEA and Napocor officials met on June 4 to plan out and effect the Baselco takeover. An agreement was finally reached between and among the two government agencies and Baselco detailing the takeover arrangements.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, during her visit Tuesday to Basilan, announced the takeover.

Napocor records also showed that Baselco owed the state-run power firm some P332 million as of April 30, 2002.

The amount represented Baselco's current due of P4.44 million, overdue of P125.6 million and restructured debt of P202.1 million.

Napocor has served several disconnection notices to Baselco but the latter ably arranged acceptable repayment schemes.

But Perez said the repayment schemes were not enough. Baselco should settle their obligations in full as Napocor is also beset with obligations of its own.

Baselco also owed NEA some P408 million as of December 31 last year.

The cooperative's system loss, or the amount of electricity loss from pilferage and technical problems, has reached 24.05 percent, way above the 14-percent required on electric cooperatives.

Meanwhile, the DOE also reported that it has energized some 52 barangays in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) as of end-May 2002.

The accomplishment is in line with the commitments made by President Macapagal-Arroyo in her July 2001 State of the Nation Address.

Energized were 17 barangays in the towns of Indanan, Panamao, Parang and Talipao, all in Sulu; 13 barangays in Barira, Buldon, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Datu Paglas, Kabuntalan, North Upi, Sultan Kudarat and Sharif Aguak, all in Maguindanao

Thirteen barangays in Tandubas and Simunul, Tawi-Tawi; six barangays in Lamitan, Lantawan and Tuburan, in Basilan; one barangay each in the towns of Lumba-Bayabao, Maigo and Wao, in Lanao del Sur.

GMA says June 12 also 'Freedom Day' of coconut farmers

LAMITAN, Basilan — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday June 12 should be commemorated not only as the country's Independence Day but also the "Araw ng Kalayaan (Freedom Day)" of small coconut farmers nationwide.

The President said that starting on June 12, coconut farmers could avail themselves of the fruits of the coconut levy fund “which we have fought for (in the last) several decades” for their benefit.

The President made the announcement during a program conducted before the joint Regional Economic Planning and Development Board and Regional Peace and Order Council of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) at the Claret High School.

She said the coconut farmers in Basilan and elsewhere in the country have been entitled to a P10,000 insurance, up 100 percent from the old insurance coverage of P5,000 they used to avail of from the Philippine Coconut Authority.

She added that registered and accredited small coconut farmers could begin availing themselves of micro-financing of P1,000 each.

Coconut farmers, however, may pool their resources together to engage in small but more productive coconut farming efforts and get better returns from their micro-finance and livelihood project, she said.

The President also announced that farmers could sell their copra directly to oil mills put up and funded through the coconut levy.

The oil mills offer better prices for copra, she said, adding that farmers do not have to suffer from the hands of middlemen who dictate copra prices to the disadvantage of farmers.

The President, during the program, also distributed 500 Philhealth Insurance cards to beneficiaries from this town.

She said holders of Philhealth cards could take advantage of subsidized medical care, particularly in state-run hospitals.

Meanwhile, a report from the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) showed that as of May 15, 2002, a total of 8,040 poor families of 36,984 persons in the ARMM have been enrolled under the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP).

In Basilan alone, 1,726 families have been enlisted, with Lamitan having 1,000 family-beneficiaries; Maluso, 395; and Sumisip, 366.

The PMS report said 6,221 families from six towns in Lanao del Sur and Marawi City are enjoying the benefits of the NHIP. A total of 5,817 families are in Marawi City, 164 in the town of Masiu, 130 in Piagapo, 58 in Ditsa-Ramain, 20 each in Madamba and Madalum, and 12 in Balindong.

Twenty families are covered by the NHIP in Indanan, Sulu and 38 in Sapa-Sapa, Tawi-Tawi.

Besides providing benefits under Philhealth, the government has also stocked four Department of Health-retained hospitals in the ARMM with low-cost imported medicines, the PMS reported.

These are the Sulu Sanitarium in San Raymundo, Jolo, Sulu; the Maguindanao Provincial Hospital, Sharif Aguak, Maguindanao; the Dr. Serapio Montaner Provincial Hospital, Malabang, Lanao del Sur; and the Buluan District Hospital in Buluan, Maguindanao.

As of May 31, 2002, the National Food Authority has deployed 93 rolling stores in the ARMM.

The Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera Rolling Stores have served some 108,000 consumers in 72 villages in 18 towns and cities of the region, the report added.

Papal Nuncio lauds GMA's 'new culture of politics' and fight against poverty, terrorism

Archbishop Antonio Franco, apostolic nuncio to the Philippines, today lauded President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for promoting a grassroots-based consultation process and for her commitment to fight terrorism and poverty.

In his response to the President's remarks at the traditional Vin d'Honneur held this morning at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang, Franco, who is also the dean of the diplomatic corps, said that the diplomatic community welcomes the President's desire to promote "a new culture of politics intended to integrate and to favor greater participation."

The Vin d'Honneur was held as part of the commemoration of the country's 104th Independence Day.

The President just flew in from Lamitan, Basilan where she led the flag-raising ceremonies to kick off the nationwide Independence Day celebration. This was the first time that any incumbent President has led the flag-raising rites on Independence Day in Mindanao.

Franco said that this process of dialogue and consultation that the President has been conducting throughout the country is conducive to a healthier environment and speedier development of the Philippines.

"We appreciate your commitment to dialogue with all—troops and other sectors of the Filipino society—in order to reassure them of their innate rights and respect for human dignity," Franco said.

Franco also cited the President's stance that the fight against terrorism is invariably linked to the fight against poverty which her administration is waging in the country today.

According to Franco, in order to find a lasting solution to the problem of suffering and terrorism, it is essential for world leaders to realize that this human tragedy often arise from "uninterrupted human frustrations owing to painful poverty and the lack of respect for human rights."

He said that the religion that one group professes, the language that they speak, or their profession, ideology, or prosperity should never be used to suppress others, or to foment a division, wage a war, or disseminate distrust and destruction.

"Our common hope is that the collective efforts of the international community will lead eventually to the eradication of the roots and the manifestations of the evils that we all denounce," Franco said.

Speaking for the diplomatic community, Franco said that with her able leadership and the full dedication of her government as well as the contribution of the opposition, the President would succeed in maximizing the fruits of true freedom and in promoting peace and prosperity not only in the Philippines but also in other parts of the world.

"We assure you of the collaboration of the governments and the organizations that we represent. We pray that together we could build a better world," Franco said.

Franco closed his brief remarks by offering a toast "to the good health of the Her Excellency, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and to the prosperity of our beloved Filipino people."

GMA pays tribute to nation's martyrs, day-to-day heroes and heroines

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today paid tribute to the nation's heroes and heroines, the martyrs who shed their blood and the ordinary people whose small acts of courage, civic duty, honesty and dedication inspire others to take bold and decisive measures.

During the traditional Vin d'Honneur on the 104th anniversary of Philippine Independence, the President told the world's ambassadors and envoys gathered at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang of the great acts of courage and martyrdom of such heroes as Dr. Jose P. Rizal, the dedication to duty and sacrifice made by hostage-nurse Ediborah Yap, and the honesty and selflessness of teacher Marilyn Bonguiat.

"Independence Day is not only for great acts of courage and martyrdom, the President said. "Day to day, our nation is built with small but unnoticed acts of courage and civic duty," she added.

The President said the farmer, the street sweeper, the police officer on the beat, the worker in the export factory all serve the family, the community and the nation.

"We salute them all for all their honesty and dedication," she stressed.

The President noted that Ediborah died in the line of duty and had taken care of Gracia and Martin Burnham when they were in captivity.

"She was a nurse to the very end. She stuck to her professional oath even in the darkest depths of adversity," the President said, adding that the death of Ediborah Yap, the last of the Filipino Dos Palmas hostages, challenges the entire Filipino citizenry anew to the fight against terrorism.

The President also recalled the honesty of Marilyn Bonguiat, the teacher from Calabanga, who returned P6.6 million inadvertently added to her meager pay check.

"She is telling us that civic duty comes ahead of personal gain," she said.

While many people could find it difficult to believe that this is happening in the Philippines, President Macapagal-Arroyo said the "truth is that we have heroes and heroines all around us."

"These heroes and heroines all around us inspire us to take bold and decisive measures towards national consolidation. They inspire us to provide leadership and the example of hard work. They inspire us to deliver care and service to our people," she declared.

According to the President, the keel of democracy is balanced on freedom and responsibility.

"Here and now, we are buoyed by a new sense of resolve and hope in successfully restoring the political and economic moorings of our nation," she said.

The President noted that the 104th anniversary celebration of Independence Day is also a celebration of the Filipino people's common ideals. "Ideals that all peoples live and fight for at work, in the streets, and homes all over. These are the ideals of human freedom, human dignity, human excellence," she said.

However, the President noted that there are times in history when the promotion of these ideals calls for the ultimate sacrifice.

"Some, like Dr. Jose P. Rizal, consciously answered that call. Others, like Ediborah Yap, answered that call, though nothing in their previous life had warned them that they would have to do it," she said.

Among those who attended the Vin d'Honneur were Papal Nuncio to the Philippines Archbishop Antonio Franco, Senate President Franklin Drilon, House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Acting Foreign Affairs Secretary Franklin Ebdalin, members of the Cabinet and members of the diplomatic corps.

Gov't to use all resources in fight against terrorism, poverty, GMA tells envoys

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said her administration is committed to use all its resources, including that of the military, in the fight against terrorism and poverty in the country, particularly in Mindanao.

Speaking before the diplomatic community at the traditional *Vin d'Honneur* held this morning at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall, the Chief Executive likened terrorism to a phantom in the night that stalked the world and the southwestern Philippines.

"But we have learned to muster the military and development of forces to fight this evil," the President said.

The *Vin d'Honneur* was held as part of the commemoration of the country's 104th Independence Day.

The President said her administration has recognized that beyond physical security what is needed is "total human security" which relates to basic human needs as food, shelter, education and employment.

"Unless all these are comprehensively addressed, impoverished and disillusioned communities will continue to be the recruitment grounds for the evil of terrorism," the President said.

According to the President, in her visits to countries in the region, she has expounded on two main points: one, is that the drive towards economic integration is part of the answer to the problem of poverty in the world and in the region, and the other is that there should be a united front against terrorism and international crime.

The President said that the *Balikatan* exercises of Philippine military troops with the United States holds a profound significance to national security.

She also said her government has formalized its cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in order to "check transnational crimes and terrorism."

"This is found in the trilateral agreement of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines recently joined in by Thailand to share intelligence and maintain tighter control of borders to stop the flow of weapons and terrorists," she said.

According to the President, the agreement includes within its purview other transnational crimes, such as money laundering, hijacking, drug trafficking and piracy.

"The integration of Asean, once a hazy vision, is now a reality. From the early part of this year, when most of the goods traded among us had their tariffs go down to zero to five percent," she said.

The President said she was reminded of the European experience where, between 1870 and 1945, there were three major wars between France and Germany, "but they, eventually overcame the past to win the future."

She noted that Europe's economic integration led to greater political stability and security.

In this connection, she asked the ambassadors and envoys present during the *Vin d'Honneur* to think and act together as East Asians rather than just individual nations and cultures.

She also said that the Philippines will be a part of this new economic order working with, though not dominated by, regional and international economic and financial organizations.

But even if the country becomes a part of the new economic order, the President said she still subscribes to what her late father, Diosdado Macapagal had said – that the "Philippines and its government should become truly independent so as to adopt policies and decisions on the overriding issues of national interest."

“It is only if our government and its leaders are free to decide and act in the highest interest of our people that we can solve our vital problems, particularly the redemption of the poor from poverty,” she said.

The President said she looks forward to continued partnership with all countries represented by their respective ambassadors at the diplomatic reception.

In her speech, the President also cited the accomplishments of her government during the past one and a half years based on the targets that she set in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA).

For instance, she said, the government has distributed 104,261 hectares of private agricultural land more than the target of 100,000 hectares of land, which she pledged during in the SONA.

The President said that the administration has also provided with health insurance a total of 1.5 million rural and urban poor individuals from her target of 500,000.

“I said that all public school students will have textbooks for priority subjects in grades one to four and first and second years in high school. And by September this year, we will have five textbooks in the hands of every child in the public schools,” she said.

The President said this is the essence of human freedom. “People are not truly free if they do not have education. They are not truly free if they do not have access to health care. They are not truly free if they are landless,” she added.

In closing, the President thanked the ambassadors present during the occasion “for helping the Philippines achieved true freedom for its people.”

She then proposed a toast to all the nations and peoples “in order that we may continue to work together and harder, to attain our dreams of world peace and prosperity.”

GMA calls on people to pursue war against poverty initiated by nation’s heroes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the Filipino people not to forget the sacrifices of the country’s heroes like Andres Bonifacio and to carry on the struggle they initiated, particularly against poverty.

In her Independence Day speech at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park, the President stressed that aside from terrorism, the nation’s main enemy is poverty.

She said that as long as poverty exists, a nation and its people can never be considered truly free and independent.

That is why, the President said, she has made the war against poverty the central theme of her administration.

The fight against poverty is a carry-over from the past, she added, initiated by Andres Bonifacio as part of the nation’s struggle for independence.

The war against poverty never ended as poverty continues to exist to this day, the President said, at the same time urging the people to unite and bring to an end, within the decade, the battle launched by Bonifacio.

The President prodded the Filipino people to draw more power and knowledge from the lessons of the past, from the country’s heroes and heroines who demonstrated determination and resolve, courage and civic duty, dedication and selflessness.

She also said that a few years before her father, former President Diosdado Macapagal, died, he wrote an article and discussed poverty and its possible cures, one of which is independence.

“The Philippines and its government should become truly independent so as to adopt policies and decisions on the overriding issues of national interest. It is only if our government and its leaders are free to decide and act in the highest interest of our people that we can solve our vital problems, particularly the redemption of the poor from poverty,” the President quoted her father.

The President said she strongly believes that progress and development would not materialize if the majority of Filipinos is not free from poverty.

She then reiterated the four core beliefs that guide her administration: to win the war against poverty within the decade; to improve moral standards in government and society; to change from personality-driven to party and program-based politics; and to promote leadership by example.

The President said the priority programs of the government involve jobs for the people, education, food on every table, health care and shelter.

GMA calls on Filipinos to close ranks in fighting the Abu Sayyaf scourge

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on all Filipinos to close ranks in responding to the needs of the nation and in fulfilling their respective obligations, especially in fighting the Abu Sayyaf scourge in Mindanao.

In her speech during the 104th Philippine Independence Day celebration at the Quirino Grandstand in Luneta, the President said no other group has sowed so much hardship, fear and instability in Basilan and elsewhere in Southwestern Philippines except the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

The President said that for as long as the Abu Sayyaf terrorists are not brought to justice, the suffering of the people of Southwestern Philippines would not be assuaged.

“Mga kababayan ko, ang mga terorista ay naghangad ng gulo kung kaya’t sila ang dapat makatikim nga makatarungang galit ng sambayanang Pilipino, ng mga kawal, at maging sibilyan man (My countrymen, these terrorists are out to sow trouble, and that is why they should be dealt with the full fury of the Filipino nation, by the soldiers as well as the civilian population),” the President said.

In calling for unity among the people, the President cited the case of the people of Lamitan, Basilan who became divided in the aftermath of that unfortunate incident involving the incursion of Abu Sayyaf bandits in their area.

The President noted that this year’s theme of the Independence Day celebration, *“Bayan Ko, Sagot Ko”* aptly described how the people of Lamitan have responded to that call by posting stickers in the walls along the streets calling for unity among the residents.

When she led the flag-raising ceremony in Lamitan early this morning, she also noticed that the people there are now talking about how to close ranks, to move on and to unite in fighting the Abu Sayyaf menace.

By moving on, the President said it is a way for the people of Lamitan to show that they really care about their place.

“Independence Day is not only for great acts of courage. Day to day, our nation is built through small unnoticed acts of courage and civic duty. The farmer, the street sweeper, the police officer on the beat, the worker in the export factory, all serve the family, the community and the nation. We salute them all for their honesty and dedication,” the President said.

After one year that everyone was praying to end the abduction of Filipina nurse Ediborah Yap and the Burnham couple from the hands of the Abu Sayyaf bandits, the President stressed that now is the time to show that the terrorists should not be allowed to escape from justice.

“As we have shown time and again, it is the Filipino who can love the Philippines so much as to lay down his life for his country so that others may enjoy the blessings and joys of living in this land,” she said.

Time and again and generations after generations, the President added that the call to make the ultimate sacrifice has been made.

“Some like Rizal consciously answered that call. Others like Ediborah Yap answered that call though nothing in their lives had warned them that they would have to do it. Yet, all in all, our history has been sanctified by the sacrifices of martyrs,” the President said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: June 12, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032127/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june12.htm>

The President's Day: July 13, 2002

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- **Life insurance policies of 1.02 million coconut farmers now upgraded**
- **GMA calls on economic team to speed up major projects**
- **GMA enjoins voters to participate in the July 15 polls**
- **RP needs a strong government for all Filipinos, says GMA**
- **Solon says GMA's SONA target commitments positive**

Life insurance policies of 1.02 million coconut farmers now upgraded

The Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) is now ready to distribute to some 1.02 million coconut farmers throughout the country their upgraded COCOLIFE insurance certificates.

According to PCA Administrator Danilo Coronacion, the upgrading of the coconut farmers life insurance policies from P5,000 to P10,000 is being undertaken under the Upgraded Insurance Project of the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF).

Coronacion said that Region VII tops in the list of coconut farmers with upgraded life insurance policies, with 161,106 beneficiaries; followed by Region VIII, with 135,558 beneficiaries; Region VI-A, with 125,730 beneficiaries; Region V, with 99,476 beneficiaries; and Region IX, with 84,154 beneficiaries.

The increase in the insurance coverage of coconut farmers has been ordered by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as part of the package of benefits for the coconut growers after the Supreme Court has decided that the coconut levy fund is "public in nature."

The President has earlier announced that the United Coconut Planters Bank (Cocobank) is now ready to make available some P700 million in coconut levy earnings for the benefit of the country's coconut farmers and the coconut producing provinces.

The Chief Executive made this announcement in her speech before thousands of residents who attended the 35th Foundation Anniversary of Davao del Norte held in Tagum City early this month.

The President recalled that during the Independence Day celebration this year, she had announced that the CIIF board has approved the release of P86 million as first-year premium payment for the expanded life insurance program for coconut farmers.

"The upgraded life insurance policies for more than one million farmers are ready for distribution to the region," the President said.

The President likewise said that she has instructed all concerned government agencies to see to it that the first fruits of the coconut levy fund should go to micro-financing for coconut farmers at P1,000.00 per coconut farmer.

GMA calls on economic team to speed up major projects

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has directed anew her economic team to address bottlenecks that have stalled the country's major infrastructure and investment projects.

"We must provide reinforcement to the understandably timid business community these days," the President said in her speech at the launching Friday of the Fourth Philippine Human Development Report at Malacañang's Heroes Hall.

She said administration projects in the pipeline should be fast-tracked.

The projects included the construction of the North Rail and the linking of the Light and Mass rail transits, the opening of the new *Nayong Pilipino* Tourism Estate, housing, the reopening of the National Steel Corporation, the construction of the Batangas Port, and the rehabilitation of the Philippine National Bank.

She said more focus should be given in implementing the projects, as well as programs in improving peace and order and reducing utility rates.

The President said: “We will not stop until we are satisfied that we have squeezed every drop of blood from stones. But at the same time, we must be responsible and respect the sanctity of contracts, despite the histrionics of some, because this is needed if we are to preserve the gains that we have made in our credit risk ratings.”

To make investors and citizens feel safer, the President said her administration — together with Philippine National Police chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes, Jr. and Davao City Rodrigo Duterte — has been concentrating on breathing new life and efficacy into the country’s anti-kidnapping efforts.

She said she is dealing with the threat of kidnapping the way she dealt with the threat of the notorious terrorist group Abu Sayyaf.

“I nag the police everyday today the way I used to nag the military everyday since May first,” she added.

“After I was convinced that we had seen the last of the destabilization threat because May First was very peaceful, I began to work on breathing down the necks of the military. And thanks God, the Abu Sayyaf has been defeated,” she said.

The President also cited the Order of Battle Workshop which pinned down 21 kidnapping syndicates. The workshop was held Thursday at the Police Headquarters in Camp Crame in Quezon City.

She said Ebdane would give her his report on what “needs to accelerate the manhunt for the syndicates at the top of the Order of Battle.”

“I will not micro-manage them as I did not micro-manage the war against the Abu Sayyaf. But I will personally track progress,” she stressed.

The President expressed the hope that the government “will win this battle with hands on persistence combined with good intelligence, and as in Edsa I and Edsa II, and many other struggles.”

She noted that spirituality was important especially when “it’s a matter of being discouraged or encouraged, no matter what the numbers look. It is the Spirit that will help lift us up from the feeling of hopelessness to the feeling of faith.”

“That is what we are doing to shore up our business confidence: bring investments and create better and higher paying jobs for our people,” she said.

GMA enjoins voters to participate in the July 15 polls

Calling on the need to revitalize democracy in the lowest political levels of the Philippine government, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today enjoined voters to go out and vote in the barangay elections on Monday, July 15.

In her regular Saturday radio address, the President noted that the barangay council is the basic form of government which renders public service in the nation’s communities.

The *Sangguniang Kabataan*, on the other hand, serves as the stepping stone of the youth in becoming responsible leaders of the country, she said.

The President said the people must not only go out and vote but also ensure that the polls would be honest, orderly and peaceful.

“Mahalaga ang bawat boto ninyo. Sagrado sa ating demokrasya ang inyong karapatang pumili ng ating mga pinuno (Your votes are important. Your right to elect our leaders is sacred),” the President added.

Earlier, the President declared July 15 as a special non-working holiday to enable qualified voters to exercise their right to vote.

The President said the people should take part in the affairs of their respective communities.

“Sa barangay level, higit na naiintindihan ng inyong mga pinuno ang inyong damdamin at mga pangangailangan. Sila rin ang nakakaalam kung ano ang ikabubuti ng inyong lugar dahil kilala nila ang mga totoong residente ng inyong komunidad. Sila rin ang nakatutok sa mga serbisyo at programa ng gobyerno sa inyong lugar – lalo na ang mga may kinalaman sa paglaban sa kahirapan (In the barangay level, the officials understand your needs and concerns because they know the issues in your area. They know the residents of your communities And they render public service and implement programs especially the anti-poverty thrust of government),” the President said.

RP needs a strong government for all Filipinos, says GMA

In summoning the people to go out and vote in the barangay elections on Monday, July 15, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the nation needs a strong government, not for a few, but for all Filipinos.”

“We need a republic so strong that it could help and defend the poorest, the weakest of Filipinos,” the President stressed.

She pointed out that having survived the elements of destabilization after EDSA II, “it is our mission now, the duty of this generation, to finally build a strong republic in the 21st century.”

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo recalled that when she became President last year, she emphasized that a dedicated government has as pillars the following;

First, a moral foundation that will guide the leadership in all levels of government. Second, a philosophy of transparency in the conduct of government. And third, an effective implementation of policies and program in the entire bureaucracy.

“These three pillars are the first and foremost cornerstone of a strong republic — an effective government, from national to local, with a devoted professional civil service, that delivers services to the majority, keeps the peace and order, helps the poor and the weak, and administers the law and justice to all,” she said.

The President said “it is our duty to protect our freedom and democracy by taking part in elections.”

“We need to strengthen our republic based on the new politics of programs and institutionalized consultations that we want to aim to achieve in these times,” she added.

“We have proven that we can conduct peaceful elections like the recent elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) despite the conflict in certain parts of Mindanao. I hope we can achieve this on July 15,” she said.

“On Monday, let’s all go out and vote. Let’s all work for honest, orderly and peaceful elections. Let us show to the world that our republic is strong,” she concluded.

Solon says GMA’s SONA target commitments positive

A comprehensive report of the House of Representatives Committee on Oversight has classified as “positive” the government’s performance in accomplishing the commitments made by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her July 2001 State of the Nation Address (SONA).

Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda, chairman of the House Committee on Oversight, stressed this to clarify media accounts that the report gave or suggested a negative overall rating for the administration.

Salceda said committee findings showed that “the Arroyo administration’s SONA accomplishment record, has been, on the whole, positive, contrary to some media accounts.”

Salceda said the committee “noted ‘technical or substantial compliance’ with 22 targets, while only 13 were underperforming, based on preliminary data” on the 35 SONA targets.

But more recent information from the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) noted that “several targets that seemed to be behind will now be achieved,” he added.

The targets included the distribution of 100,000 hectares of public land, construction of classrooms in villages not served by nearby schools, distribution of textbooks in key subjects for Grades 1 to 4 and Years 1 to 2, emergency hiring of out-of-school youth, and the release of the P500-million Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) fund.

Salceda said the committee “will continue to monitor the government’s compliance with the SONA targets.”

“We will review and validate new data from the PMS,” he said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: July 13, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032924/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july13.htm>

The President's Day: June 13, 2002

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- **GMA names Bayani Fernando MMDA Chairman**
- **Ifugao officials should have main role in preserving rice terraces — GMA**
- **GMA stresses need for inter-faith dialogue**
- **GMA wants Metropolitan Theatre to new home of NCAA**
- **WB launches \$1-B program to assist GMA administration strategy for poverty reduction**
- **Malacañang announces resignation of DOTC's Alvarez**
- **Palace: Abu Sayyaf has no new hostages**

GMA names Bayani Fernando MMDA Chairman

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the appointment of former Marikina City Mayor Bayani Fernando as the new chairman of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority replacing Benjamin Abalos who is now Chairman of the Commission on Elections.

The President made the announcement during her speech at the opening ceremonies of the two-day Culture and the Arts Conference held this morning at the Pearl Manila Hotel along Gen. Luna St, corner Taft and United Nations Avenues in Ermita, Manila.

The President first issued a series of directives, including the revival of the Metropolitan Theater in Manila to give the masses access to cultural activities and a review by the new MMDA chairman of the allocation of the proceeds of the ongoing Metro Manila Film Festival.

“Incidentally, you might want to know to whom I will give the instructions. You might want to know who will be the new MMDA chairman. It is Bayani Fernando, the former mayor of Marikina City,” she declared.

The President noted that when she asked former chairman Richard Gordon of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority to be Secretary of Tourism, she told him that what he did in Subic “you’ve got to do for the country.”

“When I called Bayani, I said, ‘BF, what you did for Marikina, you must for the whole country’,” she added.

The President said that in the review of the allocation of the proceeds from the film festival, “they should ensure that the endowment or the production subsidy contributed by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) to the semi-finalists or the qualifying scripts should become a permanent fund. So therefore, it should keep returning as much as possible to the NCCA so that you have the money again for next year’s subsidy.”

The President said that she began advancing money from the President’s Social Fund “not to give an award to the best movies at the end of the Metropolitan Film Festival but near the start.”

In other words, she said, there is a preliminary judging on the best scripts.

In this connection, the President announced that she has also allocated an initial P50 million to spread out as a subsidy for the production of the best scripts that will be chosen by the Metro Film Festival committee.

She acknowledged that this idea was given to her by Caloocan City Mayor Reynaldo Malonzo whom she also asked to help her work out the implementing guidelines for the use of the subsidy.

Ifugao officials should have main role in preserving rice terraces — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that the national government will help in the preservation of the world famous rice terraces in Ifugao but the initiative should come from local officials.

“I am very happy that we are going to be preserving the Ifugao rice terraces,” the Chief Executive said in her speech at the two-day Culture and Arts Conference 2002 held this morning at the Pearl Manila Hotel located at the General Luna St. corner Taft and United Nations Avenues in Ermita, Manila.

The President asked the officers and members of the National Commission on Culture and Arts (NCCA) and other artists present during the conference to support Ifugao Governor Teodoro Baguilat, Jr., who, she described as “a very young Ifugao, educated, dynamic and dedicated.”

“Let’s empower the people of Ifugao to preserve their cultural heritage,” the President said.

The President recalled that when she was still vice president, there was an Ifugao Rice Terraces Task Force that was organized to handle the preservation of the terraces where she was a member.

But after a while, the President said, she saw that she was the only one taking the job seriously.

As a member of the task force, President Macapagal-Arroyo said, she was responsible for organizing development projects for the poor in the various towns that had rice terraces community. This was in the form of food for work but the actual work was to preserve the rice terraces.

Since this was the only specific activity that was being put forward by the task force, the President said that when she assumed the presidency in January 2001, she abolished the task force.

“Committees don’t work, task forces work for a specific period with a deadline,” the President said, adding that if it is within a particular geographical jurisdiction, she believes that the primary responsibility of preserving the rice terraces should be on the local government of Ifugao.

GMA stresses need for inter-faith dialogue

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the need to cultivate a culture of inter-faith dialogue even as the fight against the twin evils of poverty and terrorism continues.

During a courtesy call of the participants of the four-day Fifth World Congress of the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) in Malacanang, the President noted that inter-faith understanding holds the key to a better world, “not just to live and let live.”

The President conferred with IRLA leaders who include Denton Lotz, president of the IRLA and general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, and John Graz, secretary general of the International Religious Liberty Association and coordinator of the Fifth World Congress on Religious Freedom. IRLA concluded their conference today.

In their brief conversation, the President recalled to the delegates her meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair during a visit to London last January, wherein they discussed the importance of religious tolerance and understanding.

The President noted that just as important as the link between terrorism and poverty, which she always emphasized, is “the relation between terrorism and religious understanding,” which Blair has always stressed.

With the President to receive the IRLA delegates were Secretary Gabriel Claudio, chief of the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office, Northern Samar Rep. Hardin Abayan and Ambassador Bienvenido Tejano.

Chartered in 1893, the IRLA has advocated religious freedom for 105 years.

It does not identify with any political party anywhere, nor does it endorse candidates for political office. Leaders of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church originally organized the IRLA, but its purpose is universal and non-sectarian. Various religious traditions are represented on the Board of Directors.

The presidency rotates annually among a panel of vice presidents. The president in 1989 was the former general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation; in 1991, the general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance.

The IRLA has no paid staff. Officers and directors serve voluntarily. Funding for IRLA operations comes from organizations supportive of the association's purpose.

GMA wants Metropolitan Theatre to new home of NCCA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called for the revival of the Manila Metropolitan Theater and make it a new home of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

In her speech before experts, artists, cultural workers and heads of government and non-government agencies attending the two-day Culture and Arts Conference which opened this morning at the Pearl Manila Hotel in Ermita, Manila, the Chief Executive said it is a good idea investments for the NCCA to use part of its income from the endowment fund to revive the Metropolitan Theater.

"This is one specific operational instruction that I would like to give to our government representatives," the President said.

In her speech, the President also underscored the need to make culture, including the movies, attractive and available to the masses.

A great movie fan herself, the President said she grew up in Iligan City and movies were the only "culture available to us." She added that she loved to watched the movies of the late actress Nida Blanca and Nestor de Villa when she was a child in Iligan City.

She said her grandmother used to bring her to the theater, and they would watch movies over and over again.

"That's mass culture. Let's make it available to everyone," she said, adding that is what she wants the Metropolitan Theater to offer to the masses.

The Metropolitan Theater is jointly owned by the Government Service Insurance System and the City of Manila.

The President underscored the need to use cultural establishments to be able to offer movies that would bring out "those beautiful values that we must preserve in our society."

That is the reason why the President said she was advancing money from her Social Fund — not to give an award to the best movies at the end of the Metropolitan Film Festival but at the start.

For this reason, the President said she has allocated an initial P50 million to be spread out as a subsidy for the production of the best scripts that will be chosen by the Metro Manila Film Festival committee.

WB launches \$1-B program to assist GMA administration strategy for poverty reduction

The World Bank (WB) is launching a three-year strategic program to assist the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo achieve poverty reducing growth and ensure that the poor participate and benefit fully from development.

Dubbed as the new Country Assistance Strategy for the Philippines, the World Bank plans to provide about US\$1 billion in loans to the Philippines over the next three years beginning this coming July 1.

The World Bank has said that the amount of lending could go as high as US\$1.7 billion depending on the pace of policy and institutional reforms, government revenue mobilization and budget management, and portfolio performance.

In addition, the World Bank will provide analysis and technical assistance to improve delivery of services to the poor, strengthen the business environment and support peace and development in Mindanao.

According to Robert Vance Pulley, WB Country Director for the Philippines, it is more important than ever that the World Bank support actions of Filipinos, especially the poor, as the country emerges from the period of modest economic growth.

Pulley cited in particular the recent actions of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to restore fiscal discipline by meeting the country's deficit target and commitment to fiscal consolidation by 2006, implement key structural reforms such as passage of the Power Sector Restructuring Bill, the Anti-Money Laundering law, and continue government revenues and strengthen the banking sector.

He likewise stated the need to improve government revenues and strengthen the banking sector.

Pulley explained that a high priority is to spur investment and job creation and mobilize adequate public resources for education, health, rural infrastructure and agricultural modernization.

To ensure that the poor participate and benefit fully from development, the strategy also calls for the focusing on efficient provision of other basic services such as shelter, water supply and sanitation, rural power and other infrastructure.

It also suggests increased access to productive assets such as land, technical extension services and credit. Also, the strategy will require the strengthening of organizational and financial capacity of the poor to engage in local development activities.

Malacañang announces resignation of DOTC's Alvarez

Malacañang announced today that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has accepted the resignation of Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez of the Department Transportation and Communications (DOTC).

In a regular press briefing in Malacañang, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said Alvarez submitted his resignation after June 5 when the President re-appointed him.

Afable said Director General Leandro Mendoza, chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), is expected to take over the DOTC top post as earlier announced by the President.

He said that Alvarez wanted to free the President from the burden arising from unfair and unfounded charges hurled against him, which, he said, have no basis in fact.

Alvarez felt it is his duty to help resolve the problem rather than be part of it, Afable said.

While admitting that the appointment of Mendoza has already been signed, Afable said he did not know the exact effectivity date of the appointment because “there are some transition matters that have to be taken up.”

But Afable added that the appointment of Mendoza is already a done deal and he will step in as DOTC chief soon.

Afable also said that the President has found Mendoza to be very well qualified to fill the top position at the DOTC.

“General Mendoza has a good track record as PNP chief. He has seen through important reforms in the PNP and he has shown his skills as a manager. And I guess these are the things that, and of course his accomplishment as PNP chief, have figured greatly in the President’s decision,” Afable said.

Afable also said that the re-appointment of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Heherson Alvarez still “holds up to this time.”

Palace: Abu Sayyaf has no new hostages

Malacañang today categorically denied reports that the Abu Sayyaf bandits led by Abu Sabaya had taken new hostages in the vicinity of Sirawai in Zamboanga del Norte.

In his press briefing this afternoon in Malacañang, Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. said he had checked with the Southern Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in Zamboanga City and with Camp Aguinaldo and reports about new hostages taken by any group are negative.

“There are no such hostages that are now being held by any armed group in Mindanao,” Afable said.

Afable also debunked the reported claim of a certain Ustadz Shariff Julabbi that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is now training some 50,000 new guerrillas as a preparatory move to retake Camp Abubakar, MILF’s erstwhile main headquarters in Central Mindanao.

According to Afable, the report has been strongly denied by Al Haj Murad, MILF vice chairman for military affairs, in a conversation this afternoon with Secretary Norberto Gonzales, presidential adviser for special concerns.

Gonzales has been doing back-channeling efforts with the MILF to put in place confidence-building measures in the former conflict areas in Mindanao.

Quoting Gonzales, Afable said that Murad would be issuing an official MILF statement denying the report.

Afable said that Julabbi, who was reportedly the source of the report, is not involved in the negotiations with the MILF either in the formal negotiations or through the back-channeling efforts.

“So, we do not recognize Julabbi’s statement and we recognize only the statements of Mr. Murad,” Afable said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: June 13, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100710000954/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/june13.htm>

The President's Day: July 14, 2002

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- **GMA builds pro-investment climate to create more jobs**
- **GMA urges people to go out and vote tomorrow**

GMA builds pro-investment climate to create more jobs

The state will go on bringing down the cost of doing business in the Philippines in its bid to create a better investment climate and to attract more capital in labor-intensive industries.

In her speech during the ASEAN Summit in November 2001, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo stressed the government's "line of enlightened liberalization, deregulation and privatization," as she vowed to push information and communication technology (ICT), promote reforms in the power sector, improve support infrastructures, and maintain the peace.

The focus is on her administration's thrusts to improve a flailing economy she inherited when she was proclaimed president on January 21, 2001 following a people power revolt against an ineffective government.

A year and a half going to her 2nd State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 22, the President and her team have jumpstarted the promotion, rather than regulation, of ICT with the declaration that "technology is the foundation" of the country's economic growth

In compliance with the E-Commerce Act, the National Computer Center has launched the e-Gobyerno that placed the whole bureaucracy within easy reach, at a click of a computer key.

The ITECC e-Government Implementation Committee will present in November an e-Philippines Management Plan that will strengthen the ties between government and the private and business sectors.

Businesswise, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is carrying out a development plan for e-services, having profiled major ICT-enabled services like call centers, medical transcription, accounting and finance, animation, among others.

The mapping of information technology (IT) firms was completed in the financial districts of Makati City, Ortigas in Pasig City and Quezon City. Mapping work is being done in other parts of Metro Manila.

Promulgated on March 15, 2002 were guidelines for IT community access as in the case of Internet cafes, telecenters and learning centers.

The government has sponsored and joined in outsourcing meetings and missions resulting in 17 investment leads, three of which are call centers to operate this year, and conducted walking tours for foreign business groups on IT firms, schools and telecommunication companies.

It also came out with a "Showcase Hour," a program highlighting the countries IT products and services as well as contracted the Gardner Inc. to conduct a survey-research on the country's IT-enabled services.

From January to March alone, the DTI has approved nine IT projects that generated 2,977 jobs.

A similar IT plan was developed for small and medium enterprises (SME), kicking off with a service providers matchmaking fair where 10 exhibitors netted P18.256 million and launched 16 products. SME portals are also being set up.

The state will soon let telecommunications players put up high-speed networks and connectivity in eight IT hub areas, while deregulating rates that will result in healthy competition and lower connectivity costs.

In Congress, at least two bills on ICT are being worked out. One is the bill on Internet privacy and security to shield IT firms from computer fraud and abuses; the other, a bill creating the Department of ICT to address the new phenomenon of emerging technologies.

In her first SONA on July 23, 2001, President Macapagal-Arroyo looked forward to the day when the Philippines would be one of the world's center for software development and data management in this decade.

Besides ICT promotion, the government has also tasked itself to go on reforming the power sector to lower the cost of doing business in the country.

As a start, the Joint congressional Power Commission has approved the implementing rules and regulations for the Power Reform Law and the privatization plan for the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) on February 27 and March 13, 2002, respectively.

The President has also ordered a mandatory rate reduction of P0.30 per kilowatt-hour monthly on bills of electricity users starting the billing period June 26 to July 25.

She has also urged Congress to amend the Electric Power Industry Reform Act or Republic Act 9136 to give power consumers immediate relief from the high cost of purchase power adjustments, reduce the cost of electricity, and ensure a more reliable and efficient electricity system.

A legislative franchise for the National Transmission Corporation is also sought to lower the potential stranded cost and universal charges usually passed on to end-users, while enhancing the value of NAPOCOR's transmission assets and raise its privatization value.

Further, the Department of Energy has energized as many as 1,136 villages, most of them in remote areas, nationwide, as of May 31, 2002.

All this will minimize bottlenecks to productivity and reduce operating costs of businesses.

On February 3, 2002 before the Economic Club of Chicago, the Chief Executive stressed that the government would likewise "aim to expand the investment opportunities related to infrastructure required to improve the competitiveness of industries in the form of mass transport systems, roads, bridges, telecommunications and ports" by harnessing private sector support through the Build-Operate-Transfer Law.

A case in point is the ongoing implementation of two rail projects, one going north and the other south, to speedily transport people and goods to areas outside Metro Manila.

The Northrail will disperse communities towards the Subic and Clark freeport areas while the Southrail will cover the Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon (CALABARZON) front.

Five more rail lines that can seat more than 1.3 million passengers daily are in the pipeline, expected to be completed by 2004.

These projects include the Light Rail Transit (LRT) Line 1 capacity expansion, Metro Manila strategic mass rail development, LRT Line 1 south extension, Mass Rail Transit (MRT) 3 Phase 2, and MRT 4 Phase 1.

Aside from this, the government will continue the liberalization of the airline industry.

Under this program, the President has issued on December 9, 2001 Executive Order 219 that established the domestic and international civil aviation liberalization policy.

Its implementing rules and regulations noted that any air carrier possessing a valid CPCN or TOC could be designated as an official international air carrier.

Another highlight was the provision that at least two operators on each domestic route or link should be encouraged and that domestic rates, charges and fees should be liberalized.

The country has also signed an improved air services agreement with Singapore, South Korea, Macau, Luxembourg and Qatar.

But more than promoting ICT, pushing power reforms and improving support infrastructure to attract investments and create more jobs, the Chief Executive further promised to maintain peace and order, in the workplace and in the streets.

In industries, the Department of Labor and Employment reported that it had a 94 percent conciliation and mediation success, having averted 407 notices of worker strikes and lockouts from July to December last year.

To uphold general law and order, the President issued Executive Order 21 adopting a holistic government response consisting of political, economic, psychological and security components.

This included a comprehensive program to meet head-on the twin problems of terrorism and poverty in the country.

GMA urges people to go out and vote tomorrow

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has enjoined voters to go out and cast their ballots in the simultaneous barangay and youth elections tomorrow.

The President said these two important electoral exercises would revitalize democracy in the lowest, but vital, political levels of government.

She noted that the barangay council is the basic form of government that renders public service in the nation's communities.

The *Sangguniang Kabataan*, serves as the stepping stone of the youth in becoming responsible leaders of the country, she added.

The President said the people must not only go out and vote, but also ensure that the polls would be honest, orderly and peaceful.

“Mahalaga ang bawat boto ninyo. Sagrado sa ating demokrasya ang inyong karapatang pumili ng ating mga pinuno (Your votes are important. Your right to elect our leaders is sacred),” she said.

Earlier, she declared July 15 as a special non-working holiday to enable qualified voters to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

The President said the people should take part in the affairs of their respective communities.

“Sa barangay level, higit na naiintindihan ng inyong mga pinuno ang inyong damdamin at mga pangangailangan. Sila rin ang nakakaalam kung ano ang ikabubuti ng inyong lugar dahil kilala nila ang mga totoong residente ng inyong komunidad. Sila rin ang nakatutok sa mga serbisyo at programa ng gobyerno sa inyong lugar – lalo na ang

mga may kinalaman sa paglaban sa kahirapan (In the village level, the officials understand your needs and concerns because they know the issues in your area. They know the residents of your communities and they render public service and implement programs, especially the anti-poverty thrust of government),” the President said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 14, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032938/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july14.htm>

The President's Day: July 15, 2002

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- **KOMPIL reaffirms support for gov't reform agenda**
- **GMA distributes relief goods in Bataan**
- **Bunye formally assumes post of press secretary tomorrow**
- **GMA makes a surprise visit to Commonwealth Market to check on prices of basic items**

KOMPIL reaffirms support for gov't reform agenda

The civil society group *Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino* (KOMPIL) today stressed it remains supportive of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's reform agenda, particularly those that have to do with good governance, new politics and social reform.

KOMPIL, in a statement made shortly after a dialogue with the President at the State Dining Room in Malacañang, said it "has not withdrawn support" for the government's reform agenda, contrary to speculations.

"Transparency, good governance, public accountability, social justice is the spirit of People Power 2. The challenge is to cascade these to the basic sectors and reassure a public grown weary of political strife and prevent actions of some groups that will derail the people's agenda," KOMPIL said.

During the meeting, the President assured KOMPIL members that her government has no plan to recruit Ronaldo Puno and Jimmy Policarpio, into her administration.

With regards to the choice of the next foreign affairs secretary, KOMPIL acknowledged the President's prerogative to decide on who would be the next DFA secretary even as they expressed their objections to the appointment of Sen. Blas Ople to the post.

"We put the matter to rest even as we remain vigilant as certain quarters will surely continue their attempts to try and inflict these persons, and others of the same probity, on the public once again," KOMPIL added.

Among those who attended the dialogue with the President were members of the KOMPIL Council of Leaders and Convenors Chito Gascon, Karen Tanada, Miguel Perez-Rubio, Jeannete Dumo, Evelyn Kilayko, Bobbit Librojo, dan Songco, Eero Brillantes, Teddy Lopez, and Melita Cruz.

On the government side, those present were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Juliano Soliman, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council Secretary Michael Defensor, National Anti-Poverty Commission chair Teresita Deles, Presidential Adviser on Media and Ecclesiastical Affairs Conrado Limcaoco, Presidential Adviser Marita Jimenez and former Presidential Management Staff Secretary Vicky Garchitorena.

GMA distributes relief goods in Bataan

HERMOSA, Bataan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today personally distributed relief goods and other government assistance to some 5,558 families or 24,757 individuals of the 16 barangays of Hermosa affected by floods due to the intermittent monsoon rains that hit the area.

The Chief Executive distributed the goods shortly after her arrival at 1:05 p.m. at the Hermosa Elementary School here.

She was welcomed by Hermosa Mayor Efren Cruz and other local officials as well the evacuees who were extremely happy to see her set foot at the Hermosa school grounds.

Elated by the warm reception, the President shook hands with them. She then instructed Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Juliano Soliman and Mayor Cruz to ensure that evacuees get their share of the relief goods.

Later, the President, together with Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, Soliman and other local officials, joined the evacuees for lunch.

After lunch, the President inspected two of the 16 flooded areas — Barangay Almacen and Barangay Daungan.

She rode in an amphibian truck during the inspection.

Earlier, Mayor Cruz said that 16 out of 23 barangays of the town were directly affected by floods due to the continuous heavy rains spawned by storms Inday, Florita, Gloria and Hambalos.

The 16 barangays affected by the floods and rains include Almacen, Pulo, Saba, Cataning, Daungan, Burgos, Mubuco, Sto. Cristo, JRC Mandama, Balsic, Bacong, Bamban, Culis, Palihan, and A. Rivera.

The evacuees are now housed in Almacen Elementary School, Almacen Barangay Hall and Cataning Chapel.

Damage to agricultural crops and production was estimated at P17.3 million; for livestock P517,000 and fisheries P4 million in.

Hermosa is a fourth-class municipality on the northeastern part of Bataan province. It has a land area of 15,730 hectares, which represents 11.4 percent of the provincial land area.

Bunye formally assumes post of press secretary tomorrow

Former Muntinlupa Congressman Ignacio “Toting” Bunye will formally assume the post of press secretary and presidential spokesman tomorrow.

He will be officially sworn in by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in ceremonies to be held July 19 in Malacañang.

Bunye, who will take over from Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr., will remain as presidential spokesman until October when Roberto Tiglao will reassume the post. Tiglao will also assume the post of chief of staff under the Office of the President upon his return from Japan.

Before he joined politics in 1986, Bunye had been a reporter of *DZMT*, the radio station of the old *Manila Times*, and later as reporter of the *Daily Star*.

A lawyer by profession, Bunye has served in various executive positions at the Ayala group of companies, including as assistant vice president of the Ayala Investment and Development Corporation and the Bank of the Philippine Islands.

When former President Corazon Aquino took over power after the downfall of former President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, Bunye was designated officer-in-charge of the municipality of Muntinlupa.

He became the duly elected mayor of Muntinlupa from 1988 to 1995. As Muntinlupa mayor, Bunye served as chairman of the then Metropolitan Manila Authority in a concurrent capacity, from 1991-1992.

In 1995, Bunye was again reelected as mayor of Muntinlupa for his last three-year term. During his 12-year stewardship, Muntinlupa metamorphosed from a fifth-class municipality into a highly-urbanized city.

Adopting proven corporate practices that he gained from working in the private sector, Bunye streamlined operations and cut red tape, thus making Muntinlupa City a business-friendly community which is what it is today.

Toward the end of his term as mayor, Bunye laid the foundation for the establishment of the Ospital ng Muntinlupa through the acquisition of a five-hectare lot within the Filinvest Corporate City, which is also the site of the future Civic Center Complex.

Barred by law to seek a fourth consecutive term as mayor, Bunye ran for Congress in 1998 and became the first Congressman from the lone district of Muntinlupa City.

In Congress, Bunye continued to champion the cause of local governments, especially in providing them with greater fiscal autonomy.

Originally a member of the minority, Bunye became one of the fiscalizers of the 11th Congress. But with the change of leadership toward the end of the 11th Congress, he became the Senior Deputy Majority Floor Leader.

A valedictorian during his elementary and secondary education, Bunye finished both his AB in Political Science and Bachelor of Laws from the Ateneo de Manila. He had a Masters in Management from the Asian Institute of Management.

Bunye, who is a lifetime member of the National Press Club, has written a number of articles published in the *Daily Star*, including a four-part series entitled "War Vignettes," a first-person account of events immediately after the Tet Offensive in South Vietnam in 1968.

He also wrote a one-hour documentary entitled "The Other War," a first person account of the activities of the Philippine Civic Action Group in Tay Ninh, South Vietnam. The documentary was broadcast in 1967 by radio station DZMT.

Bunye is married to Dr. Miraflor Oca-Bunye and has three children.

GMA makes a surprise visit to Commonwealth Market to check on prices of basic items

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today made a surprise visit to the Commonwealth Market in Quezon City to ensure that concerned government agencies are conscientiously monitoring the prices of basic commodities.

The President went straight to the market from the Batasang Pambansa grounds, where the presidential helicopter landed after an unscheduled visit to Hermosa, Bataan.

Accompanied by Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, Jr. and Market Administrator Jose Mari Hilario, the President took her time in inquiring on the prices of basic goods.

She inquired on the change of prices of vegetables from Baguio City before and after the torrential rains hit Metro Manila and Central and Southern Luzon.

Vegetable vendor Roly Mopal graciously explained to the President that the prices of vegetables from the summer capital have increased slightly last week, but have gone back to their original and lower prices.

Baguio pechay, Mopal cited, has gone back to P40 per kilo from P50 per kilo.

The President also checked on the prices of rice.

At the VMS Rice Center and Gen. Merchandise, the President inquired on the prices of the staple and was glad to hear that prices remain the same as before the rains came.

Regular rice was priced at P19/kg, P20/kg, and P21/kg while the well-milled variety stood at P23/kg.

The President also looked into the prices of fish and meat products and was glad to learn that the prices have gone back to their level before the rains started.

While the President was undertaking the inspection, shoppers and children, pleasantly surprised that the President was in their midst, milled around her, wanting to shake hands with her and greet her.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 15, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514032949/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july15.htm>

The President's Day: July 16, 2002

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- **GMA thanks people for peaceful elections**
- **GMA says she is glad bulk of civil society continue to support her administration**
- **GMA formally assumes post of foreign secretary**
- **GMA orders OCD-NDCC to find ways of solving perennial flooding in Metro Manila, Regions 1 and 3**
- **GMA stresses 8-point realities in Philippine foreign policy in meeting with DFA officials**
- **GMA okays return of administrative control over police to Metro Manila mayors**

GMA thanks people for peaceful elections

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked the people for the peaceful Sangguniang Kabataan and Barangay elections yesterday in the country.

In a nationwide radio interview this morning, the President expressed the hope that the same peaceful and happy atmosphere will prevail when the elections postponed in other parts of the country are finally conducted.

The President congratulated all those who won in the elections and exhorted them to work hard for the welfare of the Filipino people.

She noted that the barangay represents the primary structure of government, adding that “it is a must that barangay officials should help make our Republic strong.”

The President added that the country becomes stronger and effective only if government officials and the entire bureaucracy work diligently and dutifully enough, particularly in the delivery of basic services to the people.

GMA says she is glad bulk of civil society continue to support her administration

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she is glad that majority of the groups that comprise the civil society, except for the communists, are behind her administration.

In a radio interview this morning, the President said in a strong republic, the civil society must also be vibrant and its job is to help build the nation.

“*Yong kanilang swords, maging hammers, to build rather than to destroy, iyon ang kanilang trabaho*(Their swords should be turned into hammers so that they can build rather than destroy, that is their function),” the President said.

After a meeting in Malacañang Monday, the mainstream civil society group, *Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino* (KOMPIL) expressed its continued support for the President’s reform agenda, particularly those that have to do with good governance, new politics and social reforms.

In a statement issued after their audience with the President, KOMPIL said that contrary to reports, it has not withdrawn its support for the government’s reform agenda.

The President said that despite the expression of support by the civil society in her administration, there are still a lot of problems that have to be resolved, like peace and order, how to be competitive in the world market, and how to ensure that consumers will continue to enjoy lower electricity rates.

When asked about what the government is doing to prevent an increase in water rates, the President said that like in the power sector, the problem in the water sector is also financing.

The President said that in the same manner that her administration was able to make a headway in resolving the problem of financing of the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR), it will also be able to find a solution to the financing problem of the water sector.

GMA formally assumes post of foreign secretary

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today formally assumed, in a concurrent capacity, the post of foreign secretary that was vacated by the resignation of Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr.

As her first official function as foreign secretary, the President presided over a meeting this morning in Malacañang with officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

The President, chief architect of the country's foreign policy, will remain as the DFA chief until such time that she can designate a replacement for Guingona.

According to the President, Guingona was still the DFA secretary until Monday, July 15, the date when his resignation takes effect, although he bade goodbye to his staff at the DFA last Friday, or three days earlier.

The President said that although the special search committee that she formed to scout for Guingona's replacement has announced that it already has a short list of nominees to the post, she has yet to receive such a short list.

She also said that she has not given a deadline for the special search committee headed by Victoria Garchitorena, former head of the Presidential Management Staff (PMS), to submit the list.

When asked if she has already made a formal offer of the DFA portfolio to opposition Senator Blas Ople, the President replied: "Not yet."

GMA orders OCD-NDCC to find ways of solving perennial flooding in Metro Manila, Regions 1 and 3

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has directed Administrator Melchor Rosales of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), who is also executive director of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), to form a committee that would seek a comprehensive solution to the perennial flooding in Metro Manila, Region 1 and Region 3.

In a nationwide radio interview this morning, the Chief Executive said she issued the directive to Rosales following her surprise inspection Monday of the flooded barangays in Hermosa, Bataan, where she also distributed relief goods and other government assistance to flood victims.

The President said she will soon meet with the local officials of Metropolitan Manila to tackle its perennial problems of floods, traffic and garbage.

On the flood-prone areas in the metropolis such as Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, and Valenzuela (Camanava), the President said, the flood problem in these places will soon be solved because of the construction of the Camanava dike which will start in October this year.

Only the other parts of Metro Manila, and some provinces of Regions 1 (Ilocos) and 3 (Central Luzon) that must be given similar solutions and planning to prevent, if not completely eliminate, the perennial flooding of these places, the President said.

During her inspection trip to the flooded barangays in Hermosa, the President said, she also directed Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon Datumanong to transfer the desiltation or dredging project from its present site at the middle of the Almacen River to the river's mouth in Barangay Almacen.

“Dapat ilipat ang desiltation (project) sa mouth of the river, hindi doon sa gitna ng ilog (There desiltation project should be transferred to the mouth of the river instead of at its present location at the middle of the river)”, she said.

Out of the 23 barangays in Hermosa, 16 were flooded as of Monday due to the continuous downpour spawned by typhoons Inday, Florita, Gloria and Hambalos.

GMA stresses 8-point realities in Philippine foreign policy in meeting with DFA officials

As her first official act as concurrent foreign secretary, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the eight-point realities in regional and international development that would shape the foreign policy of her administration.

In a press briefing this afternoon, his first as press secretary and presidential spokesman, Ignacio “Toting” Bunye said the President reiterated her 8-point foreign policy guidelines during a meeting with senior officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs held this morning in Malacañang State Dining Room.

Bunye said the President's foreign policy is essentially anchored on the realities of having to deal with the world's great powers like the United States, Japan and China.

The President, according to Bunye, is also looking forward “to touching base” with the leaders of the major European countries where the Philippines has strong cultural, economic and diplomatic ties.

Bunye said that during the meeting with DFA officials, the President also mentioned that the cornerstone of the country's foreign policy is to really strengthen the role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) “not just in terms of economic but also in terms of other arrangements that would include security matters.”

Before the meeting, the President issued a memorandum detailing the working arrangement between Malacañang and the DFA covering administrative work while she is heading the foreign affairs portfolio, Bunye said.

In this connection, Bunye said the President has designated a coordinating official in the person of Cecille Rebong, presently the acting chief of the Presidential Protocol and Presidential Assistant on Foreign Affairs.

“So, she (Rebong) will be the coordinator between the Palace and the DFA,” Bunye said.

The President, Bunye said, also appointed Ambassador Delia Albert, a career DFA official, as foreign affairs undersecretary. Albert, former Philippine envoy to Australia, is currently the DFA assistant secretary for policy planning and coordination.

The eight realities in the regional and international environment that would guide the President's foreign policy are as follows:

1. The paramount influence of China, Japan and the United States in the security and economic evolution of East Asia;
2. The growing context of the ASEAN in global affairs;
3. The role of the international Islamic community;
4. The looming importance of inter-regional organizations;
5. The protection of the environment, natural resources and maritime territory;
6. The drive for foreign markets and foreign investments in which Europe is also a major source along with the US, Japan, China and ASEAN;
7. The importance of international tourism; and

8. The crucial role of the overseas Filipinos in the socio-economic stability.

GMA okays return of administrative control over police to Metro Manila mayors

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today approved a proposal of Metro Manila mayors to restore to them administrative control over Philippine National Police members in their area.

The President announced her approval of the proposal during a joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and the Regional Peace and Order Council of Metro Manila at the Centennial Hall of Manila Hotel.

She earlier met the Metro Manila mayors at the Champagne Room of the hotel before the joint forum.

She said she has instructed the PNP hierarchy to work out within two weeks the details of an Executive Order (EO) that would be the guiding law for the Metro mayors.

“I talked to (PNP Deputy Director) Gen. (Hermogenes) Ebdane about this. He has no problem in principle so he would work out an EO that will be viable.” the President told Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, who undertook the peace and order briefing at the conference as RPOC chairman.

Atienza, for his part, thanked the President for the decision and assured a better crime rate the next time the council meets again.

“As mayors in the National Capital Region, Mrs. President, we would like to be fully responsible in the maintenance of peace and order conditions in each city and municipality,” Atienza said.

He added that having better control of each and every policeman on the beat, “then we should be able to present to you in the next meeting of the RPOC a much controlled and definitely a better picture.”

During the briefing, it was reported that Metro Manila’s crime rate from January to June 2002 increased to 9,743 or 28.6 percent from last year’s figure of 7,575.

Metro Manila is made up of the cities of Manila, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikini, Pasig, Quezon City, Caloocan, Valenzuela, Las Piñas, Makati, Muntinlupa, Paranaque, Pasay and the municipalities of San Juan, Navotas, Pateros and Taguig.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: July 16, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033001/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july16.htm>

The President's Day: July 17, 2002

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- **GMA okays action on MMDA strategic plans for Metro**
- **GMA names Albert Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs**
- **Bunye's daughter resigns as spokesperson of First Gentleman**
- **GMA to agencies: fast-track ODA projects in M. Manila**
- **Gov't committed to stamp out corruption, GMA assures nation**
- **GMA pushes Bohol as RP's primary tourism growth area**
- **Administrative control over police forces more effective type of control, says Palace**
- **GMA seeks development of parts of Chocolate Hills**
- **Palace cites NBI for filing case on Nida Blanca slay**
- **Let's not allow envoy's remarks to spark RP-US diplomatic row, says Palace**
- **GMA awards P167.3 M in agriculture tools, livelihood assistance in Bohol**

GMA okays action on MMDA strategic plans for Metro

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has expressed support and ordered action taken on certain strategic programs presented to her and the Cabinet by the Metro Manila Development Authority yesterday.

The strategic programs were laid out by the MMDA during yesterday's 14th Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) joint meeting held at the Manila Hotel.

MMDA Chairman Bayani Fernando, co-chair of the Metro Manila RDC-RPOC, presented what he called "an honest to goodness" situation of the metropolis, and asked for presidential intervention on vital programs that need government funding and support.

The joint RDC-RPOC meeting was also an opportune time for the President to meet all the city and municipal mayors and congressional representatives of Metro Manila and be apprised of the many concerns of the residents of the metropolis.

Among the strategic programs the MMDA chairman asked the President for consideration and support include the following:

- Sustained clearing of sidewalks of all types of illegal obstruction. The President said that out of the P2.5-billion estimated annual cost of this program, 10 percent will come from the income of the local government units and the rest will be funded by the national government.
- Construction of additional bridges and completion and interconnection of missing links of secondary roads. The President instructed the Department of Public Works and Highways to see if these additional bridges can be included in the President's Bridge Program which is being implemented throughout the country.
- Review of the United Vehicular Volume Reduction Program, popularly referred to as "color coding," and adoption of other Traffic Demand Measures, and other appropriate traffic schemes in major thoroughfares like EDSA which the President approved.
- Use of the railroad transfer station system to transport garbage in Metro Manila to a waste processing site within a 150-kilometer radius of Metro Manila. The President ordered the implementation of a financing scheme that works like a corporation on this program.
- Effect the complete transfer of flood control functions and responsibilities of the DPWH to MMDA, including the major flood control projects. The President earlier directed the transfer of flood control programs from the DPWH to MMDA.
- Simplification of government transactions by agencies, like issuances of certification, permits, clearances, etc. The President gave instructions to all government agencies to make verifications and clearances

required by the different government offices to be inter-agency procedures instead of requiring the public going from office to office, which contributes to commuter traffic.

The strategic programs were part of the short-, medium- and long-term plans for the metropolis which Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye described as viable and workable.

Bunye, who was also present during the RDC-RPOC meeting, had served as Officer-in-Charge, mayor and congressman of Muntinlupa, which is part of Metro Manila. He was also at one time chairman of the Metro Manila Authority, forerunner of the present MMDA.

GMA names Albert Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has announced the appointment of former Philippine Ambassador to Australia Delia Domingo-Albert as Undersecretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Chief Executive made the announcement during her meeting with officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday in Malacañang, her first since she assumed the post as Secretary of Foreign Affairs in a concurrent capacity.

Prior to her appointment, Albert was Assistant Secretary of the DFA's Office of Policy Planning and Coordination.

A career diplomat herself, Albert has represented the Philippines in various capacities in Switzerland, Romania, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.

She recently returned from her post as Philippine Ambassador to the Commonwealth of Australia with concurrent accreditation to Nauru, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. She also served as Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Australia in 2001.

A native of Baguio City, Albert began her career in the DFA as Assistant Secretary in the Office of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs in 1967. She passed the Foreign Affairs Service Examinations in 1973.

Before her stint as the country's Ambassador to Australia, Albert served as Director General of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) National Secretariat of the Philippines. As such, she participated in various ASEAN meetings including the ASEAN Summit in 1992 and the first APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) Summit in 1993.

During the Fourth APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in the Philippines, Albert worked as Secretary General of the Conference Secretariat for which she was commended by the Philippine Senate in its Resolution No. 9 dated November 28, 1996.

Albert was also awarded the Knights Commanders Cross of the Order of Merit with Star of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1992 in recognition of her efforts in promoting Philippine relations with Germany as well as relations between ASEAN and the European Union.

Bunye's daughter resigns as spokesperson of First Gentleman

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today said that his daughter, Atty. Patricia Bunye, has tendered her resignation as spokesperson of First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo effective today.

Bunye, who formally assumed the post of press secretary and concurrent presidential spokesman yesterday, made the announcement in a radio interview when asked how he would coordinate with daughter Patricia, who is also serving as spokesperson of the First Gentleman.

He pointed out that his daughter decided to tender her resignation as spokesperson of the First Gentleman to avoid criticism.

“Dahil nakikita natin, there might be siyempre – babatikusin iyan. Sasabihin bakit iyong tatay ay spokesperson ni PGMA, iyong anak ay spokesperson pa kay FG Arroyo (We can see that there might be criticisms there. The critics might say that the father is spokesperson of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo while the daughter is spokesperson of the First Gentleman Arroyo),” he said.

During his press briefing at Malacañang yesterday Bunye said that aside from his job as press secretary, he will also perform the role of presidential spokesman but only until October when Rigoberto “Bobi” Tiglao will reassume the post.

Upon his return from Japan in October, Tiglao will also assume the post of chief of staff of the President.

GMA to agencies: fast-track ODA projects in M. Manila

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered concerned government agencies to expedite all ongoing Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) projects in Metro Manila, making sure these are completed on time.

The President made the directive during Tuesday’s joint meeting of the Regional Development Council (RDC) and the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) at the Centennial Hall in Manila Hotel.

Attended by the Cabinet, regional directors and private sector representatives, the meeting is the 14th RDC-RPOC for Metro Manila.

Among the ODA projects on traffic infrastructure discussed during the meeting were the Metro Manila Mass Rail Transit Development (Line 2) project, Metro Manila Light Rail Transit (Line1) Capacity Expansion Project Phase II, Metro Manila Interchange Construction IV, Metro Manila Interchange Construction V, and the Metro Manila Urban Transport Integration Project.

Except for the first two, which are having Right of Way and other issues, all the projects are on schedule.

The President also stressed that work should also be hastened on flood-control projects such as the CAMANAVA (Caloocan-Malabon-Navotas-Valenzuela) Area Flood Control, Metro Manila Flood Control Project-West of Manggahan Floodway, engineering services for the Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement and the Manila Second Sewerage Project. She cited the fast rate of work on the Marikina River project.

She noted delays in the implementation of environment-related projects, and said these should be avoided.

The projects included the Pasig River Environment Management and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program, Metro Manila Air Quality Improvement Sector Development Program (MMAQISDP), the MMAQISDP-Air Pollution Control Facility and the MMAQI Investment Loan.

Also taken up were the implementation of human development projects such as the Upgrading of the Eulogio Rodriguez Sr. Memorial Hospital, the Hospital Waste Treatment project, Upgrading of the Medical Equipment of the Department of Emergency Medical Services Complex and the Creation of the National Eye Referral Center.

Interregional ODA projects are the Technical Education and Skills Development Project, Expansion of Dual Education Training Project, Promotion of Ship Inspection System and Technique Project, Rural Micro-Enterprise Finance Project and the Vulnerable Groups Facility Project.

The completion of all these projects will bring about socio-economic benefits for Metro Manila’s 9.9 million people.

Metro Manila is composed of the cities of Manila, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Pasig, Quezon, Kalookan, Valenzuela, Las Piñas, Makati, Muntinlupa, Parañaque, Pasay and the municipalities of San Juan, Navotas, Pateros and Taguig.

Gov't committed to stamp out corruption, GMA assures nation

TAGBILARAN CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the entire government machinery is committed to stamp out corruption in public offices even as she agreed with the observation of the business community that corruption indeed impedes investment flows into the country.

In her opening statement at the start of the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) for Region VII held at the Tropics Resort here, the President also called on the local government executives throughout the country to be very vigorous in the fight against crime and corruption.

The President said that she has ordered the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) to submit their own reports on the works they are doing in going after perpetrators of graft and corruption in government.

“I believe too, like the business community, that corruption discourages investment flow,” the President said.

The PAGC, she said, is doing its job to ensure that good governance is carried out in all levels of the bureaucracy.

With regards to the corruption involving the courts, the President stressed that this would need special attention because of the separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary as stipulated in the Constitution.

In order to fight this dilemma, the President said, the executive branch would work with the leaders of Congress to come out with law on how to fight corruption among the judges.

“I would like to ask the whole Cabinet, the whole executive branch including the local government executives to be very vigorous in this campaign against corruption, against crime, and, of course, look forward to the legislative initiatives on Congress to help us fight corruption in the judiciary,” the President said.

The President said that what the executive branch could do in the meantime is to tighten up the prosecution of cases filed against members of the bench in the DOJ as part of cleansing the judicial system.

On the peace and order problem, the Chief Executive said she will expound more on the issue during her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) this coming Monday.

To further bolster the government anti-crime campaign, the President said she has already given newly designated Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Deputy Director Gen. Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. to eliminate kidnapping in one year.

On the anti-smuggling, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said she has also instructed Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo to charge those smugglers who will be caught not just with smuggling but with economic sabotage.

“Just like in kidnapping, we are not going to resolve it crime by crime but criminal by criminal,” the President stressed.

By charging those smugglers who are in the Order of Battle with economic sabotage, the President said this means that it will be a crime that is punishable by death and as such there will also be no bail recommended for those apprehended.

GMA pushes Bohol as RP's primary tourism growth area

TAGBILARAN CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called for the immediate development of Bohol's natural resources and eco-tourism spots, stressing that this would be a very potent growth sector for the future.

Speaking in fluent Bolanon and Cebuano before a large crowd at the Carlos P. Garcia Memorial Sports Complex here, the President cited Bohol as one of the country's most progressive areas as it is endowed with rich natural resources.

She noted the presence of the world-renowned Chocolate Hills, Panglao Bay and the diving spots in Balingasan, among others, plus the natural hospitality of Boholanos, as big factors in promoting Bohol as a vibrant tourist destination.

She recalled having said in her State of the Nation Address in July last year that "we will promote fast-growing industries where high-value jobs are most plentiful. One of them is tourism."

"We have the competitive edge in tourism, in the natural wonders of our country and the natural warmth of our people," she said.

Tourism, she added, is one of the "two identified growth sectors of the future. The other is information and communication technology."

McKenzie Associates, who put together the country's strategic tourism plan, named the Cebu-Bohol Tourism Complex "the number one area, by far, in the Philippines" for tourism promotion and development, she said.

To provide the means to take the tourists to primary natural wonders of the country and Bohol, the President disclosed the expansion of the Tagbilaran City airport to accommodate bigger planes like the Boeing 737s.

She said the Philippine Ports Authority is also working on expanding the seaport to the tune of P100 million. "This shall be a big help to your tourism because it will facilitate the movement of tourists between Cebu and Bohol so that Cebu and Bohol will be truly one, unified tourism attraction."

She added that tourism would be made more attractive in the area with the implementation of the P2.1-billion Leyte-Bohol Power Interconnection Project Phase II "so that Bohol will not lack in electricity."

She also cited work on the P1.07-billion Bohol Circumferential Road Improvement Phase II would complement ongoing tourism efforts. Similarly, work would also be undertaken on the Panglao circumferential road and Loay tourism highway.

Meanwhile, the President stressed the imperative need to give due attention to the bulk of the poor in Bohol who are in agriculture.

"Thus, we need agricultural modernization in Bohol," she said, as she named the P2.384-billion Bohol Irrigation Project Stage II as one of the major projects being implemented to the benefit of the area's farm workers. Another project is the Talibon Reservoir Irrigation Project.

She said she had directed concerned Cabinet Secretaries to speed up the processing of documents so that tourism and agriculture projects would be carried out soonest in Bohol.

Earlier, the President cited Bohol as the site of the famous blood compact between Datu Sikatuna and Spanish General Miguel Lopez de Legaspi, which anniversary the locals are celebrating today in the Sandugo (One Blood) Festival.

National Artists Juan Luna and Carlos “Botong” Francisco vividly put on canvas the blood compact, which was to spur friendship and cooperation for peace and growth between the natives of Bohol and the Spanish colonizers.

She noted the Boholanos for being good examples for Filipinos nationwide.

She lauded the province’s leaders for their commitment to uplift the lives of the people in the area, in close cooperation with the national government.

Administrative control over police forces more effective type of control, says Palace

Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye today said that the restoration to Metro Manila mayors of the administrative control over the elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in their areas of jurisdiction is more effective than just operational control.

In his press briefing in Malacañang, Bunye explained that what is covered by the present arrangement between the PNP and the Metro Manila mayors is only operational control which, he said, is very different from administrative control.

“Administrative control already includes the hiring and firing of policemen. In operational control, you can just deploy police forces within your municipality,” he said.

However, when it comes to reviewing the police force for possible promotion, it will be a different matter, Bunye said. “They are reporting to somebody else and they are beholden to the one who will decide on their promotions or other benefits,” Bunye said.

“So this administrative control will really make it a more effective type of control,” he added.

Bunye said that before martial law, mayors all over the country had both administrative and operational control over police forces.

Although in some cases, the police were used as private armies by some abusive local executives in those days, Bunye, however, said that there was such a thing as Philippine Constabulary (PC) control at that time.

“At that time when the Philippine Constabulary thinks that a mayor or a governor was abusing his powers, then it could place a particular police force under PC control,” Bunye recalled.

“So maybe under this set up, if administrative and operational control are reverted to Metro Manila mayors, then perhaps the National Police Commission, which has overall supervision of the police forces, could place back the police forces under NAPOLCOM control in the event that some abuses are done by the local government officials,” Bunye said.

During the 14th Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) joint meeting at the Manila Hotel yesterday, the President approved the proposal of Metro Manila mayors to restore to them administrative control over PNP forces in their respective areas.

The President directed PNP chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. to meet with the Metro Manila mayors and work out an Executive Order that would implement the restoration of administrative control over the police forces to Metro Manila mayors.

GMA seeks development of parts of Chocolate Hills

TAGBILARAN CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today signed an amendment to Proclamation 468 dated Sept. 26, 1994, declaring the land around or in between Chocolate Hills as no longer part of the national monument.

The President signed the amended proclamation midway her speech at the re-enactment of the Sandugo (blood compact) between Datu Sikatuna and Spanish navigator Miguel Lopez de Legaspi at the Carlos P. Garcia Sports Complex here.

The tracts of land surrounding and within the famous tourist spot shall be developed by the provincial government and other entities that have control over the area, the amendment said.

Presidential Management Staff Undersecretary Ricardo Saludo said the amended proclamation would ensure that the areas that have to be preserved are preserved while those that could be developed would be excluded from the national monument area and classified as inalienable and disposable by the government.

The President initially decided on the issue during the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) of Region VII which was conducted at the Tropics Resort here.

“This is what strong and resolute leadership means. You don’t wait and you just make a decision if it is for the good of the community,” Saludo said.

Another issue raised by provincial and local officials during the RDC-RPOC meeting was the purported shortage of funding for local government unit (LGU) projects.

The President immediately instructed the Department of the Interior and Local Government to help LGUs set up units that would formulate solid or good project proposals.

These proposals, Saludo said, could then be presented to local and foreign funding agencies, to generate money for the projects.

“A lot of the times, you have LGUs that have good ideas but they do not have the technical expertise to package this into project proposals,” Saludo said.

From her own experience as former Undersecretary of the Department of Trade and Industry and later as Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the President pointed out that it really takes a unit to produce project studies.

“The moment you have good project studies, you attract funding,” she said.

Palace cites NBI for filing case on Nida Blanca slay

Malacañang today expressed confidence that the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) would finally put to rest the eight-month old murder of popular Filipino actress Nida Blanca.

In a press briefing, newly designated Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the NBI was moving in the right direction in so far as the murder case was concerned.

The NBI has this afternoon filed before the Department of Justice’s Prosecutor’s Office a case against several suspects in the Blanca slay.

“I think everybody will be happy that this 8-month old case will finally be put to rest. Of course, assuming that the National Bureau of Investigation has foolproof evidence to nail the persons who were really responsible,” Bunye said.

Actress Nida Blanca, Dorothy Jones in real life, was found dead inside her car at the parking lot of Atlanta Center building in San Juan on the morning of November 7, 2001.

Let's not allow envoy's remarks to spark RP-US diplomatic row, says Palace

Malacañang today called on some sectors not to allow the recent statement of US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone about corruption in the country to spark a diplomatic row and damage Philippine-American relations.

In his regular press briefing in Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio "Toting" Bunye said that "we should not be very defensive and I think we should not allow the incident to escalate into a diplomatic crisis."

"As I said we should not bloat it further than what is necessary," Bunye said.

Bunye was reacting to reports that some congressional leaders and media personalities have demanded a public apology from the US envoy after he remarked in a forum that widespread corruption in the Philippines was driving away potential investors.

In her remarks at the opening of the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) of Region VII held in Tagbilaran City this morning, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo herself agreed with the observation that graft and corruption impedes the flow of foreign investments into the country.

The President, however, emphasized that the entire government machinery is committed to wipe out public corruption with the support of the local governments, Congress and the judiciary.

While Bunye admitted that there is "some truth" to the US envoy's observation, the administration is addressing this problem with resolve.

"We have to equally emphasize, we have to doubly stress that the government is doing something about this corruption problem," Bunye said.

He said that the best thing to do is to leave the matter "at that for the time being."

"Let us not be too defensive, let us not be too self-righteous about it. Let us not be on the denial mood," Bunye said.

GMA awards P167.3 M in agriculture tools, livelihood assistance in Bohol

TAGBILARAN CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the awarding of some P167.3 million worth of agricultural implements and various equipments, fishing gear and other means of livelihood for the different individual and group beneficiaries in this province.

In a ceremony during the celebration of "Sandugo" (blood compact) festival at the Carlos P. Garcia Sports Complex here, the President also handed over certificates of occupancy for 20 beneficiaries from Purok 1, Barangay Cabawn, Tagbilaran City under the "Gawad Kalinga" Build program of Couples for Christ. The said project was funded by the President's Social Fund.

Aside from the certificates of occupancy, the President also awarded emancipation patents and certificates of land ownership awards to 356 agrarian reform beneficiaries covering 506 hectares of land in the province of Bohol.

From the Department of Health, the President distributed 1,775 health cards under Plan 500 to beneficiaries in Tagbilaran City and the towns of Loon and Loay.

Other awards and benefits distributed by the President during the Sandugo celebration were the Barangay Official Eligibility (BOE) to 88 qualified officials in Bohol; certificates of completion of the Banlasan-San Isidro farm-to-market road and restoration of damaged box culvert and roadway project; certificate of completion on the construction and rehabilitation of 16 units of hand pumps; certificate of completion on the construction of a rural health unit building in Poblacion, Dagohoy, Bohol; certificate of completion of the Hinlayagan, San Isidro Road; certificate of completion of the Carmen District Hospital; financial assistance certificates under the Private Education Student Financial Assistance (PESFA) for technical education and skills development to 113 student grantees; scholarship certificates under the GMA Scholarship Program to 372 students from the towns of Dagohoy and Danao; 10 checks under the GMA Cares program amounting to P3.4 million for 10 local government units in Bohol; five units of 4-wheel 90 horsepower farm tractor with complete accessories amounting to P15 million to the province of Bohol under the Corn-Based Agri-Business System Technology (COAST) project; and fishing supplies consisting of fishing nets, ropes, straw, seaweed seedlings for the 15 members of the Alumar's Fishermen's Association and the Macaas Fishermen's Association.

To further enliven the Sandugo celebration, the DOH has put up a booth selling medicines under the "Gamot na Mabisa't Abot Kaya (GMA 50) and Parallel Drug Importation Program.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), in coordination with Presidential Adviser for Jobs Generation Luis Lorenzo also held jobs fair at the Central Visayas School of Fisheries, Forestry, Agriculture and Technology here in Tagbilaran City.

Among those who joined the President at the Sandugo Festival were Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council Chairman Michael Defensor, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., National Anti-Poverty Commission Chairperson Teresita Deles, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas and PNP chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 17, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033018/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july17.htm>

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GMA: Metro mayors' control over police to stabilize peace and order situation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed belief that the return of administrative control over the police to Metro Manila mayors is an effective way of stabilizing the peace and order situation in the metropolis.

In a live interview this morning with the *Magandang Umaga Bayan* segment of Channel 2's *Alas Singko y Medya*, the President pointed out that the restoration will be experimental and limited to Metro Manila only.

The President said the move is in response to the complaint of Metro Manila mayors that they have not been able to contain illegal "jueteng" in their respective municipalities "because the police are not reporting to us (mayors)."

"The appeal of the Metro Manila mayors was to restore to them administrative supervision over the police to give them the opportunity to solve the peace and order problem," the President said.

The President also pointed out that issues such as peace and order, is part of the "state of the regional visits."

She said that these were the important issues discussed at the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and the Regional Peace and Order Council of Metro Manila that need to be addressed.

The President said that Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., the new PNP chief, has no objection in principle to restoring administrative control over the police to Metro Manila mayors.

Ebdane, the President said, asked for two weeks to draft an Executive Order in coordination with Metro Manila mayors giving them limited administrative control over the police.

The President also ordered Ebdane to concentrate on the kidnap-for-ransom cases, and delegate other police matters to his deputies and Metro Manila mayors.

Energy dep't says 1,513 barangays provided electricity

The Department of Energy today said 85 percent of all barangays nationwide now have electricity as a result of the intensified government program to promote rural development through electrification.

Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, Jr. said the electrification program is designed to encourage more economic activity in rural areas and create more jobs for Filipinos, which is a basic component of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's agenda to win the war against poverty within the decade.

Perez told a briefing for a media on the SONA 2001 Accomplishments at Malacañang's Heroes Hall that the energy department exceeded by four percent the target set the President Macapagal-Arroyo for the total number of barangays to be provided electricity.

From the time the President set the target during her SONA last year, a total of 1,513 barangays have been connected to electricity service. This leaves 6,536 barangays that remain to be provided electricity, he said.

It can be recalled that in her first SONA in July last year, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo unveiled the government's national agenda to win the war against poverty within the decade. Part of the national agenda to fight poverty as mentioned by the President is a balanced economic development that has a bias towards the poor and the disadvantaged

Since electricity is a vital component of economic development, the President vowed to provide electricity to four unenergized barangays everyday for one whole year.

Perez admitted that given the geographical and economic constraints, rural electrification has made snail-paced progress in the previous years.

However, he stressed that the President's strong commitment to wage war against poverty has made it clear that "we can no longer take this for granted."

"Electricity is a key component in improving the lives of our people especially our less privileged countrymen," Perez declared.

He pointed out that through the accelerated O-IIaw Electrification program, some 522 barangays were given electricity in Luzon while another 598 barangays were also lighted in the Visayas.

In the Mindanao region, Perez reported that about 393 barangays were likewise energized particularly in rural-infested areas. These are the following: Region I (20), Region II (119), Region III (30), Region IV (189), Region V (130), Region VI (176), Region VII (153), Region VIII (269), Region IX (71), Region X (71), Region XI (56), Region XII (65), Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao or ARMM (78), CARAGA Region (52), and Cordillera Administrative Region or CAR (34).

Perez also cited the economic policies and structural reforms being vigorously implemented by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration which, he said, "further strengthen efforts towards attaining complete electrification of all the barangays in the country."

He mentioned the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) giving the DOE the power to consolidate all efforts by government agencies such as the National Power Corporation, National Electrification Administration and the Philippine National Oil Company and the private sector in the rural electrification program.

Perez said that at present, the DOE is busy preparing the Missionary Electrification Development Plan (MEDP), which outlines the government's program in reaching out to the countryside.

He added that the MEDP also outlines capital investment, operations and generating capacity additions in existing missionary areas as well as the needed facilities to be constructed in areas not yet connected to the transmission system.

Perez also noted that while NAPOCOR assets will be sold, "it will remain as a government-owned and controlled corporation that will specifically carry out the missionary electrification program of the administration, providing electricity in the far-flung areas such as those in the mountains and in the small islands that cannot be reached by the main electricity grid."

He also said that electricity rates for residential end-users were immediately reduced by 30 centavos per kilowatt hour when EPIRA took effect in June last year.

To give immediate relief to power consumers, the President had earlier ordered NAPOCOR in May this year to reduce its Purchased Power Cost Adjustment (PPCA) and pegged it at a uniform rate of P0.40 per kilowatt hour.

Perez said the President's order has resulted to a national average reduction of P0.85 per kilowatt hour, representing about 20 percent in the consumer's electricity bills starting this month of July.

He also said that the completion of the inter-agency committee review of the 35 Independent Power Producers (IPP) contracts of NAPOCOR by end of June this year and the renegotiations of these contracts are expected to further reduce stranded costs in the near future.

According to Perez, the enactment of EPIRA also constituted new bodies that will carry out the reforms stated in the law.

The new bodies identified by Perez include – the Private Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp (PSALM), the company that will handle the privatization of NAPOCOR's generating and transmission assets and manage its liabilities; the National Transmission Co (Transco), the new transmission firm that will handle the transmission functions of NAPOCOR; and the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), the quasi-judicial body that will regulate the industry to ensure customer choice and promote competition.

Gov't provides security of tenure to 338,858 families, exceeding GMA's SONA target by 113%

The Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) today said that the government had already provided security of tenure to almost 338,858 families as of end-June this year, exceeding the State of the Nation Address (SONA) target of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo by 113 percent.

In his report during the breakfast forum on SONA accomplishments held at the Malacañang's Heroes Hall, HUDCC Chairman Mike Defensor said that the housing sector surpassed its target of providing 300,000 families with housing rights.

He said that the target of 300,000 is broken down as follows: 150,000 land tenure for the urban poor; 70,000 socialized housing for the poorest of the poor; and 80,000 low-cost housing for low-salaried workers both in the private and public sectors.

Defensor admitted that the provision of the security of tenure to 183,026 urban poor families was largely achieved through the asset reform program, which involves declaring idle government lands for housing purposes, along with the Community Mortgage Program (CMP) and the National Government Center (NGC) projects.

Defensor said that more than 80,000 poorest of the poor families have already benefited from the various socialized housing programs of the National Housing Authority and the Pag-IBIG fund such as slum upgrading, sites and services, land tenurial assistance program, community loan acquisition support program, grants in aid for housing, and housing material assistance.

He also said that 72,375 households representing 90 percent of the targeted 80,000 low-salaried workers have already availed of the home lending programs of Pag-IBIG fund, Government Service Insurance System, Social Security System and Development Bank of the Philippines.

He added that another SONA related accomplishment of the housing sector includes the publication and implementation of reduction of signatures needed for the processing of housing permits is already in place and Executive Order 45 – the law that waged the “mother-of-all wars” against red tape in housing.

The EO 45 prescribes simplified requirements, procedures and timetables for issuance of housing related and imposes sanctions to agencies found not complying with it.

The Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of the Interior and Local Government and the HLURB involved now in the issuance of housing permits, have all come out with their respective complying orders to EO 45.

In another related accomplishment, Defensor said that the HLURB issued 2,819 Licenses to Sell for government and private sector with regards on the housing projects and this translates to 156,252 housing units while the NGC extended P17,798.68 million in guaranty equivalent to 42,879 housing units.

Defensor expressed optimism that the housing sector will continue to be bullish as may be gleaned from the licenses to sell issued by the HLURB, and indication of the housing units made available to the public.

“While we are glad we passed with flying colors we have to strive harder to raise the bar of our performance in the next SONA,” Defensor said.

Boncodin says gov’t committed to good governance

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin today stressed that the government remains committed to carry out President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s national agenda of raising the moral standards in the bureaucracy and society in order to push socio-economic growth.

In a breakfast forum, Boncodin cited the implementation of electronic (E)-procurement, a major program on good governance.

She said all state departments have been linked to e-procurement, resulting in a system that would rid the bureaucracy of avenues for corrupt practices in the purchase of products for public use.

Also connected to e-procurement were 57 percent of sub-department offices, 91 percent of government owned and controlled corporations (GOCC) and 72 percent of state universities and colleges, she added.

Boncodin also cited moves to make the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Bureau of Customs (BoC) as showcases in the fight against corruption.

The BIR has filed administrative charges against erring personnel while reducing processing time on public documents.

The BoC, on the other hand, has bought an X-ray containing machine while automating its various procedures and systems.

The budget secretary disclosed that the state has continued to facilitate the fair and speedy trial of plunder cases against former President Joseph Estrada.

A Social Weather Station survey published in March showed that the Sandiganbayan has proceeded with fairness on the trial and that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration had been treating the former president fairly, she noted.

Boncodin said anti-red tape projects are also being undertaken in local government units. Different agencies have also brought down to the minimum the processing time for documents.

In high levels, the President has streamlined the executive department and had abolished 90 locally funded projects and task forces under Executive Order 72.

“We have also rationalized the compensation package of GOCC’s and government financing institutions (GFIs) that are exempted from the salary standardization law,” she said.

“We are also involved in various governance related activities, essentially working with civil society to curb graft and corruption and uphold the rule of transparency in the government,” she added.

Boncodin said the President is expected to sign soon an administrative order on corporate responsibilities of presidential appointees to the board of GOCCs and GFIs.

The Presidential Committee on Effective Governance has been reviewing the practice of gift-giving to public officials and agencies. She said civil society has been helping in the formulation of good governance policies.

Quoting President Macapagal-Arroyo, Boncodin said: “We will introduce a new culture in governance, a culture of plain talk and common sense.”

She said Cabinet secretaries would do less cluster and inter-agency committee work so that they could concentrate on running their departments; less meetings, more action; more tangible results so that we can improve peace and order and fight graft.

“Good governance is a continuing challenge to all of us and we will do this with the leadership of the President,” Boncodin said.

GSIS increases amount of emergency loan to members in calamity-hit areas

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) has increased the amount of emergency loan granted to members from P8,000 to P10,000 in areas hit by floods caused by monsoon rains and four successive typhoons.

In a report to Malacañang, GSIS President and General Manager Winston F. Garcia said that the GSIS board approved the P2,000 increase to provide ample financial assistance to GSIS members who have been affected by calamities such as typhoons, floods, or earthquakes.

The increase will benefit thousands of GSIS members who have been affected by typhoons Florita, Gloria, Hambalos and Inday that hit the country, particular Metro Manila and Central Luzon, during the past two weeks.

Over July 17, the GSIS board approved the grant of emergency loans to members who work or reside in Tarlac (to be processed by the Tarlac Branch Office); Malabon and Valenzuela (to be processed by the Caloocan District Office); and Province of Rizal (to be processed by the Antipolo District Office).

Garcia said that a total of P404 million has been budgeted for the purpose.

To qualify for the GSIS emergency loan, the members must:

1. be residing or working in the area declared as a calamity area duly proclaimed by a duly constituted authority and approved by the GSIS;
2. be in service and not on leave of absence without pay as of the date of application;
3. has no pending administrative or criminal case as of the date of application;
4. has no arrearage in the payment of mandatory social insurance contributions; and
5. has no arrearage in the payment of any of his GSIS loans or none of his loans with the GSIS has been declared in default.

Garcia said the emergency loan is payable in 24 months (two years) and carries a very reasonable interest rate of 10% per annum which already includes the service fee.

He said renewal of the loan shall be allowed after payment of 12 monthly installments but not earlier than the anniversary date of the previous loan.

According to Garcia, as of January this year, the GSIS has already released a total of P692 million in calamity loans to 66,489.99 members hit by typhoon Nanang.

These members are residing or working in Aklan, Capiz, Maasin, Cebu, Camiguin, Negros Occidental, City of Surigao and Surigao del Norte, Garcia said.

GMA to focus on peace and order, lower power rates in 2nd SONA, says Bunye

When President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo delivers her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 22, she will be specific and more focused on effecting solutions to the country's major problems, particularly peace and order.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, in a radio interview this morning, said the President would give due attention to peace and order concerns to further gain the confidence of foreign investors to put their money in labor-intensive but competitive industries in the country.

“Kung walang peace and order ay hindi magkakaroon ng confidence ang ating mga investors. Kung walang confidence ang ating mga investors ay hindi tayo magkakaroon ng mga bagong negosyo (Without peace and order, investors tend to shy away from the country. Without investor confidence, we will not be able to have new businesses),” he said.

Bunye said new businesses would create new jobs. Subsequently, it would open economic opportunities for the people. They would have the money to buy their basic needs.

Another topic the President would tackle in her second SONA would be the power problem, he said.

The President would spell out measures that would be undertaken by her more than 18-month old administration to lower electricity and power rates, he added.

On May 8 this year, the President has ordered the National Power Corporation to reduce its Purchased Power Cost Adjustment by P0.40 per kilowatthour.

The President's directive has resulted in a national average reduction of P0.85 per kilowatthour. Negotiations of contracts with independent power producers were expected to further bring down stranded power costs soon.

Gov't, private sector release P23M for relief, rehab of typhoon, flood victims

The government, in cooperation with the private sector, has released some P23.235 million for the relief and rehabilitation of families hard hit by typhoons and monsoon rains that lashed the country in the last two weeks.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), in an update this morning, said the amount was extended to flood victims through the combined resources of the DSWD, local government units (LGUs), non-government organizations (NGOs) and government organizations (GOs).

The National Disaster Coordinating Council and its provincial and municipal chapters coordinated the relief and rehabilitation efforts.

The DSWD said the government ably extended assistance to a total of 164,881 families or 768,804 individuals.

Of this number, 12,762 families or 59,024 persons were accommodated in 277 evacuation centers set up in Metro Manila and a number of provinces in Central and Southern Luzon.

With floods subsiding in most areas, only 73 evacuation centers have remained open to help typhoon and flood victims. At least 204 have been closed.

The 73 evacuation centers, located in Regions 1 and 3, have continued to serve 2,674 families or 12,795 individuals.

However, some 80,890 families or 397,729 persons are being served outside evacuation centers.

Since the start of the heavy rains and flooding, the number of affected families totaled 440,616 or 2,059,876 individuals. Most of the victims came from 2,194 barangays in 16 provinces.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo earlier ordered the Department of Budget and Management to release an initial P300 million for relief and rehabilitation efforts in calamity-stricken areas in Metro Manila and some parts of Luzon.

The President has visited flooded areas and evacuation centers in Metro Manila and nearby Pampanga to personally assess the damage wrought by rains and typhoons.

NEDA bares continued foreign support to develop ARMM

Representatives of foreign states and development aid agencies have expressed continued support for the development of Mindanao, particularly in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and its component Basilan province.

In a recent forum on peace and development chaired by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), United States Ambassador Francis Ricciardone said the U.S. international livelihood program is open to the people of Mindanao.

Ricciardone, however, stressed that the U.S. would not provide development assistance to rebel returnees who tend to switch loyalties and fight against the Philippine government.

“The United States will not provide development assistance to those who will make future terrorist attacks against the Philippine government and its people,” he said.

Ricciardone added it was vital for ARMM Gov. Parouk Hussin and Basilan Gov. Wahab Akbar to help in identifying areas ready for development programs.

He cited the importance of clearly defining the channels of assistance to ensure that resources would not end up in the hands of terrorists or bandit groups.

Hussin and Akbar have assured Official Development Assistance (ODA) partners they would closely coordinate with them on peace and development efforts to ensure success.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said development projects in the ARMM would play an important role in the ongoing peace process between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Ermita said the country’s application for observer status in the Organization of Islamic Conference would also depend on the effective implementation of socio-economic projects in the region.

“It will even better our chances to get observer status in the OIC,” he said.

The World Bank also expressed its support to reduce poverty and help build peace in conflict-affected areas in the ARMM through its ARMM Social Fund for Peace and Development (ASFPD) Project.

The project, worth between \$40 million and \$60 million, would strengthen institutional capacities and improve local governance. A possible co-financing with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) is being worked out.

On the other hand, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reported that it had so far poured in \$41.2 million in assistance to Mindanao this year. Some \$22.6 million went to the ARMM and \$2.37 million to Basilan.

USAID activities included the Livelihood Enhancement and Peace Program, with some 13,700 former MNLF combatants as beneficiaries and another 13,000 persons availing of the program.

The United Nations-led Multi-Donor Program (UN-MDP) had assisted some 53 MNLF farmers in Calang Canas, Maluso, Basilan. The beneficiaries are in the production of cassava. The project is worth P237,000, carried out through the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Other UN-MDP activities included community access to sports facilities from the Department of the Interior and Local Government, a seaport funded by the Congressional Development Fund; and payaw-making funded by the Children Catholic Fund Malusa Outreach.

The UN-MDP also conducted capability building and training in the area.

The Joint Task Force-510 of the U.S., which is participating in the RP-US joint *Balikatan* military exercises, has reported that some \$1.98 million worth of humanitarian assistance projects were accomplished in Basilan.

These included the installation of water storage tanks, water treatment and catchment systems, and water wells, the upgrading of hospitals and medical clinics, and the construction of hospitals, medical clinics, three multipurpose centers, and high schools.

Aside from these, the JTF-510 reported the upgrading of some 60 kilometers of roads and the improvement of the Basilan airfield.

NEDA Deputy Director General Gilberto Llanto said the forum on peace and development was conducted to brief the diplomatic community and ODA donor-countries on the improving peace and order situation in the ARMM and Basilan.

Llanto urged them to invest their resources in programs and projects in the area.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 18, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033031/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july18.htm>

The President's Day: July 19, 2002

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- **GMA okays issuance of new E.O. to speed up interconnection among telecom firms**
- **Speed up national road maintenance in typhoon-hit areas, Datumanong orders**
- **GMA SONA to address 3 main issues affecting people**
- **Gov't committed to dismantle crime syndicates as GMA lauds PNP for big drug bust**
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- **Gov't micro-finance program exceeds SONA target**
- **Local pharmaceutical firms assure GMA of making quality but cheap medicines**
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GMA okays issuance of new E.O. to speed up interconnection among telecom firms

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has approved the issuance of a new executive order that would speed up interconnection among telecommunications companies that would result in lower rates for consumers.

The President gave the directive during Thursday's Cabinet meeting after noting that delays in interconnection among public telecommunication entities (PTEs) have resulted in high telecom charges.

She ordered Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz Jr. to draft the executive order amending Executive Order No. 59 issued by former President Fidel Ramos.

EO 59 prescribed the policy guidelines for compulsory interconnection of authorized public telecommunications carriers in order to create a universally accessible and full integrated nationwide telecommunications network and thereby encourage greater private sector investment in telecommunications.

The draft EO, which was presented to the President and the Cabinet members in Thursday's Cabinet meeting, would enhance the existing policy on interconnection to ensure telecommunication services of PTEs can access the services as well as the subscribers of other PTEs at acceptable quality of service and at reasonable costs.

The new EO would emphasize the need to provide an effective and measurable time-frame to effect and implement interconnection between and among PTEs to facilitate the negotiations of interconnection agreements.

The EO would also stress the need to ensure that interconnection will not result in unfair and unreasonable pricing arrangements to the detriment of the consumers.

EO 59 was signed by former President Ramos on February 24, 1993 to strengthen competition in the telecommunications industry as well as to break the monopoly in telephone services.

Speed up national road maintenance in typhoon-hit areas, Datumanong orders

Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Secretary Simeon A. Datumanong has ordered agency field officials to carry out immediate maintenance work on national roads damaged by monsoon rains and typhoons "Gloria" and "Hambalos" that recently hit the country.

Datumanong also directed DPWH maintenance crews to use all available equipment to clear national roads from landslides, debris and fallen trees.

He also asked field officials to thoroughly assess damages to public infrastructure, particularly bridge sub-structures, school buildings and flood control structures.

Datumanong said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has directed the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to release P80 million in calamity funds to the DPWH for repairs of damaged infrastructure.

Priority, he said, would go to patching up potholes in Metro Manila, Manila North Road, Manila South Road and the Cagayan Valley Road, which for sometime was closed to all types of vehicles.

Meanwhile, the DPWH has vowed to extend technical help to the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to solve the perennial flooding in the metropolis.

This followed the formal turn-over of all functions and responsibilities for flood control projects in Metro Manila from the DPWH to the MMDA, in accordance with the instruction of President Macapagal Arroyo.

Under a memorandum of agreement signed by Datumanong and MMDA Chairman Bayani Fernando, the MMDA would also assume the functions and responsibilities and relevant programs, projects, activities, personnel, funds, equipment, records, assets and liabilities subject to the provisions of existing relevant laws.

The DPWH has identified at least two major causes of flooding in Metro Manila, namely: the overflowing of the Pasig, San Juan, Marikina and Malabon-Tullahan rivers and streams during intense rain and the insufficiency of inland drainage facilities in coping with excessive local run-offs.

Flooding has been aggravated by the indiscriminate disposal of garbage and other solid materials into the rivers, esteros, drains, and waterways.

DPWH Assistant Secretary Salvador A. Pleyto, in-charge of the operation in the National Capital Region, said encroachment on esteros and rivers by squatters, business establishments and residential buildings also affected the flow of waters.

GMA SONA to address 3 main issues affecting people

When President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo delivers her State of the Nation Address (SONA) before the joint session of Congress on Monday, July 22, she will focus on three main issues, namely peace and order, graft and corruption, and the power situation.

In a radio interview this morning, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President would expound on her plans and programs for the incoming years.

Specifically, the Chief Executive would stress on the government's all-out war against all forms of criminality, including smuggling, and corruption, Bunye said.

He said a big part of the President's SONA would also focus on how to address the power rate problem. In recent months, the President had ordered a reduction on the controversial Purchased Power Cost Adjustment to ease consumer burdens.

He added that the SONA would be less in "nitty-gritties," but would be concentrated more on the fundamental issues that needed immediate solutions.

"The President will explain what she will do and basically, this is the declaration of war against all forms of criminality, all forms of anomalies, including smuggling," Bunye said.

Toward the end of her SONA speech, Bunye said the President would seek the support and cooperation of lawmakers on her priority bills that included the franchise law that would assure power users throughout the country of affordable electricity.

Bunye said the President has expressed elation over the bi-partisan pledge of senators to work for the passage of vital administration bills.

Gov't committed to dismantle crime syndicates as GMA lauds PNP for big drug bust

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said her administration is committed to dismantle all organized criminal syndicates in our country, including those engaged in drug manufacture and drug trafficking.

The President reiterated her strong commitment after a surprise visit and inspection at the drug laboratory in Quezon City raided by the elements of National Capital Regional Police Office-Metro Manila Drug Enforcement Group (NCRPO-MMDEG).

During the raid, the police confiscated at least P118 million worth of high grade shabu, chemicals and paraphernalia used in manufacturing the illegal drugs. The police also arrested seven Chinese nationals and three Filipinos inside a house in No. 75 Varsity Hills, Loyola Heights, Quezon City.

In her brief remarks, the President personally congratulated Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Interior and Local Government Secretary Joey Lina, Jr., NCRPO Chief Edgardo Aglipay and Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte for their successful drug bust.

The President said that the raid in Varsity Hills drug laboratory is the latest in a series of raids made by her administration in the war against drug pushers and drug dealers.

She said that the successful raid of PNP is the clear indication that the administration has the political will to fight against the proliferation of illegal drugs in the country.

The President also said that under her leadership, the PNP has now more drug bust operations compared to the past administration.

“Nakikita na ang political will kontra sa droga. Ang pinakamaraming drug bust ay ginawa sa ating administrasyon. So congratulations, at eto na ang sinasabi nating giyera kontra sa mga drug pushers, drug dealers na kasama sa ating giyera sa mga criminal syndicates (We can now see the political will against drugs. More drug busts have been conducted under our administration. So, congratulations, and this is now the war against drug pushers, drug dealers and in our war against criminal syndicates,” the President said.

GMA okays ICC-reviewed MRT 3 extension project

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has given the go-signal for the construction of the 5.12-kilometer extension of the existing 16.9-kilometer EDSA Mass Rail Transit (MRT) 3.

The \$213.99-million rail project, to be financed and carried out by Metro Rail Transit Corporation (MRTC), earlier passed the muster of the Investment Coordination Committee (ICC) of the National Economic and Development authority (NEDA).

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and ICC co-chairman Dante Canlas recommended the approval of the MRT 3 extension project to the President during the Cabinet meeting held Thursday in Malacañang.

Canlas said the project would complete the rail transit loop by linking the Baclaran-Monumento Light Rail Transit Line 1 and the Taft-North Ave. MRT 3.

The interface would come when the MRT 3 extends from its depot site in North Ave. to Monumento, with the construction of three elevated stations at Roosevelt, Balintawak and Monumento, all along EDSA.

The extension project will be implemented under the Build-Transfer (BT) scheme under the Build-Operate-Transfer Law.

It supplements the MRT 3 Phase I solicited Build-Lease-Transfer agreement.

When adopted, the MRT 3 extension project may not need the solicitation of comparable competitive proposals and may provide to MRTC similar government support possibilities under the existing Phase I BOT agreement.

The project will involve civil works, system designs, communication system, automated fare collection system, escalators and elevators and closed-circuit television and others.

The government, under the build-lease-transfer (BLT) contract, is operating the MRT 3 on an 18-hour basis, six hours of which are peak hours.

The maximum capacity of a three-car train is about 1,182 passengers or 394 passengers per car.

The minimum design speed is pegged at 32 kilometers per hour and the maximum possible headway is about two minutes.

Gov't micro-finance program exceeds SONA target

The government has extended some P692.75 million in micro-finance credit to 312,472 women borrowers as of mid-July, surpassing the 300,000-beneficiary target set in President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July 2001.

A report on the accomplished SONA targets presented in Thursday's Cabinet meeting said the President was also successful in making microfinance a cornerstone in the fight against poverty nationwide.

The report said this success has brought the total of microfinance institutions registered with the People's Credit and Finance Corp. (PCFC) to 198.

Loans released by PCFC to active conduits reached P1.128 billion serving 298,516 clients.

In providing funds for new women borrowers, 86.46 percent of the total borrowers got financing through government financial institutions (GFIs), such as the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Small Business and Guarantee and Finance Corp. and government-owned and controlled corporations like the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC), National Livelihood Support Fund (NLSF) and the PCFC.

Almost fourteen percent of the total borrowers acquired financing through PCFC conduits and affiliates, the report added.

Most of the women borrowers, numbering 57,485, came from Region 4; some 49,757 from Region 3; and 34,423 from Region 6.

In her SONA, the President promised to make micro-credit available to 300,000 new women borrowers every year.

"Bawat taon, dadagdagan natin ng tatlundaang libong maralitang kababaihan ang makikinabang sa paluwagan programa ng microfinance (Every year, we will include 300,000 new women borrowers in our microfinance credit schemes)," she said.

The President also pledged to make microfinance a foundation in the fight against poverty.

“Ang ibig sabihin nito ay maliliit na paluwagan para sa maliliit na negosyo (This means that microcredit will be made available to small businesses),” she said.

Aside from building new microfinance institutions, the government, through the BSP, issued licenses to three microfinance-oriented banks.

These were the Opportunity Microfinance Bank Inc., Micro Enterprise Bank and Bangko ng Masa with branches in Rizal province and in the cities of Davao, Makati, Pasig and Quezon.

The BSP is also evaluating four more bank applications to operate in Muntinlupa City; the provinces of Bukidnon and Catanduanes; and in Cainta, Rizal.

The government likewise prepared the Microfinance Development Framework and conducted a national microfinance conference and consultation with concerned agencies to identify needs of the microfinance industry and ensure that appropriate policies are in place.

It has also drafted the implementing rules and regulations of the Peoples Development Trust Fund, which shall finance capability building and institutional strengthening of microfinance institutions.

The implementing agencies of the microfinance program include the National Anti-Poverty Commission, PCFC, Department of Finance – National Credit Council, BSP, DBP, Land Bank of the Philippines, NLSF and the TLSF.

Local pharmaceutical firms assure GMA of making quality but cheap medicines

The Association of Philippine Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, Inc. (APPMan, Inc.) today reaffirmed its commitment to support the program of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to provide ordinary Filipinos, especially the poor, with quality but affordable medicines.

APPMan reaffirmed this commitment after the simple oath-taking ceremony of its officers and members led by its president, Ernesto Bravo of the St. Martin Pharma Lab, and executive vice president Ferjenel Biron of the Pharmawealth Lab. Inc. held at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang.

The new APPMan officers took their oath of office before the President.

APPMan also said that they have been supporting the program of the President to cut by half the prices of medicines frequently being bought by the masses.

“We have been supporting this program of President Macapagal-Arroyo especially in the countryside,” Bravo said.

Silently competing with the multinationals, especially in terms of affordability and quality, Bravo said that the APPMan, Inc., an association of all-Filipino pharmaceutical manufacturing companies, has been offering prices that are 50 percent lower than the popular brand sold by multinational firms.

Dr. Biron, on the other hand, said that it has been more than 20 years that APPMan has been offering medicines, especially antibiotics and other relevant lines, with half the price or even lesser than other brands sold by multinational companies.

“We just want to reaffirm that commitment to the President now that one of her programs is to reduce the price of medicines here in the Philippines,” said Dr. Biron.

The APPMan members also expressed gladness when the President assured them that she would look into the current situation of the Filipino pharmaceutical manufacturing which has been doing its best to upgrade its

manufacturing system, a requirement imposed by General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organization.

“Some of our members are already exporting their products to Asian countries and engaged in the development of herbal plants available in the Philippines,” Dr. Biron said.

He said APPMan members have continued to operate their plants because of their commitment to serve, especially the less fortunate members of society.

“But we can only continue serving to the best of our ability and to the limit of our resources only if our government will do its part to stabilize and strengthen what was already developed – a true Filipino pharmaceutical industry,” Biron added.

GMA swears in Bunye as new Press Secretary

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today formally swore into office newly appointed Press Secretary Ignacio “Toting” Bunye in ceremonies in Malacañang.

Secretary Bunye officially started working as press secretary and presidential spokesman last Tuesday (July 16).

Accompanied by his wife, Dr., Miraflor Oca-Bunye, his three children, relatives and friends, Bunye took his oath at the Ceremonial Hall of the Palace.

Aside from being press secretary, Bunye will act as presidential spokesman until October when Rigoberto Tiglao will reassume the position.

Before he joined politics in 1986, Bunye had been a reporter of *DZMT*, the radio station of the old *Manila Times*, and later as reporter of the *Daily Star*.

A lawyer by profession, Bunye has served in various executive positions at the Ayala group of companies, including as assistant vice president of the Ayala Investment and Development Corporation and the Bank of the Philippine Islands.

When former President Corazon Aquino took over power after the downfall of former President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, Bunye was designated officer-in-charge of the municipality of Muntinlupa.

He became the duly elected mayor of Muntinlupa from 1988 to 1995. As Muntinlupa mayor, Bunye served as chairman of the then Metropolitan Manila Authority in a concurrent capacity, from 1991-1992.

In 1995, Bunye was again reelected as mayor of Muntinlupa for his last three-year term. During his 12-year stewardship, Muntinlupa metamorphosed from a fifth-class municipality into a highly urbanized city.

Adopting proven corporate practices that he gained from working in the private sector, Bunye streamlined operations and cut red tape, thus making Muntinlupa City a business-friendly community which is what it is today.

Toward the end of his term as mayor, Bunye laid the foundation for the establishment of the Ospital ng Muntinlupa through the acquisition of a five-hectare lot within the Filinvest Corporate City, which is also the site of the future Civic Center Complex.

Barred by law to seek a fourth consecutive term as mayor, Bunye ran for Congress in 1998 and became the first Congressman from the lone district of Muntinlupa City.

In Congress, Bunye continued to champion the cause of local governments, especially in providing them with greater fiscal autonomy.

Originally a member of the minority, Bunye became one of the fiscalizers of the 11th Congress. But with the change of leadership toward the end of the 11th Congress, he became the Senior Deputy Majority Floor Leader.

A valedictorian in his elementary and secondary education, Bunye finished both his AB in Political Science and Bachelor of Laws from the Ateneo de Manila. He had a Masters in Management from the Asian Institute of Management.

Bunye, who is a lifetime member of the National Press Club, has written a number of articles published in the *Daily Star*, including a four-part series entitled "War Vignettes," a first-person account of events immediately after the Tet Offensive in South Vietnam in 1968.

He also wrote a one-hour documentary entitled "The Other War," a first person account of the activities of the Philippine Civic Action Group in Tay Ninh, South Vietnam. The documentary was broadcast in 1967 by radio station DZMT.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 19, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033043/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july19.htm>

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- **DPWH terminates contract of delayed road project**
- **E.F. cites B.O.C. modernization in RP trade growth**
- **GMA asks Sen. Sotto to oversee creation of Dangerous Drugs Board**
- **GMA cites help of Scotland Yard experts in gov't anti-kidnap for ransoms efforts**
- **GMA cites cities in 1st L.C.P. 'Best Practices' Awards**
- **GMA lauds PACER, Bulacan police for neutralizing kidnap-for-ransom gang**

DPWH terminates contract of delayed road project

Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon A. Datumanong has ordered the termination of the contract to build the Bayugan-Awa-San Francisco (Prosperidad) Road Section of the Surigao-Davao road in Mindanao.

Datumanong said the contractor, LS Sarmiento/Conception Basic/J&P Builders, in a joint venture, was unable to meet project schedules and had been committing work slippages since the project was started more than a year ago.

The contractor then vowed to adopt a "catch-up program" that the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)-Philippine-Japan Highway Loan (PJHL)-project management office prepared.

But a recent ocular inspection showed that the contractor did not make good in its promise.

Physical accomplishment on the 36-kilometer road project, earlier scheduled for completion in less than a year, was recorded at a dismal 37 percent.

The P486-million road project, located in Agusan del Sur, is implemented under the supervision of DPWH-PJHL-PMO.

It is funded under a loan agreement between the Philippine government and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

"Once the loan closing date for this project expires, the government will shoulder the remaining construction costs, so we have to execute immediate remedies in accordance with existing laws," Datumanong said.

Undersecretary Manuel M. Bonoan, in-charge of the construction operations, said the DPWH might employ the next lower bidder or the contractor undertaking the adjacent road project to complete the works for the delayed Surigao-Davao section project.

Meanwhile, DPWH-PJHL-PMO Director Danilo Trajano said the agency would carry out maintenance works on the road section, so as not to inconvenience the motoring public.

Trajano also reported the completion of the Langkilaan (Trento)-Monkayo section of the Surigao-Davao Road Project.

The project, under contract with VT Lao Construction/Grace Construction (joint venture), covers the rehabilitation of the 18.35-kilometer road with portland cement concrete pavement and asphalt concrete overlay on 6.7-meter carriageway.

DPWH Assistant Secretary Bashir D. Rasuman, in-charge of operations in Mindanao, said the overtime work during good weather facilitated the on-time completion of the project.

W.E.F. cites B.O.C. modernization in RP trade growth

The Bureau of Customs (BoC) was chosen as the first target agency from among 161 countries to avail of the World Economic Forum trade enhancement initiative.

The BoC has been rated as among those that have made progress in customs modernization.

The agency ranked number one in E-Commerce Readiness among government agencies in the country.

It is expected to assist other countries that will undergo a similar initiative as the implementation of the project starts.

A non-governmental organization, the World Economic Forum, launched the initiative, focused on the assessment and improvement of customs processes of a specific country.

This would support trade facilitation through the application of E-Government policies and practices.

Recognizing the vital role of trade and investment in economic growth, the WEF engaged stakeholders from all sectors of society, along with international groups, to support the implementation of the initiative.

During the WEF annual meeting in New York attended by Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho early this year, only 20 firms from different countries and other industry sectors were chosen to participate in the initiative.

Camacho has named BoC Commissioner Antonio M. Bernardo as the BoC representative to the WEF.

Discussions on the initiative will be conducted during the East Asia Economic Summit 2002 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October.

GMA asks Sen. Sotto to oversee creation of Dangerous Drugs Board

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that she had invited Senator Vicente "Tito" Sotto III to oversee the creation of the new Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB).

In a radio address, the President said Sen. Sotto "will work closely with the administration without resigning from the Senate."

She cited the senator for having painstakingly researched and worked on the passage of Republic Act (RA) 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, of which the latter was the primary author.

"Nakilala rin si Sen. Sotto sa kanyang masigasig na kampanya laban sa droga sa loob at labas ng Senado (Sen. Sotto was also known for his no-nonsense campaign against illegal drugs in and out of the Senate)," she said.

She said she was thankful to Sen. Sotto for accepting the challenge and responsibility.

She remained confident that the senator would "give to this task the full measure of his dedication, patriotism and professionalism."

The President also disclosed that she, in her State of the Nation Address before Congress on Monday (July 22), would tell on illegal drug syndicates, which continued to be considered threats to national security and enemies of the state.

She again lauded the members of the National Capital Regional Police Office-Metro Manila Drug Enforcement Group who recently raided a drug laboratory in Quezon City and seized some P118 million worth of high-grade shabu, chemicals and paraphernalia used in producing illegal drugs.

The police also arrested seven Chinese nationals and three Filipinos, said to be operating the laboratory, in a house at Loyola Heights, Quezon City.

In her radio address, the Chief Executive described the manufacture and trafficking of illegal drugs as a big social menace victimizing not only adults but also thousands of young Filipinos.

She said many homes have been broken and lives destroyed because of the use of and addiction to illegal drugs. Many families continue to live in fear over the threat of drug abuse by a family member.

“Ito ang dahilan kung bakit ipinasa ng Kongreso, at dalian kong pinirmahan, ang RA 9165 para buwagin ang mga sindikato ng droga, parusahan ang mga kriminal at iligtas ang mga biktima at mga magiging biktima pa ng dangerous drugs (This is the reason why Congress passed and I immediately approved RA 9165 to bust drug syndicates, punish criminals and save victims and prospective ones from dangerous drugs),” she said.

She urged the people to turn to the total implementation of RA 9165, to begin with the creation of the DDB. “This is where we need expertise and commitment,” referring to Sen. Sotto.

“I ask every Filipino who shares the grief of drug-stricken families and who shares the national outrage against dangerous drugs to help me, my administration and Sen. Sotto fight the drug empire and destroy this curse down to its very roots,” she added.

GMA cites help of Scotland Yard experts in gov’t anti-kidnap for ransoms efforts

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited two experts from the United Kingdom’s world-renowned Scotland Yard for helping members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) upgrade their knowledge on handling kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) cases.

The President personally attended the PNP seminar on hostage negotiations for KFR cases, underscoring her administration’s all-out campaign against KFR syndicates and gangs in the country.

PNP Chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. led those participating in the workshop conducted at the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response building in Camp Crame.

Following a briefing, the President said the very restricted seminar was part of government efforts to secure help from Scotland Yard.

“Ito ay bahagi ng ginagawa natin na mas ma-enhance pa yung professionalism ng ating mga police sa pagsugpo sa mga malaking criminal syndicates na ginagraya natin ngayon (This is part of our efforts to further enhance professionalism in our police force, especially in the war against criminal syndicates we are waging),” she said.

She said the Scotland Yard experts are conducting training sessions to brief the police on how to further improve the handling of KFR cases.

In her brief visit to United Kingdom last January, the President worked out an agreement with Scotland Yard to train the PNP in curbing transnational crimes, including kidnapping.

The two governments noted that the international nature of terrorism and of organized crime required close cooperation among law enforcement agencies.

GMA cites cities in 1st L.C.P. 'Best Practices' Awards

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the importance of good governance and public service, as she led officials in citing ten cities in the 1st League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP) "Best Practices" Awards at the Century Park Sheraton Hotel.

The President was assisted by Tagaytay City Mayor and LCP president Francis Tolentino in the awarding rites.

Adjudged the top city was Island Garden City of Samal for the Samal City Mariculture Farm, a reservation area that promotes mariculture as an alternative source of livelihood for marginalized and sustenance fisher folk.

The mariculture farm is patterned from the conceptual framework of an industrial park, providing a communal mooring system for a seacage project.

Bagging the second place was Lipa City for the "Lipa City Public College: Free College Education for All," a program providing free education to poor and gifted children in college.

Placing third was Balanga City for its "Taxpayers' One-Stop Shop," a scheme providing a simplified systems and procedures in business transactions.

Earning the fourth place was the Science City of Munoz for its "Developing the Matingkis Farm-Tourism Project," a program addressing the farmers' need for irrigation water and subsequently increasing the volume of palay production by as much as 62 percent.

Fifth was Dumaguete City for the "Land for Urban Poor housing Program," a land acquisition program addressing the basic need for affordable and decent housing.

The other five cities that made up the top 10 entries were Bago City for its "Community-based Disease Surveillance System"; Batangas City's "Batangas Environmental Management Council," Palayan City's "Smile Bilis-Action Program," Sagay City's Oplan Paglilingkod," and Vigan City's Vigan Heritage Conservation Program.

Before the awarding rites, the President witnessed the launching of the LCP's Good Urban Governance Norms.

LCP vice president for Mindanao and Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat and Panabo City, Davao del Norte Mayor Rey Gavina presented to the President a signed declaration of commitment for the endeavor.

Dubbed as the Manila Declaration on Good Urban Governance, the manifesto enjoined city mayors to set priorities in improving the investment climate and promoting social and economic growth in their respective areas.

The declaration also called for the commitment of every mayor to speedily respond to the barest minimum needs of their constituencies.

"I will traverse all boundaries, whether political, cultural or ethnic, geographical or communal, just so to ensure my city works for all and that all persons responsibly enjoy their right to the city," the declaration said.

Ten city mayors also presented to the President the City Action Plans for Poverty Reduction through Good Urban Governance.

Also present during the ceremonies were Cebu City Mayor and LCP National Chairman Tomas Osmeña, Lobregat and Bacolod City Mayor and LCP Vice President for Visayas Luzviminda Valdez.

GMA lauds PACER, Bulacan police for neutralizing kidnap-for-ransom gang

MARILAO, Bulacan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today commended the Philippine National Police (PNP) for their continued vigilance against crime syndicates, following the neutralization of three members of a kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gang here.

The President, who motored to this town, lauded members of the newly-created Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (PACER) unit and policemen of the Bulacan Provincial Police Office.

The lawmen engaged elements of the Villaver kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) group along Mahogany St., Town and Country Executive Village in Barangay Abangan Norte, this town at about 1:30 p.m. today.

Three suspected members of kidnap-for-ransom gang were killed during the shootout with lawmen, a report from the PNP reaching Malacañang said.

The report said the Villaver KFR band operated under the Fajardo KFR Group, one of the top KFR groups in the PNP's target list.

The President inspected the site where the shootout occurred and conferred with PNP chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. on the all-out war the government is waging against kidnapers and other crime syndicates, to include those in illegal drugs and smuggling.

The PNP report named only two of the slain suspects as Lito Mercado and a certain Alvin, said to be the group's negotiator. The third suspect, who remained unidentified, was the driver of the group's car.

The police said they recovered the car, a Mitsubishi Lancer with plate number UDK-478; three bullets of a cal. 38, a cal. 45 automatic pistol, two cellular phones, and three hand grenades.

Initial reports from Bulacan police director Senior Superintendent Edgardo E. Acuña said the suspects were spotted by PACER intelligence operatives and the Marilao police under Superintendent George Torcuator.

The PNP report said the suspects were involved in various high-profile kidnappings including the abduction of Connie Wong y Cheng and Police Officer 1 Dionisio Burca, Jr. in October 2001; the kidnap of Mary Grace Cheng-Rosagas in June 2001; and that of Ricardo Tan in February 2002.

They were also involved in the robbery-holdup of the Rural Bank of Meycauayan, Bulacan in July 2001 and that on RAMCAR Meycauayan in the year 2000.

Shortly before motoring to Marilao, Bulacan, the President cited two experts from the United Kingdom's world-renowned Scotland Yard for helping members of the PNP upgrade their knowledge on handling KFR cases.

The President personally attended the PNP seminar on hostage negotiations for KFR cases, underscoring her administration's all-out campaign against KFR syndicates and gangs in the country.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 20, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033104/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july20.htm>

The President's Day: July 21, 2002

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- **Basic issues concerning Filipinos focus of GMA's 2nd SONA**
- **GMA reiterates government's resolve to stop kidnap-for-ransom activities nationwide**

Basic issues concerning Filipinos focus of GMA's 2nd SONA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will deliver her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) tomorrow (July 22) before the joint session of Congress, which will focus on these vital issues — peace and order, graft and corruption, and the power situation.

According to Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, the President will expound on her plans and programs for the incoming years.

Bunye said that the President would give her attention to peace and order concerns to further gain the confidence of foreign investors to put their capital to labor-intensive but competitive industries in the Philippines.

“Without peace and order, investors tend to shy away from the country. And without investor confidence, we will not be able to have more businesses,” Bunye added.

Bunye said that President Macapagal-Arroyo would underscore her administration's all-out war against any form of criminality, which includes smuggling and corruption.

He pointed out that a large portion of the President's SONA would likewise center on the government's thrust on how to find a viable solution to the power rate problem.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had ordered the National Power Corporation on May 8, this year to reduce the controversial Purchased Power Cost Adjustment by P0.40 per kilowatt/hour to ease the consumer burdens.

Bunye said that the President would spell out measures to be undertaken by her government to lower electricity and power rates.

The President's directive has resulted in a national average reduction of P0.85 per kilowatt/hour. Negotiations of contracts with independent power producers are expected to further bring down stranded power costs soon.

Bunye emphasized that the SONA would be less in “nitty-gritties” but would concentrate more on the fundamental issues which need immediate solutions.

He said that “President Macapagal-Arroyo would explain what she would do and basically, this is a declaration of war against all forms of criminality and all forms of anomalies, including smuggling.”

Toward the end of her address, Bunye said that the President would seek the support and cooperation of lawmakers on her administration's priority bills, which include the franchise law that will assure power consumers nationwide of affordable electricity.

In other related developments:

- President Macapagal-Arroyo has returned the administrative control over the police to Metro Manila Mayors as an effective way of stabilizing the peace and order situation in the metropolis. She pointed out that the restoration would be experimented and limited to Metro Manila only

- The Department of Energy reported that 85 percent of all barangays nationwide now have electricity as a result of the intensified government program to promote rural development through electrification.
- The Department of Budget and Management stressed that the government remains committed to carry out President Macapagal-Arroyo's national agenda of raising the moral standards in the bureaucracy and society so as to push socio-economic programs.
- The Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council reported that the government had already provided security of tenure to almost 338,858 families as of end-June this year, exceeding the SONA target of President Macapagal-Arroyo by 113 percent.
- The Philippine National Police pursues its war against crime syndicates following the neutralization of three members of a kidnap for ransom group in Marilao, Bulacan.
- The PNP confiscated at least P118 million worth of high-grade shabu chemicals and paraphernalia used in manufacturing illegal drugs during a raid at No. 75 Varsity Hills, Loyola Heights, Quezon City.

GMA reiterates government's resolve to stop kidnap-for-ransom activities nationwide

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reiterated her administration's commitment to stop, once and for all, the incidence of kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) activities nationwide, as she lauded the Philippine National Police (PNP) for neutralizing the Fajardo KFR Group.

The President commended PNP Chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, who recently vowed to eliminate KFR groups in a year, for the arrest of three members of the Fajardo KFR Group and the killing of three others in a shootout in Marilao, Bulacan Saturday (July 20) afternoon.

Stabilizing peace and order conditions in the country to promote a healthy business climate, attract more foreign investments and create more jobs for the people is one of the vital issues the President is expected to sound off in her second State of the Nation Address on Monday (July 22).

In Malacañang, Ebdane this morning presented to the President three arrested members of the Villaver KFR gang, a unit of the Fajardo KFR Group.

A PNP report identified the three as Florante Concepcion, Joven Mercado and Leo Vigildo.

The report said that Concepcion and Mercado gave up to police after getting death threats from the Fajardo KFR Group leaders. Vigildo was arrested in manhunt operations launched by the newly-created Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (8PACER) team.

Mercado is the brother of Lito Mercado who was killed in the shootout with lawmen in Marilao.

The police report said that the three suspects were involved in the abduction and killing of kidnap victim Connie Wong in December last year. They were also tagged in the kidnap of Mary Grace Cheng-Rosagas in June 2001.

A sub-group leader, Rolando Villaver, was arrested on December 22 last year, the report added.

Ebdane said that the KFR groups nationwide have started feeling the heat of the President's iron-fist policy against criminality, to include KFR activities, manufacturing and trafficking of illegal drugs, and smuggling.

He said that the PNP identified at least 21 active KFR groups operating nationwide.

Just recently, the PNP also scored in its anti-drug efforts with the seizure of some P118 million worth of shabu and illegal drug manufacturing paraphernalia in a raid on a drug laboratory in Quezon City. Arrests were also made following the raid.

President Macapagal-Arroyo Saturday commended the PNP for its continued vigilance against crime syndicates, following the neutralization of three members of the Villaver KFR gang in Marilao.

She motored to the town after receiving reports that the PACER unit and policemen of the Bulacan Provincial Police Office engaged KFR members in a shootout along Mahogany street, Town and Country Executive Village in Barangay Abangan Norte in Marilao.

The PNP report named only two of the slain suspects as Lito Mercado and a certain Alvin, said to be the group's negotiator. The third suspect, who remained unidentified, was the driver of the group's car.

The police said that they recovered the car, a Mitsubishi Lancer with plate number UDK-478; three bullets of a cal. 38, a cal. 45 automatic pistol, two cellular phones, and three hand grenades.

Initial reports from Bulacan police director Senior Superintendent Edgardo E. Acuña said that the suspects were spotted by PACER intelligence operatives and the Marilao police under Superintendent George Torcuator.

The PNP report said that the suspects were involved in various high-profile kidnappings including the abduction of Police Officer 1 Dionisio Burca, Jr. in October 2001 and that of Ricardo Tan in February 2002.

They were also involved in the robbery-holdup of the Rural Bank of Meycauayan, Bulacan in July 2001 and that on RAMCAR Meycauayan two years ago.

Shortly before motoring to Marilao, Bulacan, the President cited two experts from the United Kingdom's world-renowned Scotland Yard for helping members of the PNP upgrade their knowledge on handling KFR cases.

The President personally attended the PNP seminar on hostage negotiations for KFR cases, underscoring her administration's all-out campaign against KFR syndicates and gangs in the country.

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The President's Day: July 22, 2002

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- **GMA vows to further reduce cost of electricity**
- **GMA asks Congress to pass anti-terrorism bill, other measures**
- **GMA to take direct hand in all-out war against terror, criminality**
- **GMA cites accomplishments that exceeded targets set in first SONA**
- **Drug menace a national security problem, not just a police matter – says GMA**
- **GMA vows to lead country towards strong republic**
- **Big-time smugglers to be charged with economic sabotage, says GMA**
- **P. back in international economic map, GMA says**
- **GMA's second SONA praised by gov't leaders**

GMA vows to further reduce cost of electricity

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today vowed to further reduce the cost of electricity as she stressed that cheaper power would result in a more competitive economy and thus attract both local and foreign investments.

In her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered this afternoon before a joint session of Congress, the President said she was elated to learn that electricity bills of consumers for the month of July have gone down because of the reduced purchased power adjustment (PPA) that she has ordered the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) to implement.

She said that when she first became president, the Philippines had the second most expensive power rate in Asia but now we have gone down to number 6.

According to the President, this was the result of the comprehensive 10-point program that her administration has put in place to reduce power costs.

The President said that after studying the results of the review on the contracts of independent power producers (IPP), some concrete moves would be undertaken by the government to further ease the burden of our people.

She said that soon the Philippines will have the first-ever wholesale electricity spot market in Asia but without the pitfalls of the spot market in California.

Through this scheme, the consumers, especially the larger ones, will be able to choose their electricity suppliers.

The President also called on the NAPOCOR and the Manila Electric Company (MERALCO) to stop bickering and instead work together to give price incentives to large users so that excess power can be utilized.

She said price incentives to large users of electricity would further spur economic activity and thus create jobs for our people.

GMA asks Congress to pass anti-terrorism bill, other measures

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the two houses of Congress to immediately pass the anti-terrorism bill and other measures aimed at spurring the economy and empowering Filipinos working or residing abroad.

In her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered this afternoon before a joint session of Congress at the Batasan Pambansa, the President said the anti-terrorism bill would strengthen the country's legal armory in the war against terrorism.

She said that if passed into law, the anti-terrorism bill would plug the loopholes by which crimes spread and democracy is undermined under the protection of the laws.

The President said that she would hold more meetings with the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) to push for more social, economic and political reforms.

She specifically cited the need for a law that would make farmlands acceptable as loan collaterals to remove a big deterrent to investments in agriculture.

Other measures that the President asked the House of Representatives and the Senate to pass include the following:

- Special Purpose Vehicle Act to encourage asset management companies to put back into productive circulation assets now tied up in problematic loans;
- Absentee voting to give overseas Filipino workers the right to vote, consistent with the provisions of the Constitution, but with all the safeguards;
- Dual citizenship to give Filipinos abroad equal respect and recognition, consistent with our national honor; and
- The Transco Franchise Bill to make our electric power sector more efficient and competitive.

GMA to take direct hand in all-out war against terror, criminality

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today vowed to take "a direct hand in the war against the enemies of the Republic."

"This is how I did it with the Abu Sayyaf ... This is how I will do it with the criminal gangs," the President said, as she resolved "to build a strong Republic by breaking the back of terrorism and criminality."

In her second State of the Nation (SONA) Address before the joint session of Congress at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City, the President outlined the state's sterling performance in assuring peace and security in the homeland.

She cited the gallant soldiers who rescued American missionary Gracia Burnham from the hands of the notorious kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) band and terrorist Abu Sayyaf and who killed Abu Sayyaf spokesman Aldam Tilao a.k.a. Abu Sabaya in a sea encounter last June.

This year, Camp Abubakar, the main lair and training site of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), had been transformed into an "authentic community of new hopes and dreams" where the Philippine tricolor flies and where Filipino soldiers protect conflict-affected civilians who have returned to their homes.

Just recently, the President and United States Ambassador Francis Ricciardone visited Camp Abubakar, which she renamed Camp Datu Duma Sinsuat, to launch the Iranun Development Project for the people in the 10,000-hectare former rebel camp that borders the towns of Barira, Buldon and Matanog, all in Maguindanao.

The President, in her speech, saluted the men and women of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) who continued to be "at the forefront of our Republic's efforts to fight terror and enforce peace."

Last Sunday, "we captured the mastermind of the General Santos bombings that killed and maimed 80 persons a few months ago," she disclosed. The captured terrorist is considered as a top bomber.

She also noted ongoing efforts, “energized by the invaluable initiative of Speaker Jose de Venecia,” to seal a peace pact with the MILF, as well as to continue the road to peace signed by the Philippine government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1996.

Going farther, she said the government had “gained powerful allies (from around the world) in the domestic war against terrorism, because of its decisive action after September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the US.

“The President of the Philippines was the first head of government to emphasize the interconnection between the war against terrorism and the war against poverty. Nations, large and small, now embrace this interconnection,” she said.

“We shall enhance our strategic relationship with the US through continuing training exercises to sharpen the Filipino soldiers’ capability to move and communicate to fix and finish off their targets,” she added.

The no-nonsense, all-out war against criminal syndicates, which remained direct threats to national security, had also gained ground with all the weapons of the country’s democratic arsenal brought to bear on them.

She had ordered the AFP and the PNP to treat criminal syndicates “as what they are, direct threats to national security,” and wage a no-compromise war against these social menaces.

“Within a month, we shall organize the New Dangerous Drugs Board and the Philippines Drug Enforcement Agency which Congress has just created,” she said.

With the drug menace elevated to the level of a national security problem, the President further ordered the AFP “to field military resources for intelligence and to field soldiers in drug raids in support of civilian law enforcement.”

She called on the newly elected barangay officials “to take an active role in this war, to be the frontliners in this fight in your communities.”

“Criminals are criminals, whether of the common kind or the kind that kill in the name of political advocacies. They will feel the full brunt of the arsenal of democracy. Freedom, too, is entitled to self-defense,” she said.

“I have given very clear orders to spare nothing in hunting down kidnapers,” she added.

The Chief Executive said major KFR groups have been neutralized, with police and military operations claiming 170 kidnapers, either killed in various encounters or arrested.

But she pointed out that she wanted smashed the 21 remaining KFR syndicates, to include the two biggest – the Bucala and Fajardo groups.

She earlier dared the PNP to eliminate kidnappings within a year, a challenge that PNP Chief Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. readily accepted.

Just last Saturday, the newly-created PNP Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (PACER) unit killed three members of the Villaver KFR group, a sub-group of the Fajardo KFR gang in an encounter in Marilao, Bulacan.

Last Sunday, Ebdane presented to the President in Malacañang another three Fajardo group members tagged as suspects in a string of kidnapping and robbery-holdup cases in Bulacan.

More than anything else, the President urged the PNP “to start with the cleansing of their own ranks” of rascals who disgrace the uniform.

But she stressed that there were more heroes than rascals within the PNP – heroes who “scorned to be bribed” and seized almost P5 billion worth of illegal drugs and equipment in various raids in the provinces of Quezon, Batangas and Zambales, among others.

This included last Friday’s raid on a drug laboratory in Quezon City that netted for the PNP shabu and drug paraphernalia worth some P118 million

“We cannot afford to lose (in the war against terror and criminality). Even a stalemate will be a defeat. For what is at stake is our country as a viable proposition in the world economy. And we must be viable if we are to win the most fundamental war, the war against poverty,” The President pointed out.

“The right to work in peace is as basic as the right to life and liberty, and when both are in danger, their preservation by all lawful means becomes not just a higher right but an overriding duty. And that duty I will discharge,” she vowed.

GMA cites accomplishments that exceeded targets set in first SONA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today spelled out the tangible results of her administration particularly in the delivery of basic services to the Filipino people which she enunciated in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July 2001.

In her second SONA delivered this afternoon before the joint session of Congress at the Batasan Pambansa in Quezon City, the Chief Executive said that her administration has exceeded the desired targets despite the turbulent state of domestic and global affairs.

For example, the President said a total of 250,000 hectares of land have been distributed by the government compared to the administration’s target of a 200,000 hectares for land reform.

The President also said that with the P20 billion earmarked for the country’s agricultural modernization, a total of P24 billion was spent for the project by her administration.

On her promise to provide security of land tenure to 150,000 urban families nationwide, the President said that a total of 180,000 urban poor households were provided with shelter security.

At the same time, she declared that a total of 150,000 housing units were provided for workers and the very poor.

She noted that some 1,500 rolling stores have been deployed to sell rice at P14 per kilo and other basic commodities from the 1,000 rolling stores she promised for deployment.

The President likewise stressed that cheap medicines not only for the poor but for all the citizenry are now available in all the pharmacy of government hospitals as well as in all outlets of the United Laboratories or Unilab.

She expressed sadness over the fact that except for Unilab, the wider distribution network of commercial drug stores – under pressure from the multinational drug companies – will not sell cheaper medicines.

The President stressed that her administration is in the process of studying punitive measures to correct this unfair, unjust, and heartless situation being inflicted by other commercial drug stores to the Filipino people particularly the poor.

On health insurance, the President said that a total of 4 million urban poor families have been enrolled or insured under the National Health Insurance Program or NHIP.

The President also said that the first year target of a three-year program to construct 1,612 schoolbuildings in barangays unserved by nearby classrooms, was met – 555 school houses were completed or are due to be completed from the government side while 450 from the private sector.

Aside from this, the President also mentioned the 285 school buildings amounting to P100 million which was allocated by Senate President Franklin Drilon for the project.

The President said that for the past year, her administration was able to procure 54 million textbooks for all grade and year levels in five core subjects for 16 million public school students for the current school year.

On her promise to make mathematics a primary concern in all schools in the country, the President underscored the need to increase the number of hours for teaching mathematics.

On the need to increase the number of teachers in schools, the President said a total of 15,000 school teachers have been employed to teach.

On her target to provide emergency employment for 20,000 out-of-school-youth, the President said that a total of 30,000 OSYs have been provided jobs.

On the three poor children from Payatas, namely Jayson, Erwin, and Jomar, the President said they were given scholarships by her government their respective families were given livelihood assistance.

She added that some 400 scholarships were likewise given to the poor children of Payatas and the problems of the residents in the area on land and housing have been attended to.

Drug menace a national security problem, not just a police matter – says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said her administration is determined to win the war against drug trafficking as she announced that the drug menace is now a national security problem and not just a police matter.

In her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered this afternoon before a joint session of Congress at the Batasan Pambansa, the President said there will be no compromise and no quarters given in the war with the drug trade.

“Drug lords will be treated as enemies of the state,” the President said.

The President thus ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to field military resources for intelligence and soldiers for operations in support of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other civilian law enforcement agencies.

According to the President, this year alone the PNP was able to confiscate almost P5 billion worth of illegal drugs and laboratory equipment.

Last Sunday, the President invited Senator Vicente “Tito” Sotto III to oversee the creation of the new Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB), as she cited the senator for having painstakingly researched and worked on the passage of Republic Act (RA) 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, of which the latter was the primary author.

The President also lauded the members of the National Capital Regional Police Office-Metro Manila Drug Enforcement Group who recently raided a drug laboratory in Quezon City and seized some P118 million worth of high-grade shabu, chemicals and paraphernalia used in producing illegal drugs.

The police also arrested seven Chinese nationals and three Filipinos, said to be operating the laboratory, in a house at Loyola Heights, Quezon City.

The Chief Executive described the manufacture and trafficking of illegal drugs as a big social menace victimizing not only adults but also thousands of young Filipinos.

She said many homes have been broken and lives destroyed because of the use of and addiction to illegal drugs. Many families continue to live in fear over the threat of drug abuse by a family member.

“I ask every Filipino who shares the grief of drug-stricken families and who shares the national outrage against dangerous drugs to help me, my administration and Sen. Sotto fight the drug empire and destroy this curse down to its very roots,” she added.

GMA vows to lead country towards strong republic

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said her administration’s efforts to build a strong Republic have been difficult in the last 18 months since she was sworn in as the country’s Chief Executive.

“It has been 18 months of putting out small fires and soothing hurt feelings, while taking what I hope have been giant steps forward in the economy,” the President said in her 48-minute second State of the Nation Address (SONA) before the joint session of Congress this afternoon.

The President’s SONA was interrupted 75 times by applause from those who filled the halls of the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City.

“But now the time has come. We must devote ourselves entirely to taking more of those giant steps towards the achievement of the strong Republic. I will lead our country towards the strong Republic,” she vowed.

The Chief Executive noted the two essential features that mark out a strong Republic.

“The first is independence from class and sectoral interests so that it stands for the interests of the people rather than of a powerful minority. The second is the capacity, represented through strong institutions and a strong bureaucracy, to execute good policy and deliver essential services —the things that only governments can do,” she said.

The two features would result in good policies and empowered institutions and would propel faster economic development and social reforms, she added.

“A strong Republic takes care of the people and takes care of their future. Thus, a strong Republic is the bedrock of the victory we seek over poverty within the decade,” she said.

The President recalled that during the past 18 months, “our efforts to build the strong Republic have been difficult, with both domestic and global conditions extremely harsh.”

She said that at home, the poor were pitted against the rich to further inflame the nation’s social divisions. Abroad, the contracting economies of the country’s main trading partners were further aggravated by the tensions generated by the global war against terrorism.

Meanwhile, a shocking corporate scandal after another severely eroded public faith in the most promising system for conducting economic activity — the free market.

The Chief Executive said these were the large long-term crises of social justice and the capitalist system itself, whose resolution awaited events well beyond one small nation’s ability to influence in the short term.

But she noted that the immediate crises have been resolved by the tangible results obtained in the delivery of government services, particularly to the country's poor; the resolution of problems brought about by terrorism and criminality; and the successful efforts to bring down the cost of electricity nationwide.

"For a country to be as good as it can get, many of the right decisions are tough decisions. I have made some of the toughest. And I will make even more tough decisions in the year to come," she said.

"Because the easy way out may postpone the pain but will prolong the problem. But the tough decisions which are the right decisions, because they serve the people, are the source of our hope for the future," she added.

The President urged the people: "Stay with me. *Samahan ninyo ako. Itayo natin ang matatag at malakas na Republika* (See me through. Let us build a firm and strong Republic)."

Big-time smugglers to be charged with economic sabotage, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that big-time smugglers will now be charged not just with smuggling but with economic sabotage, a non-bailable capital offense.

In her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered this afternoon before a joint session of Congress at the Batasan Pambansa, the President said she has instructed the Customs Commissioner not just to seize smuggled goods but to arrest big-time smugglers.

The President described tax evasion as a "white-collar crime" and the government's response should also be white collar, like systems improvement, audit, and prosecution.

"But smuggling is something else. It is done by hoodlums and criminal gangs," the President said.

The President said that she will also invoke the rule of command responsibility in the campaign against rampant smuggling.

"You have seen political will in the harsh interpretation of command responsibility with regard to illegal gambling. That draconian application was a dress rehearsal for endorsing command responsibility in the even more difficult challenges of kidnapping, drug-dealing and smuggling," the President said, referring to the relief of seven ranking police officials found ineffective in the campaign against 'jueteng' in their areas of jurisdiction.

According to the President in the year 2000, despite all reports of rampant smuggling, only P16 million worth of smuggled goods were confiscated.

But last year, because of political will, the President said her administration seized P1.2 billion worth of smuggled goods, including more than a million bags of smuggled rice, as compared to much less than P100,000 worth the year before.

R.P. back in international economic map, GMA says

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today proudly proclaimed that the "Philippines is back on the map," internationally.

"We are the third best performing economy in Asia and the best in Southeast Asia," the President said in her Second State of the Nation Address before the joint session of Congress at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City.

The speech was interrupted at least 75 times by applause.

She said: “As a result of our decisive action after (the) September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States), the Philippines is now a recognized player in world affairs.”

She noted that “the President of the Philippines was the first head of government to emphasize the interconnection between the war against terrorism and the war against poverty. Nations large and small now embrace this interconnection.”

“We have gained powerful allies in our domestic war against terrorism. I am certain that our increased international visibility will continue generating capital inflows for the Philippines,” she said.

The President pointed out that it was imperative for the country to restore macroeconomic stability and win back investor confidence.

She said the “linchpin was to control our fiscal deficit. If EDSA 2 had not happened, the government would simply have gone bankrupt with a deficit of P245 billion.”

“But we controlled it, brought it down to P147 billion and against all odds, turned our international credit rating from risky to stable..” she added.

“It was hard work, here and abroad, to rekindle global interest in our country, but we did it,” she said.

She also took note of efforts to adopt strong administrative measures, including fighting smuggling and graft and corruption. These measures would “enable us to close the gap in our revenue targets.”

Recent basic macroeconomic signs showed that things were under control. Inflation is at a low, driven down by stable food prices and by declining power costs.

“Nang ako ay naging Pangulo, ang presyo ng galunggong ay otsenta pesos ang kilo. Noong isang linggo, nakabili ako sa palengke ng sesenta pesos lamang. Ang presyo rin ng bigas na binibili ng mahihirap ay nananatiling P16 ang kilo sa palengke, gaya pa rin nang isang taon (When I became President, galunggong was P80 a kilo. Last week, I bought a kilo of galunggong at P70. The price of a kilo of rice remained at P16, similar to that of last year),” she said.

Interest rates are also at a low, and the peso is stable. From P56 to the dollar, the foreign exchange rate is a little over P50.

“Where we have fallen short of achieving what we intended, it has not been from misdirection or a lack of trying. After all, it has really been only one year and a half,” the President said.

“In any event, I promise to work even harder if that is possible, and do even better because I believe that there is always room for improvement. I cannot grow taller but I can always get better,” she added.

She disclosed that her working agenda for the coming year would focus on creating and improving job opportunities.

“Citizens with rewarding jobs paying decent wages constitute not just a stone in the edifice but the very foundation of a strong Republic,” she stressed.

“We need investments to generate jobs. To draw in investments, we will address certain problems in the short term: katiwalian (corruption), peace and order, and the cost of power,” she said.

“Bilang Pangulo, tinatanggap ko ang pahayag ng mga negosyante na dapat sugpuin ang katiwalian sa bansa (As your President, I recognize the need to deal with corruption, as asked by businessmen),” she added.

She recalled that before she became President, the country had the second most expensive power rates in Asia.

“Now, we have gone down to 6th. This is first fruit of a comprehensive ten-point plan we have put in place to reduce power costs,” she said.

With cheaper power would come a more competitive economy, and more investors, the President noted.

“We know where we are going and how to get there; we are planting the milestones along the way to a strong Republic and a prosperous country,” she said.

GMA’s second SONA praised by gov’t leaders

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today earned commendations from various leaders of the country when she clearly spelled out in her

Second State of the Nation Address (SONA) the need to build a strong Republic as well as address two important issues – peace and order and power rates.

The President’s SONA was interrupted 75 times by applause from the jampack crowd at the session hall of the House of Representatives in Quezon City which included top government officials, members of the diplomatic corps and various representatives of the private sector.

In an interview with reporters, Senate President Franklin Drilon said the theme of building a strong Republic is good and will be most welcome to many sectors of the society.

Senate President Pro Tempore Manuel Villar said the President’s second SONA is far more specific than last year’s address, focusing more on the fight against criminality and the lowering of electricity rates.

“It’s a good challenge and I think we have a clearer picture of what we will have to do this time around,” Villar said.

For his part, Sen. Renato Cayetano stressed that the President’s campaign against criminality can be achieved with the cooperation of all sectors, including both houses of Congress.

“I am very happy for that because I understand the problem of law and order that is the very foundation of the stability of the Republic,” he said.

Cayetano said he is happy to hear the President’s SONA, saying that “it went beyond motherhood statements with so many details.”

“It was not only a statement of principles but a statement of what should be done, specially in the area of peace and order, judicial reform and, of course, lowering of electricity rates,” Cayetano said.

Meanwhile, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. expressed confidence that the Philippine National Police (PNP) will be able to meet its one-year ultimatum to dismantle kidnap-for-ransom syndicates.

“We also learned from our experience last year and we have already identified the kidnap-for-ransom syndicates and their modus operandi,” Lina said.

On the power rates issue, Energy Secretary Vicente S. Perez said he will immediately meet with the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) and MERALCO representatives in compliance to the President's call for them to settle their differences and find ways to provide a program that would increase the power consumption and further reduce the price of electricity.

"This is the homework given to me by the President and I will call Napocor and Meralco to a meeting so that we can brainstorm and look for a way to comply with the President's SONA target," Perez said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 22, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033124/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july22.htm>

The President's Day: July 23, 2002

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- **GMA distributes gov't assistance to Metro Manilans**
- **5 urban poor enrolled under PhilHealth insurance**
- **No return to dictatorship in building of strong Republic, Palace assures nation**
- **North co-op lauds GMA programs to win war against poverty**
- **GMA elated over positive reaction to her SONA — Palace**
- **GMA holds teleconference with RP envoys abroad on new SONA aspirations**

GMA distributes gov't assistance to Metro Manilans

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today distributed livelihood assistance, certificates of awards, PhilHealth cards as well as certificates of scholarship and other government assistance to qualified indigent beneficiaries of the various programs and projects of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration in various parts of Metro Manila.

The Chief Executive, assisted by Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chairman Bayani Fernando, and Manila City Mayor Lito Atienza, personally handed out the different forms of government assistance during ceremonies held this morning at the Quirino Grandstand at the Luneta.

From the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the President distributed loan checks for P100,000 each to the following recipients under the livelihood program of the Overseas Filipino Workers: Renerio Sarusal, Daniel Layno, and Giovanni Solidum.

She also awarded certificates of scholarship from KALAHÍ (Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan) areas around the National Capital Region under the Petron Tulong-Aral Project (or the Petron Send-A-Child to School Program) to 1,000 Elementary School students as follows:

Caloocan 132, Las Pinas 129, Malabon City 35, Mandaluyong City 95, Manila 166, Navotas 29, Pasay City 37, Paranaque 48, Pateros 93, Quezon City 118, Taguig 51, and Valenzuela 67.

The Petron Tulong-Aral Project is aimed at sending 1,000 children to public elementary schools every year in support of the poverty alleviation program of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. It offers educational scholarship to school children which includes uniforms, books, school supplies, school projects and daily meal allowance. Its beneficiaries are children belonging to KALAHÍ areas.

The President likewise distributed the following from the National Housing Authority:

- certificates of award to 48 Kapitbahayan Project Awardees from leasehold of 25 years to ownership (recipient: 48 Kapitbahayan leases from Navotas);
- certificates of award for Mandaluyong Medium-Rise Housing Project Awardees (awardees: local government unit employees and bonafide residents of Mandaluyong City);
- certificates of award for 129 resettlement affected by the CAMANAVA (Caloocan-Malabon-Navotas-Valenzuela) Flood Control Project to halfway houses located in Vitas, Tondo, Manila;
- certificate of award for Kasiglahan Village (awardees: relocatees from Pasig River and along Makati area);
- certificates of award to the awardees of TBC Medium Rise Housing Project (awardees: formal beneficiaries from Quezon City)
- titles to various beneficiaries of Pasay, Paranaque and Las Piñas Slum Upgrading Project; and
- titles to various beneficiaries of the Bagong Silang Resettlement Project in Bagong Silang, Caloocan.

From the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation, the President presented the take-out payment check to the landowners of the following Community Mortgage Program: Resurreccion Ville Homeowners Association Inc. (landowner: Ligaya Bigalang-Awa); and Presidential Pigeon Homewoners Association Inc. (landowner: Cresencia Masiclat Lansang).

A total of 54,800 health cards from the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation were also presented to indigent beneficiaries in the National Capital Region broken down as follows: Manila 20,000, Caloocan 23,000, Muntinlupa 5,000, Quezon Cigtly 5,000, Pasay City 1,500, Las Piñas 100, Taguig 100, and Marikina 100.

4.5 urban poor enrolled under PhilHealth insurance

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the most effective and most successful program of her 18-month-old administration is the enrollment of some 4.5-million urban poor beneficiaries under the PhilHealth insurance, exceeding the original target of 500,000 she set during her first State of the Nation Address last year.

In brief remarks after presenting various forms of government assistance to the urban poor of Metropolitan Manila during ceremonies held at the Quirino Grandstand at the Luneta, the President said that not only were the targets she set in her first SONA met. Some of them, including the PhilHealth insurance for the urban poor, were even exceeded, she said.

“Ang pinakamabisa, pinaka-successful na programa para sa mga mahihirap ay walang iba kung hindi iyong ating health insurance para sa mahihirap (The most effective, and most successful program of our government for the poor is none other than our health insurance),” she said.

The President recalled that in her first SONA, she had said that the most difficult situation that poor Filipinos will encounter in their lives is when they get sick — due to the high price of medicines, high doctor fees, and high hospitalization costs.

She noted that as far as the affluent, the well-off and even employees and workers are concerned, they have no problems when they get sick because their medical bills are shouldered by their respective private insurance companies.

What concerns her most, the President said, are those who are unemployed, the self-employed and the urban poor themselves.

It was for this reason, she said, why she pledged to give health insurance cards to 500,000 deserving indigent members of society during her first SONA last year.

After a year, the President said, the administration, instead of providing health cards to the targeted 500,000, was able to enroll a total of 4.5 million indigent residents in the urban areas all over the country.

The President underscored the advantages of having health insurance cards.

For instance, when a health insurance card holder or any member of the family gets sick, all he or she has to do is go to a government hospital and present the said card.

“Libre lahat. Libre ang doctor, libre ang operasyon at pati gamut ay libre basta’t dala ng parmasya ng hospital. Kaya wala na kayong babayaran basta’t national government hospital ang pupuntahan (Everything is free. The doctor’s fee, the cost of any operation, even the medicines in the government hospital pharmacy are free. You don’t have to pay for anything if you go to a national government hospital),” she explained.

The President said that health cards can also be used in private hospitals. For tertiary hospitals, the government will contribute at least P16,000 while for secondary hospitals, only P11,000 will be contributed by the government to a health card holder.

According to the President, one has to pay only P100 a month or P1,200 a year to be a health insurance member.

No return to dictatorship in building of strong Republic, Palace assures nation

Malacañang today said that contrary to the fears expressed by some sectors, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would not resort to extra-constitutional means in waging a total war against all forms of criminality and corruption in order to build a strong Republic.

In his regular press briefing this afternoon, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said definitely there will be no return to the dictatorship of the Marcos era.

Bunye said that if one would look closely at the President's second State of the Nation Address (SONA), she emphasized that in the total war against criminality and terrorism she will use "all the weapons in our democratic arsenal."

"In other words, the action that will be taken by the strong Republic will all be within the democratic framework," Bunye said.

In her SONA, the President declared that wiping out all forms of terrorism and criminality would lay the foundation of a "strong Republic."

"I am determined to build a strong Republic by breaking the back of terrorism and criminality," the President said.

Bunye also said the President would leave it to the two houses of Congress to decide on which anti-terrorism bill would be adopted.

He said that the general request of the President, as she stated in her SONA, is for Congress to really work on an anti-terrorism bill.

North co-op lauds GMA programs to win war against poverty

A cooperative in Northern Luzon has expressed gratitude to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for the administration's programs to "win the war against poverty."

In a letter to the President, the Claveria Agri-based Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Inc. based in Claveria, Cagayan thanked the President for initiatives of the government to win the war against poverty within the decade.

Cooperative General Manager Petra Martinez said that their cooperative has been proud in making significant progress in alleviating the plight of the poor because of the close cooperation between them and other local and national agencies, particularly with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Martinez said the initiatives of the department, including the issuance of land patents, delineation of municipal waters (through Department Administrative Order (DAO) 17 and the community livelihood assistance programs, were vital instruments in the administration's war against poverty.

"The land patents allow the small-scale farmers, entrepreneurs and other beneficiaries to peacefully develop their land and use the same instrument as collateral to borrow much needed capital from cooperatives or other banking institutions to increase their scale of production," Martinez said.

Martinez further said the cooperative acknowledges the government efforts to actively disseminate to the people the importance of conserving and guarding our coastal and marine resources so “that we continue to have environment-friendly and sustainable livelihood.”

Department Administrative Order 17 likewise prohibits commercial fishing within 15 kilometers from the shoreline, increasing fish yield and lowering the cost of the “poor man’s” protein source.

The membership of the Claveria Agri-based Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Inc. has increased from an original 450 in 1987 to 10,000, covering three municipalities in Cagayan.

Its capital started with less than P500,000 and, as of December 2001, has increased to P212 million in assets.

The cooperative won twice in the *Gawad Pitak* Award for “*Pinakatatanging Kooperatiba*,” the first agri-based cooperative to have done so in the eight-year history of the award.

GMA elated over positive reaction to her SONA — Palace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was elated by the positive reactions to her second State of the Nation Address (SONA), especially those coming from the business community, Malacañang said today.

In his regular press briefing this afternoon, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that based on the comments aired in broadcast outlets and published in newspapers, more people reacted positively to the President’s SONA.

“If you are the one delivering the speech, you would certainly be elated, especially if you are interrupted 77 times in the course of 55 minutes,” Bunye said.

But Bunye also acknowledged that some sectors, especially those from the political opposition, have criticized the President’s speech.

The President, according to Bunye, expected to hear negative comments from these groups.

“But the President is more comforted by the fact that there are more people who approved of the SONA,” Bunye said.

On a related topic, Bunye took exception to the comments of opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara that the administration is engaged in a “politics of piracy” when Sen. Robert Jaworski switched over to the administration side.

Bunye said Senator Angara did not raise the issue of piracy when then administration Sen. John Osmeña moved over to the opposition, thus triggering an impasse in the Senate.

“Now that Jaworski has transferred to the administration coalition, they’re calling it piracy,” Bunye said.

GMA holds teleconference with RP envoys abroad on new SONA aspirations

A day after delivering her State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo conferred with 13 heads of Philippine missions abroad to apprise them on how they could aid in accomplishing the aspirations in her second SONA.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the 45-minute teleconference, held at the State Dining Room in Malacañang, touched on, among other things, how to further attract Chinese tourists and how to work out the trade irritants of Philippine products such as with Australia and other countries.

Bunye said that while the government is prepared to waive the processing of visas to Chinese tourists, “we’ll have to work out a way by which only the bonafide tourists come in.”

He noted the President’s observation that more and more Chinese nationals figure in the drug trade.

Bunye said the President also encouraged the Philippine ambassadors to take advantage of the available technology such as the Philippine government web sites “so that they can explain to their respective host countries the various policies of the government, as well as our interpretation of ongoing events.”

The envoys who took part in the teleconference were Ambassadors Josue Villa (Beijing, China), Willy Gaa (Canberra, Australia), Rafael Seguis (Jakarta, Indonesia), Ernesto Llamas Jr. (Singapore), Domingo Siazon Jr. (Tokyo, Japan), Clemencio Montessa (Brussels, Belgium), Joseph Bernardo (Madrid, Spain), Hector Villaroel (Paris, France), Albert del Rosario (Washington, United States), Justo Orros (Mexico, Mexico), Bahnarim Guinomla (Riyadh, Saudia Arabia), Samuel Ramel (Geneva, Switzerland) and Edsel Custodio (World Trade Organization).

Bunye said the President also issued orders to Ambassador Gaa to work out the trade irritants with the Australian government “as far as our products are concerned,” referring to the entry problems experienced by Philippine mangoes.

In the case of United States, the President wanted the Philippines to supply a bigger share of the canned tuna market, Bunye said.

Bunye added that the President also gave notice to the envoys of the government efforts in passing the absentee voting bill, on the continuous efforts for the welfare of overseas Filipinos, global terrorism, developments in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, ASEAN-Europe Meeting (ASEAM), and APEC.

Bunye noted that the President received a report from Ambassador Siazon that the Japan External Trade Organization will be coming out with a positive report on the Philippine economy.

In the course of the teleconference, the President also revealed several appointments she made, including that of Ambassador to Malaysia Jose Brillantes as Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador Rowena Sanchez as coordinator between Malacañang and the DFA.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: July 23, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033133/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july23.htm>

The President's Day: July 24, 2002

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- **GMA buys a kilo of galunggong at P60**
- **War against terrorism pushing targets up against the wall, says GMA**
- **BSP reports RP lending rates among lowest in Asia**
- **Go out and vote, Mikey Arroyo urges all voters in Pampanga**
- **GMA to limit appointment of political envoys**
- **DOF, DTI, NEDA working jointly to make fiscal incentives system promote RP as investment size**
- **GMA congratulates VRB, PNP, PSG for confiscation of 2-million pirated CDs**
- **GMA hails launching of UNDP 2002 Human Development Report in RP**
- **GMA lauds PNP, AFP for arrest of 3 suspected drug dealers, seizure of P1.7M in cocaine, shabu**
- **GMA restated no interference policy on congressional affairs**
- **GMA cites UNDP 2002 Human Development Report's stress on good governance**

GMA buys a kilo of galunggong at P60

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today went to the Commonwealth market in Quezon City to buy a kilo of fresh medium-sized *galunggong* at P60 a kilo.

The President went to the market to personally see for herself if the price of fresh *galunggong*, which she mentioned in State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday, is still selling at P60 a kilo. Her detractors say that one can buy the fish at P60 per kilo, but it is already *bilasa* (stale).

The President found out by going around the fish section of the market that indeed *galunggong* has an average price of P50 a kilo. Its smaller kind can be had at P40 a kilo and its medium and bigger size can be bought at P50 to P60.

The President stopped at one fish stand and bought a kilo of *galunggong* at P60. She even saw to it that the fish is fresh by inspecting its gills.

The President, who arrived at the market at around 9:10 this morning, went around the different sections of the market – fruit, fish and meat – and noted that their prices are stable.

The vendors replied that the prices are same as those of last week, when the President visited the Commonwealth Market at the height of the monsoon rains.

With the President were Quezon City Mayor Feliciano “Sonny” Belmonte, Jr. and Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDC) Chairman Michael Defensor.

War against terrorism pushing targets up against the wall, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today the Philippines' contributions to the global campaign against terrorism continues to bear fruit as the Armed Forces chief of staff and Philippine National Police chief presented to her two suspects involved in the April 21, 2002 bombing at the Fitmart Mall in General Santos City.

“Our war against terrorism is pushing our targets up against the wall,” the President said in a statement issued during the presentation in Malacañang of Abdulbasit Usman, the principal suspect, and Moamar Timbao Esmael, the identified bomb carrier in the General Santos bombing.

The two suspects were brought before the President by AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu and the PNP Chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr.

The President added, however, that “the war (against terrorism) does not end with these two arrests.”

While she congratulated “our men and women in uniform” for the “good work,” the President exhorted the AFP and PNP officers and personnel involved in the nationwide campaign against terrorism: “I ask for more of what you have already accomplished.”

The President said the General Santos terrorist bombers sought to “undermine our Republic, but we fought back.”

She indicated that there will be no letup in the campaign against terrorism.

“No compromise, no quarter given... We will not be cowed, we will hunt them down and bring them to justice,” the President said, reiterating her vow made during her second State of the Nation Address last Monday to take a “direct hand in the war against the enemies of the Republic.”

The President said the united effort of the police and soldiers continues to deliver the much-needed security and peace that every Filipino looks for.

“We build our strong Republic every day with hard work and commitment to secure the peace,” the President said.

For his part, General Cimatú said

BSP reports RP lending rates among lowest in Asia

The Philippines has one of the lowest lending rates in the Asian region, thus bolstering expectations of stronger domestic economic activity.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last Monday cited the country’s interest rates that “are also at a low” during her second State of the Nation Address before the joint session of Congress at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City.

The President said this was one of the major factors that has put the Philippines back on the international map. “We are the third best performing economy in Asia and the best in Southeast Asia,” she said.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) estimates as of July 15 showed that the country’s real lending rate, or lending rate adjusted for inflation, of 4.95 percent was the third lowest in a sample of 10 Asian countries.

This came after South Korea and Japan, which had real rates of 4.1 percent and 3.0 percent, respectively.

By contrast, the highest rates were recorded for Hong Kong at 8.2 percent and Taiwan at 7.8 percent, a result partly of negative inflation rates.

By country, the real lending rates are: Hong Kong, 8.23 percent; Taiwan, 7.84 percent; India, 6.80 percent; Thailand, 6.80 percent; Indonesia, 6.53 percent; Singapore, 5.70 percent; Malaysia, 4.98 percent; Philippines, 4.95 percent; South Korea, 4.10 percent and Japan, 3.00 percent.

The data reflected the current low-interest rate environment in the Philippines resulting from ample liquidity conditions following the substantial monetary easing undertaken by the BSP over the past year.

BSP Governor Rafael B. Buena Ventura said this implied relatively lower cost of capital for business, which should augur well for economic activity in the near term.

Together with the benign outlook for inflation, the level of real interest rates is expected to continue and provide a supportive macroeconomic environment that would encourage stronger domestic consumption and investment activity over the coming months.

Such a prospect bodes well for the government's Gross National Product growth targets of 4.5 to 5.0 percent and 5.5 to 6.0 percent for 2002 and 2003, respectively.

Go out and vote, Mikey Arroyo urges all voters in Pampanga

LUBAO, Pampanga — Presidential son and Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo called on all registered voters of Pampanga and all members of the Sangguniang Kabataan to go out and vote on Sunday.

The young Arroyo made the calls as he hailed Commission on Elections Chairman Benjamin Abalos Sr. and the Comelec for setting the elections of barangay officials and SK officers in Pampanga on Sunday.

"We should all go out and vote whoever we want to vote as barangay or SK chairman or councilman on Sunday. This is our right and the right of every citizen in a democracy. We should exercise this right and exercise it judiciously," Arroyo said.

Arroyo said that the barangay and the SK are important cogs in the Philippine democracy, being the smallest political units of the country.

"The barangay is the best expression of people power because through the barangay, especially in elections like those on Sunday, we are free to support the officials who we think are doing good for the community and we are also free to boot out the bad eggs in our community," Arroyo said.

"We should learn and appreciate our duties and rights in the barangay democracy so we will have a better town, city, province and country," he added.

Arroyo, a graduate of the Ateneo de Manila University and the University of California in Berkeley, reminded the people in the barangays that "they get the barangay government that they deserve, so they should vote wisely in the barangay elections."

"Your decision on Sunday is a decision you will live with for several years and maybe in a lifetime. So let's all vote wisely. Let's make the elections peaceful, orderly and honest," Arroyo said.

The young Arroyo, his mother, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and other members of the family will vote in their hometown of Lubao on Sunday.

The barangay elections in Pampanga and many parts of the country set last July 15 were postponed due to the heavy rains that flooded many towns of Pampanga and other provinces.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, assisted by Pampanga Gov. Manuel Lapid, Vice Gov. Arroyo and other national and provincial officials, distributed relief goods during the floods.

The President, at the same time, called for a review of the dike and flood control system in the province to avoid big floods in the future.

Earlier, upon representation of Vice Governor Arroyo, the President released more than P600 million for flood control and dike systems for Pampanga.

GMA to limit appointment of political envoys

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that under her administration, political ambassadors should constitute only one-third of all Filipino envoys assigned abroad and the rest would be come from the career service.

In her regular luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps held at Malacañang's State Dining Room, the President said that her "self-imposed guideline" is in compliance with the provisions of the Foreign Service Act that her late father, President Diosdado Macapagal, had authored.

The President disclosed this foreign policy guideline when she pointed out that the replacement of Ambassador to Malaysia Jose Brillantes would come from the roster of career ambassadors at the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

"At least we are going to replace a political ambassador with a career ambassador," the President said.

Before joining the foreign service, Brillantes was an official of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), at one time even serving as acting DOLE secretary.

Brillantes served as labor attaché to Ottawa, Washington, D.C. and Bonn. He also became a DOLE undersecretary for employment promotion and manpower development from August 1992 to May 1995. He was also DOLE assistant secretary for regional operations and assistant secretary for legislative affairs from August 1991 to August 1992.

The President, who is also the concurrent foreign secretary, explained that his appointment of Ambassador Brillantes as DFA undersecretary for overseas Filipinos was independent of her choice of a permanent foreign secretary.

The Chief Executive said she appointed Brillantes to the position because of the latter's labor background and because he has been doing a very good job with the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Malaysia.

"He should be able to do that for the OFWs all over the world," the President said.

The President also said that she would like the DFA to work for the dignified treatment of OFWs while abroad and when they return home.

"Like I don't want them to be coming back home in a charter flight just because they are deported Filipinos. Let them come back in regular commercial flights. And a few at a time," the President said.

DOF, DTI, NEDA working jointly to make fiscal incentives system promote RP as investment size

The Department of Finance (DoF) has been in a continuing discussions with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) on how to reconfigure the country's fiscal incentives system to make the Philippines more competitive and attractive to foreign investments.

In a statement, the DoF said the objective in the review of the fiscal incentives system is to make the system clear and simple to administer, harmonious, time-bound, and performance-based.

The DoF said that at present, there are many tax incentives laws that extend diverse types of tax breaks, and a number of tax incentives administering agencies.

"Thus, streamlining of procedures, harmonizing the tax perks, and identifying promotable activities where the country has high comparative advantage are the objectives of the ongoing rationalization efforts," the DoF said.

The DoF also categorically denied that it was the source of news reports that said tax incentives cost the government about P187 billion in 2001.

Although tax incentives such as income tax holidays and import duty exemptions imply fiscal costs, the DoF said it recognizes the vital role of tax incentives to promote the country as an investment site.

For instance, the preferential tax treatment, one form of incentives offered at the country's special economic zones, has contributed to the exports' annual growth of 26.22 percent from 1996 to 2001, the DoF said.

The DoF said that this kind of incentive has also resulted in an annual increase in employment of 14.40 percent for the same period.

GMA congratulates VRB, PNP, PSG for confiscation of 2-million pirated CDs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the Videogram Regulatory Board (VRB), the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Presidential Security Group (PSG) for their success in confiscating about 2 million pieces of pirated compact discs (CDs) in various parts of the country.

The President motored to Camp Crame at around 1:30 p.m. to witness the destruction of truckloads of video compact discs (VCDs) and digital video discs (DVDs) confiscated in a series of raids conducted by the combined government operatives.

In an interview with reporters, the President said the confiscation of the pirated CDs is part of the government effort to curb criminality and maintain law and order nationwide.

"The movie and recording industry has long been suffering because of this (piracy)," she said.

In a brief ceremony at the parade ground of Camp Crame, the truckloads of pirated CDs were crushed by three bulldozers in full view of the President and other government officials led by newly-installed VRB Chairman Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Jr.

In his speech during the ceremony, Revilla emphasized that the proliferation of pirated CDs has affected more than 200,000 workers from the film and music industry.

Since assuming office last July 1, Revilla, with the help of the men and women from the PNP-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) and the PSG raided about 50 establishments suspected of peddling the hot items in Metro Manila and elsewhere in the country.

While forming a comprehensive program for preventive education and information dissemination against piracy, Revilla stressed that the operation against those peddling the illegal merchandise will continue.

"In the past two weeks alone, we have accumulated almost three million units of optical discs," he said.

On its first day of operation alone, the combined team of the VRB, PNP and the PSG has seized some 1.7 million pieces of CDs with an estimated street value of P85 million.

Among those who attended the ceremony were PNP chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., Philippine Association of Recording Industry (PARI) president Danny Olivarez, PNP-CIDG chief Director Nestorio Gualberto and PSG chief Brig. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon.

From Camp Crame, President Macapagal-Arroyo proceeded to the St. Luke's Hospital in Quezon City where she visited the policemen who were wounded during the rally outside the Batasan Complex last Monday.

The President personally awarded the medal of excellence to Police Officer 1 Gerardo Rodriguez and four other policemen from the Central Police District and congratulated them for their "very heroic act."

GMA hails launching of UNDP 2002 Human Development Report in RP

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the main launching the 2002 Human Development Report in the Philippines, saying it is a recognition of the Philippines' emphasis on human development and the country's pioneering adoption of the human development index as an official measure of the Filipino people's welfare.

In her speech at the Global Launch of the 2002 Human Development Report this morning at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall, the Chief Executive cited the presence of Djibril Diallo, director for Communications Office of the Office of the UNDP Administrator in New York, who informed her that the global launch of the 2002 Human Development Report is being held simultaneously in 70 countries all over the world.

The President also recognized the attendance of UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown and East Timor Foreign Minister Ramos Horta, the father of East Timor Independence, who have contributed much to the struggle for human freedom and democracy.

"Only in one country do we have the head of the UNDP presiding over the launching. This is the main launching of the Human Development Report in the Philippines," she said.

She told the UNDP officials and government officials attending the launching ceremonies of her administration's efforts to build a strong Republic, which she enunciated in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 22 before the joint session of Congress.

One of the essential features of a strong Republic, the President said, is that it stands for the interest of the people rather than the powerful minority.

The President noted that a Republic must be so, in fact, in reality and as what the Human Development Reports stresses especially in the difference it makes for the better in the lives of citizens.

According to the President, her experience in governance during the last year and a half "tells me that my country needs a strong Republic to guarantee human development."

She stressed that a strong Republic involves a painstaking process of strengthening institutions and communities, a process that advances only on a broad platform of shared ethical values, a firm consensus to serve common interest and a common vision of a national future.

The President said that the idea that people should be at the center of development took root mainly through to the advocacy of the United Nations and its member states.

She congratulated the UNDP under the leadership of Mark Mallock Brown for giving flesh to this advocacy in the Human Development Report.

The President recalled that the last time she saw Brown was when they were both in Washington, D.C. when she was still the vice president.

The President also paid tribute to East Timor and its people which was represented by its foreign minister, "who knows the Philippines very well."

She said she concurred with Minister Horta who once said that democracy and human rights are not inventions of the West. "We wholeheartedly agree, the Philippines established its first Republic more than a hundred years ago, the first in Asia in 1898, before the Americans occupied our country," the President said.

GMA lauds PNP, AFP for arrest of 3 suspected drug dealers, seizure of P1.7M in cocaine, shabu

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for the arrest of three suspected drug peddlers and the seizure of some P1.7 million worth of cocaine and methamphetamine hydrochloride or “shabu” during a joint operation in Barangay Bantilan, Infanta, Quezon.

In a brief ceremony at the parade ground of Camp Crame, Philippine National Police chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. presented to the President the three suspects who were identified as Radil Ramos, Belen Ortaliza and retired Philippine Army Staff Sergeant Mariano Ortaliza.

“Let there be no safe haven for the kidnapers, the drug traffickers or the terrorists,” the President said in a statement to mediamen.

Among those recovered during the drug bust were eight pieces of heat-sealed plastic packets of yellowish powdery substance suspected to be high-grade cocaine with an estimated street value of P1.5 million and 42 plastic packets of white crystalline substance believed to be shabu with estimated value of P130,000.

The Chief Executive said both the police and soldiers are working together to stamp out all criminals who undermine the strong Republic that her administration is building.

She emphasized that the government’s priority in the all-out war against criminality are the kidnapers and drug traffickers.

“We are waging the war against drug traffickers without let-up,” she said.

The President recalled that last October 13, the Quezon province police operatives seized 500 kilos of shabu, which she described as the “biggest drug haul in history.”

Since July 4 when Ebdane took the reins of the PNP leadership, she said the police have arrested 21 kidnapers and killed three others during separate encounters.

GMA restated no interference policy on congressional affairs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she has been consistent in her policy of not interfering in the internal affairs of the Senate as she stressed that she had nothing to do with the decision of Sen. Robert Jaworski to join the administration coalition.

In a luncheon with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said she talked to Jaworski only on the day that the senator made the announcement of his decision to bolt from the opposition and move to the administration party in the Senate.

“We talked because he has told me he would make the announcement, but we did not talk before that,” the President said.

Before that, the President said Senator Ramon Revilla, Jaworski’s father-in-law, called her up to say that the latter would like to see her before he makes the announcement.

The President said that movements of members in the Senate are largely the result of their own efforts.

But the President admitted that if the senators need her help and if they ask for her support as President, or as president of the coalition or as chairman of the party, she will help. “That is my obligation,” the President said.

The President also confirmed that Jaworski has received a warning that he will be subjected to black propaganda if he moves over to the administration party.

“If he moves over, they are going to do a black propaganda on him, and they are doing it,” the President said.

The President said that Senator Jaworski was threatened, but despite the warning from his former camp, he still moved to the other side “for country and family.”

The President also said that Senator Vicente Sotto III does not have to resign from the Senate when he chairs the Legislative-Executive Advisory Council (LEDAC) oversight committee for the Dangerous Drugs Board.

The President said he will ask Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., her co-chairmen in the LEDAC, to create this LEDAC oversight committee as part of a stepped up campaign against illegal drug trade.

“So it is not an executive position,” the President said.

GMA cites UNDP 2002 Human Development Report’s stress on good governance

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the 2002 Human Development Report (HDR) commissioned by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for giving due importance to the expanding role of civil society in deepening democracy.

This is very relevant to the Philippines, both as a nation and as a Republic, the President said in a speech at the Global Launch of the 2002 HDR at Malacañang’s Ceremonial Hall this morning.

But she said that amid globalization and the information revolution, people have been asking if wealth had been created and why poverty and inequality continued to pervade.

She added that advocates of free markets should put in place innovative and democratic political institutions “to allay apprehensions that globalization sets back social progress and deepens human misery.”

She stressed that institutions for governance should fight illiteracy, disease, hunger and injustice.

The President agreed with United Nations Secretary General Koffi Anan who was quoted in the report as saying that “good governance is, perhaps, the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.”

“I agree with Secretary General Koffi Anan,” she said, adding that good governance should rest on three pillars: a sound moral foundation to guide the leadership at all levels, a philosophy of transparency in all government actions, and an ethics of effective implementation throughout the bureaucracy.

She pointed out that the third pillar “is one of the essential features of strong Republic” that she enunciated in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) before the joint session of Congress last July 22, 2002.

The strong Republic “must have effective institutions to protect the weak,” she said in her SONA.

In her speech, the Chief Executive also commended the HDR for coming up with an updated scorecard on the progress of countries in meeting the millennium development goals of poverty reduction.

“It is a good way of keeping track of our shared obligations, not only as governments but as nations,” she declared.

She gladly told UNDP officials and other development advocates that the Philippines was on track with its millennium development goals.

“Based on the established trend, we would be able to meet by 2015 the goals of, among others, cutting into half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, achieve universal primary education, achieve gender equality in primary schools and reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds,” she said.

She disclosed that she told Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas that these were good indicators that “we must monitor in order to ensure that we stay on track in fighting poverty.”

She also vowed to work with her Cabinet to develop policies and programs that would enable the Philippines to catch up with the goals of reducing the number of people suffering from hunger.

The President said her administration’s national ambition is to win the battle against poverty with the decade, “even earlier than the projection of the HDR 2015.”

She also thanked the HDR for “providing us with the meaningful objectives that together spell victory against poverty.”

President Macapagal-Arroyo recalled the Philippine Development Report (PDR) 2002 that was launched two weeks ago with the theme “Work and Well-Being.”

Combined, the PDR and HDR themes would highlight the implications of politics and governance on jobs, poverty and human development. “They partner well with a strong Republic,” she said.

The President expressed the hope that her administration would ably maintain its increasing human development index in the coming years.

“This, we hope to achieve with the help of the UNDP and the international development assistance community. UNDP is a trusted partner, and we look forward to continued cooperation in peace and development,” she said.

The President called on the development assistance community not only to invest in the growth of the markets but also in the growth of democracy.

“At the same time, our common commitment to deepen democracy at the national levels should be mirrored in the practices of governance at the global level,” she said.

She added that the Doha Round under the World Trade Organization must respond to the clamor of developing member countries for expanded market access stressing that this would empower developing countries to build strong Republics.

She urged the leaders of the developed world and the various agencies responsible for promoting international peace, freedom and prosperity to be exemplars and leaders.

“We must all move forward and seek to help one another, build our strong Republics in our own nations so that we can strengthen the weak among us and make them all equally strong. Hopefully before 2015,” she said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: July 24, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033144/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july24.htm>

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SWS takes issue with results of survey on Filipinos' 'hopelessness' in the country

The respected Social Weather Stations (SWS) has taken issue with the results of a survey recently conducted by Pulse Asia, Inc. which reportedly showed that 31 percent of the respondents in the ABC class was hopeless and that they would migrate to another country if given the chance.

In a letter to Malacañang, Mahar Mangahas, SWS president, said that the question answerable by "agree" or "disagree" is double-barreled and tends to cause ambiguity in interpretation.

The question used by Pulse Asia in its survey was: "There is no hope for this country. If possible, I would migrate to another country."

The Pulse Asia survey, conducted in March and April, also found that one out of five Filipinos, or 19 percent, wanted to leave the country.

According to Mangahas, one cannot tell if an "agree" answer means that the respondent feels there is no hope for the country (whether or not it is cause to migrate), or if it means that the respondent would want to migrate to another country for any other reason.

Mangahas said that 11 survey trials of this item, designed by a former consultant of the SWS, showed little variation in results over time.

Using the same question, the SWS survey conducted in March 2002 showed that 16 percent of the respondents agree, meaning having a feeling of "hopelessness," which is identical with the 16 percent that agreed in the question in a survey conducted in July 1993, the second year of the Ramos administration.

Significantly, the percentage of those who had the feeling of "hopelessness" in this country had declined in March 2002 (16 percent) from the 26 percent in July 2001.

Because of the tendency of respondents to interpret the question in different manners, the SWS had discontinued to use the question-design, Mangahas said.

BSP notes steady 6.9% growth in domestic liquidity

The country's domestic liquidity has grown steadily by 6.9 percent year-on-year to reach P1.57 trillion as of end-May 2002, a slight improvement from the 6.6-percent growth as of end-April 2002.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said the steady growth in domestic liquidity could be attributed partly to the increase in net foreign assets (NFA) of the monetary system, arising from the decline in foreign exchange liabilities of financial institutions — partly due to the appreciation of the peso against the US dollar.

The BSP said the preference of banks for peso deposits to foreign currency deposits helped reduce the foreign currency liabilities of the monetary system.

The steady growth in May was also supported by significant increases in public sector credits that offset the decline in private sector lending.

The BSP said public sector credits grew by 2.8 percent during the same period while credits to the private sector as of end-May 2002 dropped by 3.7 percent from the level a year ago.

Commercial bank (KB) loans, in particular, registered an annual decline of 1.8 percent to reach P1.41 trillion in May 2002, an improvement from the 2.2 percent year-on-year decline in the previous month.

The bulk of KBs' outstanding loans continued to flow to the productive sectors of the economy: manufacturing; financial institutions; real estate and business services; and wholesale and retail trade, which comprise a combined share of nearly two-thirds of total KB loans.

The decline in private sector credits and KB loans, in particular, could be traced mainly to the relatively low demand for bank credit by firms despite recent signs of improvement in economic activity due to the presence of spare capacity in the manufacturing sector.

The average capacity utilization in April 2002 stood at 75.3 percent, slightly lower than the March 2002 level of 75.9 percent.

Further, banks' lending activity has been constrained by the need for banks to contain any possible build-up in their non-performing loans (NPLs), which stood at 18.4 percent in May 2002, up from 18.2 percent in April 2002.

Domestic liquidity growth, however, is expected to gain some strength in the months ahead given signs of improved economic activity, which would enhance greater demand for liquidity.

Among others, the volume of production and value of production index of manufacturing rose by 17.0 percent and 14.9 percent, respectively, a welcome reversal from the annual declines registered in March 2002.

Merchandise exports registered a 2.7-percent cumulative increase in May 2002, up from the 0.4 percent year-on-year cumulative increase in the previous month.

Meanwhile, demand for electricity has been on the uptrend since April 2002. Meralco's energy sales rose annually by 4.0 percent in May 2002 from 2.9 percent year-on-year increase in the previous month.

Going forward, the BSP said it would remain watchful of the evolving economic and financial developments to ensure that an appropriate level of domestic liquidity is made available while containing any possible build-up in price pressures.

This is in line with the objective of maintaining price stability consistent with the economy's growth objectives.

Last Monday, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo cited gains in the economy.

In her second State of the Nation Address, the President said “the basic macro signs indicate that things are under control. Inflation is at a low, driven down by stable food prices and now by declining power costs.”

“Interest rates are also at a low, and our peso is stable. From P56 to the dollar, it is now a little over P50,” she added.

The President also stressed that this had put the country back on the international map. “We are the third best performing economy in Asia and the best in Southeast Asia,” she said.

GMA acts to assure Tanjay residents of clean, safe, cheap water supply

TANJAY CITY, Negros Oriental – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to transfer the management of the water supply here to the city government unit in order to provide clean, safe and cheap water to the people.

In her speech during the Second Tanjay Cityhood Anniversary celebration at the Osmeña Park here, the President said DPWH Secretary Simeon Datumanong assured her of the immediate transfer of the Tanjay Water District (TWD) from the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) to the control of the city government.

Upon hearing the President’s directive, the huge crowd gathered here that included top provincial and local officials of Negros Oriental province gave the Chief Executive a thunderous applause.

Tanjay City Mayor Baltazar Salma earlier wrote the President requesting for her approval on the dissolution of TWD.

“Madam President, the dissolution of the TWD will result in clean, safe and cheap water supply for the people of Tanjay, your great gift ‘Para sa Pamilyang Pilipino, Malinis at Murang Tubig,’” Baltazar said in his letter.

The present sources of TWD are surface water from the Monagoto River and ground water through deepwell and springs.

According to Baltazar, the said sources show some failure when heavy rains pour in the vicinity of the Mangoto River and interruptions to the service are frequently experienced.

The Tanjay mayor also noted the presence of horseshoe worms, sediments and mud have become common occurrences after every service interruptions.

Aside from poor service and increasing water rates, Baltazar informed the President that TWD is also beset with P30 million in unpaid loans to LWUA.

Despite the increase in water rates, Mayor Baltazar argued that no major project was done to solve the present technical problem due to the need for a bigger fund estimated to be around P80 million to build a treatment plant.

Prior to her speech, the President rode a jeep for a 100-meter inaugural drive-thru of the Dumaguete North Road Project here in Tanjay.

The concreting of the road was started in year 2000 and was completed today in time for the Tanjay town fiesta.

Those who joined the President here were Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, Negros Oriental Go. George Arnaiz, and Rep. Emilio Macias (Second District – Negros Oriental).

Traders cite GMA’s all-out war against terrorists, criminals

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — Businessmen here today cited President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's tenacity in going after syndicated criminals and terrorists who have, for some time, eroded investor confidence in this bustling southern city.

Manuel Yaphucon, acting chairman of the General Santos City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said business and investment climate here had greatly improved since the neutralization of a terrorist band tagged as responsible in the burning of two malls and the bombing of another here early this year.

But Yaphucon sought continued vigilance by the police and military to sustain the healthy business climate.

Owners of the burned shopping malls earlier said they planned to put up bigger shopping centers in the city by December.

The Koronadal Commercial Corp., owners of KCC Mall, said they looked forward to building a four-story mall almost at the same site where the fire-razed mall once stood.

Yaphucon said many businessmen here hailed the recent arrest of two of those believed responsible in the bombing of the Fitmart Department Store last April 21.

At least 15 people were killed and over 60 hurt during the bombing.

The two suspects, identified as Abdulbasit Usman and Moamar Esmael, were presented Wednesday to President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang.

In her State of the Nation Address last Monday, the President announced the arrest of Usman, a bomb expert, by elements of the Central Mindanao Regional Police Office.

Months ago, other suspects behind the blasts here and in nearby Tacurong City were arrested and formally charged in court.

Yaphucon also cited the move of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Asian Institute of Management to qualify General Santos City as the most competitive mid-size city in the entire country.

The conferment, the DTI and AIM said, was based on a study involving 30 Philippine cities. The title showed that the city has all the positive factors investors look for in a place, City Mayor Pedro Acharon said.

"There's no stopping the city's journey to progress," Acharon said.

GenSan, Sarangani people await GMA on Friday

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is set to join the townspeople of Malungon in Sarangani Province celebrate their 33rd foundation anniversary tomorrow.

The President, expected to arrive here at 9 a.m., will first lead officials in burning some 30,000 fully-grown marijuana plants and seedlings worth about P60 million at the Philippine National Police Camp Fermin Lira in the city proper.

Following the burning, the President will proceed to Malungon, some 50 kilometers northeast from this city. It was in a part of Malungon, bordering Kiblawan town in Davao del Sur, where the bulk of the marijuana plants were uprooted and seized in a raid last Tuesday.

The people of Malungon, officials said, expect the President to extol the significance of the uprooting and seizure of the illegal plants in the government's no-nonsense campaign to rid the country of the social menace brought about by drug abuse and addiction.

In her State of the Nation Address last Monday, the President called on the people to support the all-out war against syndicated criminals, particularly those involved in drugs, smuggling and kidnappings.

Malungon Mayor Teody Padernilla cited the people's cooperation in dealing with the marijuana plantation owner and his cohorts, who have been identified by the National Bureau of Investigation raiding team.

The President is also expected to award and distribute a number of socio-economic programs and projects for the people of Malungon and the other six towns of Sarangani, as well as for those in the Central Mindanao region.

From Malungon, the President will return here to confer with local government officials and private sector leaders

Local officials and the people eagerly await the coming of the President who earlier visited the city on February 27, when she graced the 63rd foundation anniversary of settlements in the Cotabato area.

The landing of the first batch of 62 settlers on the shores of Sarangani Bay occurred in 1939.

The President is expected to spend the evening in nearby Alabel town, the provincial capital of Sarangani province.

The next morning, on Saturday, she will proceed to Marawi City to attend a traditional Islamic wedding of the children of two of the city's respected clans.

Laguna Lake fishers pledge support to GMA

The Alyansa ng mga Mamamayan at Magdaragat sa Lawa ng Laguna, Inc. has pledged its full and unequivocal support to the 18-month-old administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In a letter of support to the President, Alyansa national president Ka Pabling Marquez said that since the inception of the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) which was created under Republic Act 4850 coordination between the small fishermen and the LLDA has never been fully established.

Marquez pointed out that it is only under the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo that Executive Order No. 75 has been issued and signed on March 4, 2002.

Through Executive Order No. 75, Marquez said, the President appointed three representatives from the small fishermen of the Laguna Lake to sit in the Board of Directors of the LLDA as advisors.

Because of this, Marquez said "we are extending our profound thanks and in the name of the officers and men of Alyansa we pledge our full support to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo."

GMA inspects modern Negros Oriental Provincial Hospital

DUMAGUETE CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today inspected the Negros Oriental Provincial Hospital (NOPH), one of the most modern provincial hospitals in the country equipped with multimillion-peso state of the art medical equipment.

The President arrived here at the Dumaguete Airport at around 9:30 a.m. and then motored to the NOPH together with Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza, Negros

Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz, Rep. Emilio Macias II (Second District- Negros Oriental) and Dumaguete City Mayor Agustin Perdices.

While touring the hospital facilities, the President took time to exchange pleasantries with patients as well as with nurses, doctors and other staff of the NOPH. Some even posed for photographs with her.

Provincial Health Officer and NOPH chief Dr. Ely Villapando briefed the President during her visit tour to the different facilities of the hospital like the laboratory, the radiology section, dialysis center, women's health section and the emergency room.

Located in the heart of this city, the NOPH boasts of a facility that is not usually found in provincial hospitals – a Diagnostic Center equipped with P53-million modern medical equipment such as dialysis facility, ct scan, mammography, mobile x-ray and a clinical blood analyzer, automated microbial detection system, coulter hematology analyzer, refrigerated centrifuge separator, and many others.

The acquisition of the equipment and other improvements on the hospital were made through a P45-million loan as well as donations from private individuals and non-government organizations.

Thus, NGOs and the private sector have been tapped as members of the governing boards of the NOPH and its satellite hospitals.

NOPH has a capacity of 250 beds, 77 percent of which are service beds and 23 percent pay beds and medicare.

Its service area covers the entire province of Negros Oriental, some parts of Negros Occidental, southern Cebu, Siquijor and Northern Mindanao.

As a tertiary hospital, it undertakes a comprehensive health care system covering the curative, preventive, promotive and rehabilitative aspects of health care.

The said hospital came into being as a consequence of two factors– the empowering opportunity created by the Local Government Code of 1991 which turned over the pursuit of health care from the national to the local government units; and the determined effort made by the provincial government of Negros Oriental to undertake and prioritize health care as one of its major thrust.

Palace sees no hitch in Ople's confirmation at CA

Malacañang today said that it is optimistic that newly appointed Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople will not have any difficulty in his confirmation before the Commission on Appointments (CA).

Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that prior to the appointment of Ople to the foreign affairs portfolio, all the senators who are members of influential CA have expressed their approval to the senator's assumption of the top DFA post.

“You know all the senators who are members of CA have a very high regard for Senator Ople. So it will be fair to assume that he would not have any difficulty as far as his confirmation is concerned,” Bunye said during his regular press briefing at Malacañang this afternoon.

Bunye said that there is still no date as to when Ople would officially assume his new post but “it will be in the immediate future.” “So that (we) will give him enough leeway to wind down his affair at the Senate,” he added.

“Knowing Senator Ople, I'm sure he meant really to patch things up and to resolve the differences between all the parties and to keep the institutions of government moving forward,” Bunye said.

With regards to the Mutual Logistic Support Agreement (MLSA), Bunye said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is not in a hurry to tackle the matter because she has not even seen the first draft of the MLSA.

GMA leads distribution of CLOA's, livelihood assistance to Negros Oriental residents

TANJAY CITY, Negros Oriental – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the distribution of 30 certificates of land ownership awards (CLOAs) to 224 beneficiaries covering a total of 230 hectares in this city and in the municipalities of Mabinay, Pamplona and Bais.

In a ceremony marking Tanjay's second cityhood anniversary celebration held at the Osmeña Park here, the President also presided over the mass oath-taking of newly elected barangay officials and Sangguniang Kabataan members from the second congressional district of Negros Oriental.

The Chief Executive awarded three units of hand tractors worth P195,000 to the two congressional districts and the provincial government of Negros Oriental, and 600 seedlings of fruit trees in support of the agricultural modernization program in the province.

The President also handed over checks totaling more than P130,000 for various livelihood and micro-finance projects in Tanjay City and Sibulan municipality.

She likewise awarded more than P1.5 million worth of certificates of scholarship to 108 beneficiaries in Negros Oriental under the Private Education Student Financing Assistance (PESFA) of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Another 68 scholarship certificates worth about P1 million from the TESDA scholarship program were also turned over to the province of Negros Oriental under Gov. George Arnaiz.

The said scholarship program is being funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Prior to the awarding ceremony, the President was feted with a five-minute "Sinulog" presentation in celebration of Tanjay City's "fiesta."

From Tanjay, the President flew to the municipality of Guihulngan, some 200 kilometers away from this city, for the unveiling of the P31-million Bulado Roll-on/Roll-off Port Development Project.

The said project is part of the P43-million Bulado, Guihulngan-Tangil, Dumanjug, Cebu Port Development Project.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is here on an overnight visit and will fly tomorrow to General Santos City before proceeding to Sarangani and Marawi City on Saturday.

Gov't to respect civil liberties despite suspension of maximum tolerance policy

Malacañang today said that the government does not intend to curb civil liberties in the wake of the announcement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that henceforth law enforcement authorities would stop adopting the "maximum tolerance" policy.

In his regular press briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that the government would continue to respect freedom of speech and freedom of peaceful assembly as enshrined in the Constitution.

"But if the rallyists overstep this freedom, then the police will certainly have to come in," Bunye said.

Definitely, according to Bunye, the government would not tolerate police brutality. But he said in the violence that erupted at the rally at the Batasan Pambansa during the President's SONA, it was the demonstrators beating up the policemen, Bunye said.

He said if one would go by the number of people hurt during the demonstrations, there were more policemen hurt than demonstrators.

"So, the President will not tolerate this kind of situation. And since maximum tolerance is not a law, but just a policy, for the time being, this is being suspended," Bunye said.

In a luncheon with the members of Malacañang Press Corps Wednesday, the President said "maximum tolerance is not required by law but is just a policy."

In demonstrations in the future, if the rallyists violate the law, then charges would be filed against them, the President said.

RP would insist on having jurisdiction on Abu Sayyaf leaders — Palace

Malacañang today said that as a matter of procedure, the Philippine government would insist on having jurisdiction over the trial of Abu Sayyaf terrorists.

However, in his regular press briefing this afternoon, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that if the Abu Sayyaf terrorists are caught outside of our jurisdiction or within American territory, then it would be another matter.

"In which case, they (US) can try the Abu Sayyaf," Bunye said.

Bunye was reacting to reports that the US State Department has indicted five top leaders of the Abu Sayyaf for kidnapping spree that led to the death of two American nationals.

The US federal indictments identified the five as Khadaffy Abubakar Janjalani, Isnilon Toton Hapilon, Aldam Tilao, Jainal Antel Sali, and Hamsiraji Marusi Sali.

He said that if the Abu Sayyaf leaders would be caught in the Philippines, then "we will insist on trying them based on our laws."

Earlier, Justice Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee said that the US indictments are without prejudice to the primary jurisdiction of Philippine courts over the arrested Abu Sayyaf leaders.

Opposition's contra-SONA exaggerated — Palace

Malacañang today said that the counter State of the Nation Address (SONA) of the opposition delivered Wednesday by Sen. Edgardo Angara in the Senate is exaggerated.

In his regular press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said although the contra-SONA of the opposition is a traditional practice, Angara has exaggerated in his presentation of the present situation in the country.

"I don't think the situation is really that bad. There have certainly been improvements as far as the economy is concerned," Bunye said.

He said that the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has notched tangible achievements in education, health, price stability, and also in reducing the cost of electricity.

“All of these tend to improve the plight of the common people. So, I would like to believe that the opposition SONA is really exaggerated,” Bunye said.

Bunye also took exception to the allegations of the opposition camp that the government has been remiss in curbing rice smuggling.

He said that in her SONA, the President herself pointed out that more than P1.2 billion worth of smuggled rice has been confiscated, which is several times over the confiscated rice during the previous administration.

In her SONA, the President also ordered the Bureau of Customs not just to seize smuggled goods but to arrest big-time smugglers and charge them with plunder or economic sabotage, a non-bailable crime.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 25, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033155/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july25.htm>

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- **GMA to release P10 M for Bulado Port development**
- **GMA pushes for aggressive natural population plan**
- **GMA leads burning of marijuana plants, seedlings**
- **PNP Region 12 bags KFR gang leader in shootout**
- **GMA administers oath to newly-elected barangay, youth officials of Saranggani**
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GMA to release P10 M for Bulado Port development

GUIHULNGAN, Negros Oriental — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday (July 25) announced that she would infuse an additional P10 million for the further development of the Bulado Port here.

The President's announcement was made during the unveiling of the marker of the Bulado Roll-On/Roll-Off Port Development Project in this municipality.

She cited the importance of the port which could serve as the central prime mover to economic development in the area and in the entire province of Negros Oriental.

The President flew here by helicopter after attending the second cityhood anniversary celebration of Tanjay.

Upon her arrival here, she was met by Rep. Jacinto Paras (First District, Negros Oriental), Guihulngan Mayor Ceasar Macalua and other local officials.

The Bulado Port, which was used by the Americans as a temporary docking area during World War II, has a natural depth and is located in a cove.

It was also used by a mining company as port of call to transport phosphate to other destinations.

The Region VII Roll-On/Roll-Off Development Project covers the construction of roll-on/roll-off landing and reinforced concrete piers at the Guihulngan Port here in Negros Oriental and the Tangil Port in Cebu.

The component has been completed as of July 2002 while the Dumanjug component is still to be completed.

GMA pushes for aggressive natural population plan

DUMAGUETE CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night said that her administration is pushing an "aggressive natural population plan" in an effort to address the growing population in the country.

In an informal dinner meeting with local mediemen here, the President said that the target of her administration is to bring up the use of the natural method by 20 percent through an aggressive education plan for couples.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said that it is important to get in touch couples and educate them, "so that they may know essentially what might be good for them."

Dayrit said the natural method campaign would begin with the so-called "fertility awareness."

"It's getting couple to understand the whole concept when they are fertile," Dayrit said.

According to surveys, Dayrit pointed out, only 13 percent of couples at any one time know when they are fertile.

“We are trying to balance it by increasing the campaign for natural and push for aggressive fertility awareness education and make all the other methods available as well,” he said.

At present, Dayrit said the contraceptive prevalence rate is 49 percent, where 30 percent use modern artificial methods that include condoms, pills, IUDs and injectables.

On the other hand, 18 percent are reportedly using the traditional method, which Dayrit said, “are not reliable.”

“When you say reliable, you look at the failure rate, and the failure rate for pills is about one percent, for condom it is about five percent, and the natural method is between two and five percent,” he said.

The traditional method includes withdrawal and rhythm, which are not even recommended by the experts.

“If you look at it from the point of view of reliable methods, only 30 percent use the reliable, which they call the modern contraceptive method,” Dayrit said.

However, he stressed that if one will look at it from that perspective, 70 percent use unreliable methods or no methods at all.

“With that reasoning, you can think that the natural method could make inroads in this big 70 percent,” Dayrit explained.

GMA leads burning of marijuana plants, seedlings

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led officials in burning part of some 20,000 fully-grown marijuana plants and seedlings uprooted in a 60-hectare plantation bounding Sarangani Province, Davao del Sur and South Cotabato.

“Ituloy ang laban sa krimen at bawal na gamut (On with the war against criminality and illegal drugs),” the President said in a brief statement during the burning of four stacks of some 5,000 fully-grown marijuana plants immediately upon her arrival here this morning.

The President lauded National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) agents who early this week raided and destroyed the plantation located in the mountains of Malungon, Sarangani Province, Kiblawan, Davao del Sur, and parts of South Cotabato.

Among those who assisted the President in burning the illegal plants in the Philippine National Police (PNP) Camp Fermin Lira were Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu, Philippine Air Force Chief Lt. Gen. Benjamin Defensor, Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon Datumanong, Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza, South Cotabato Gov. Daisy Fuentes and General Santos City Mayor Pedro Acharon, Jr.

An earlier report said Philippine Air Force personnel and militiamen backed up the NBI agents during the raid.

No one was arrested in the raid, but NBI district head Boye Mama said the plantation owner and his cohorts have been identified.

Bilaan tribesmen in the area said people from the lowland have been exploiting the locals into planting marijuana that the former buy later.

Investigators have been looking into reports that marijuana from Mindanao is being smuggled into Indonesia and other neighboring countries, which use the plant for medicinal purposes.

The President arrived here at about 9:20 a.m. and went directly to the marijuana burning site near the airport.

PNP Region 12 bags KFR gang leader in shootout

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's tenacious campaign against kidnap and terror groups scored another victory with the neutralization of a notorious kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gang leader after a brief shootout in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat last Thursday (July 25) on the eve of the President's second visit here.

The President arrived at the General Santos Airport at about 9:00 this morning. Her first visit was last February 27 when she graced the city's foundation anniversary rites.

During her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday, the President stressed: "Criminal syndicates will be treated as what they are, direct threats to national security."

A report from the Philippine National Police Central Mindanao Regional Special Operations Group named the KFR gang leader as Tungko Abdulrahman, alias Commander Tropical. Abdulrahman was tagged as the leader of the Abu Sufia KFR group that abducted a Korean national and a local businessman in February this year.

Police Superintendent Willie Danggane, Region 12 police chief, said they have also taken in for questioning three people suspected to be Abdulrahman's men.

Danggane, also the director of the Sarangani Police Office, said they recovered from Abdulrahman a .45 caliber pistol, bullets and a cellular phone that listed phone numbers linking the Abu Sufia with the terrorist Abu Sayyaf.

Abdulrahman was said to have formed the Abu Sufia, a breakaway faction of the Pentagon KFR gang led by Tahir Alonto and Faisal Marohombsar. Danggane said Abdulrahman started the shootout. "This would have not happened to him had he given himself up peacefully."

The police were trying to effect an arrest warrant against Abdulrahman, who was facing formal charges in court for kidnapping and serious illegal detention in connection with the abduction of Korean national Jae Kwoon Yon and local hotelier Carlos Belonio.

Danggane also headed the police group that nabbed suspected bombers Abdulbassit Usman and Muammar Esmael who were presented to President Macapagal-Arroyo on Wednesday.

Superintendent Efren Alcuizar, head of the Region 12 police Anti-Narcotics Unit, said they traced Abdulrahman's whereabouts following a tip-off.

Abdulrahman was also involved in supplying drugs to dealers here and in Sultan Kudarat.

Alcuizar said his group and that of Danggane's trailed Abdulrahman to Isulan.

GMA administers oath to newly-elected barangay, youth officials of Saranggani

MALUNGON, Sarangani Province — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today swore into office some 500 newly-elected barangay and Sangguniang Kabataang officials in simple mass oath-taking rites held at the Malungon Gymnasium.

The President exhorted the barangay and village youth officials to give their share in maintaining law and order in their respective areas.

She earlier made this call during her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday.

The President sought full civilian support to the government's all-out war against criminality and terrorism, which, she said, is needed to rid the country of poverty within the decade.

"I ask the newly-elected barangay captains to take an active role in this war, to be the frontliners in this fight in your communities," the President said.

The Philippine Information Agency (PIA) based in General Santos City said those who the President swore into office came from Sarangani's seven towns.

The PIA said barangay and youth officials from this town came in full force. The barangay captains from the other towns represented their respective organizations in the ceremonies.

The mass oath-taking was held before the President's speech during the program.

GMA won't extend Cimatú's term as AFP Chief of Staff

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she could not extend the tour of duty of Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatú "beyond the first extension because of military tradition."

In an interview following the burning of some 5,000 fully-grown marijuana plants at a grass clearing at the General Santos City Airport here, the President lauded Cimatú for his achievements.

She said Cimatú, on his second month in service as AFP Chief of Staff, ably "broke the back of the Abu Sayyaf," a notorious terrorist kidnap-for-ransom group in Mindanao.

That was the continuation of his work when he was still as a division commander, the President noted.

"Even if it is sad to say, I cannot extend him beyond the first extension because of military tradition," the President said.

But she said Cimatú's work as AFP Chief of Staff had been "very, very fruitful and memorable and historic."

The President even compared Cimatú with Pope John XXIII, who became the successor to St. Peter's throne for only five years, was able to bring about the ecumenical movement in the Church.

GMA exhorts people of Malungon to keep up war against terrorism, criminality, poverty

MALUNGON, Sarangani Province — President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo today graced the 33rd foundation day anniversary celebrations in Malungon town, Sarangani Province where she sounded out anew her administration's call for a more vigorous campaign against terrorism, criminality and poverty.

In a speech delivered in fluent Cebuano at the Malungon gymnasium, the President cited the need to attain peace in the country as a means to achieve growth and progress.

But she said peace should be obtained through means that are constitutional, within territorial integrity and sovereignty and with due respect to the country's multi-ethnic characteristic.

She said that the future of “our strong Republic” depended so much on peace and stability in the homeland.

Echoing what she said in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday, she said “let us build a strong Republic.”

In her SONA, the President stressed that “at stake in this war (against terrorism, criminality and poverty) is the very life of society, the very possibility of basic rights and liberties, which have been under attack for too long.”

“The right to work in peace is as basic as the right to life and liberty, and when both are in danger their preservation by all lawful means becomes not just a higher right but an overriding duty. And that duty I will discharge,” she added.

The President also urged the officials and people of Malungon to keep up their spirit of cooperation and support to government efforts against criminal and terrorist elements.

The same exhortation was made before more than 500 newly-elected barangay officials in Sarangani Province who earlier took their oaths of office before the President.

The Chief Executive likewise called for measures to eliminate the threat of drug abuse and addiction in Malungon and other parts of Southern Philippines.

She cited the uprooting and seizure by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation, elements of the Philippine Air Force and militiamen of some 20,000 fully-grown marijuana plants being cultivated by unscrupulous persons in a 60-hectare plantation along the boundaries of Sarangani Province, Davao del Sur and South Cotabato.

The President said Malungon should be considered as a vital part of the Davao-General Santos growth corridor, having a big agricultural land area and a big population with an 84.4 percent literacy rate.

With its agriculture-based economy, Malungon, created by virtue of Republic Act 5522, also boasts of an 88.03 percent employment rate.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 26, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033210/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july26.htm>

The President's Day: July 27, 2002

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- **Good governance is most important factor in eradicating poverty — GMA**
- **Gov't gaining headway in war against terrorism — Palace**
- **Fight against drug trade is stepped up — Palace**
- **Gov't can't afford to be wishy-washy in building a strong Republic — GMA**
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- **GMA stresses 3 components of her administration's quest for peace in Mindanao**
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Good governance is most important factor in eradicating poverty — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said that good governance is the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development in the country

In her speech at the recent launching in Malacañang of the 2002 Human Development Report (HDR) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the President said she also agreed with UN Secretary General Koffi Anan that good governance rests on three pillars: a sound moral foundation to guide the leadership at all levels, a philosophy of transparency in all government actions, and an ethics of effective implementation throughout the bureaucracy.

The President pointed out that the third pillar “is one of the essential features of strong Republic” that she enunciated in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) before the joint session of Congress last July 22.

The strong Republic “must have effective institutions to protect the weak,” the President said in her SONA.

She said that amid globalization and the information revolution, people have kept on asking why poverty and inequality continue to prevail in developing countries like the Philippines.

The President said that advocates of the free market should put in place innovative and democratic political institutions “to allay apprehensions that globalization sets back social progress and deepens human misery.”

She stressed that institutions for governance should fight illiteracy, disease, hunger and injustice.

In her speech, the Chief Executive also commended the HDR for coming up with an updated scorecard on the progress of countries in meeting the millennium development goals of poverty reduction.

“It is a good way of keeping track of our shared obligations, not only as governments but as nations,” she declared.

She told UNDP officials and other development advocates that the Philippines is on track with its millennium development goals.

“Based on the established trend, we would be able to meet by 2015 the goals of, among others, cutting into half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, achieve universal primary education, achieve gender equality in primary schools and reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds,” she said.

The President also vowed to work with her Cabinet to develop policies and programs that would enable the Philippines to catch up with the goals of reducing the number of people suffering from hunger.

The President said her administration's national ambition is to win the battle against poverty with the decade, "even earlier than the projection of the HDR in 2015."

She also thanked the HDR for "providing us with the meaningful objectives that together could spell victory against poverty."

The President called on the development assistance community not only to invest in the growth of the markets but also in the growth of democracy.

"At the same time, our common commitment to deepen democracy at the national levels should be mirrored in the practices of governance at the global level," she said.

She added that the Doha Round under the World Trade Organization must respond to the clamor of developing member countries for expanded market access stressing that this would empower developing countries to build strong Republics.

The President urged the leaders of the developed world and the various agencies responsible for promoting international peace, freedom and prosperity to be exemplars and leaders.

"We must all move forward and seek to help one another, build our strong Republics in our own nations so that we can strengthen the weak among us and make them all equally strong. Hopefully before 2015," she said.

Gov't gaining headway in war against terrorism — Palace

Malacañang today said that the war against terrorism and criminality that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had pledged to wage in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) is gaining headway.

Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that recent apprehensions made through the combined efforts of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have proved that the President's vow to have "a direct hand in the war against the enemies of the state" is bearing fruit.

"I am determined to build a strong Republic by breaking the back of terrorism and criminality," the President said in her SONA.

For example, Bunye said, on Thursday, or on the eve of the visit of the President to General Santos City, a notorious kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gang leader in Mindanao was killed after a brief shootout in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat.

Bunye said that the PNP Central Mindanao Regional Special Operations Group has identified the KFR gang leader as Tungko Abdulrahman, alias Commander Tropical.

Abdulrahman was tagged as the leader of the Abu Sufia KFR group that abducted a Korean national and a local businessman in February this year, Bunye said.

According to Police Superintendent Willie Dangane, Region 12 police chief, they have also taken in for questioning three people suspected to be Abdulrahman's men.

Bunye said Abu Sufia KFR is a breakaway faction of the Pentagon KFR gang led by Tahir Alonto and Faisal Marohombsar.

Abdulrahman, Bunye said, was facing formal charges in court for kidnapping and serious illegal detention in connection with the abduction of Korean national Jae Kwoon Yon and local hotelier Carlos Belonio.

Danggane also headed the police group that nabbed suspected General Santos City bombers Abdulbassit Usman and Muammar Esmael who were presented to the President in Malacañang last Wednesday.

The two suspects were brought to Malacañang by AFP Chief Gen. Roy Cimatu and PNP chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane.

Bunye said that because of these recent arrests of Mindanao terrorists, businessmen and local officials of General Santos City have lauded the President for her tenacity in going after syndicated criminals and terrorists who have, for some time, eroded investor confidence in the bustling southern city.

Manuel Yaphucon, acting chairman of the General Santos City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said business and investment climate in General Santos City had greatly improved since the neutralization of a terrorist band tagged as responsible in the burning of two malls and the bombing of another in the city early this year.

Yaphucon said many businessmen in General Santos City hailed the arrest of two of those believed responsible in the bombing of the Fitmart Department Store last April 21. At least 15 people were killed and over 60 hurt during the bombing.

Bunye said that earlier, police authorities have also arrested other suspects behind the blasts in Cotabato City and in nearby Tacurong City and they have already been formally charged in court.

Fight against drug trade is stepped up — Palace

After President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has declared that the drug menace is no longer just a police matter but a national security problem, government law enforcement authorities, including those from the military, have stepped up their campaign against drug trafficking and manufacturing throughout the county, Malacañang said today.

In her second State of the National Address (SONA), the President said that henceforth, drug lords will be treated as enemies of the state.

“In this war with the drug trade, there will be no compromise and no quarter, not for fear or favor,” the President stressed.

Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that to show that she meant business, the President herself last Friday led officials in burning part of some 20,000 fully-grown marijuana plants and seedlings uprooted in a 60-hectare plantation bounding Sarangani Province, Davao del Sur and South Cotabato.

“*Ituloy ang laban sa krimen at bawal na gamut* (On with the war against criminality and illegal drugs),” the President said in a brief statement during the burning of four stacks of some 5,000 fully-grown marijuana plants immediately upon her arrival at General Santos City airport Friday morning.

Bunye said that the confiscation and the burning of marijuana leaves were the result of joint efforts of police and military authorities who raided and destroyed the plantation located in the mountains of Malungon, Sarangani Province, Kiblawan, Davao del Sur, and parts of South Cotabato.

In fact, Bunye said, an earlier report has said that Philippine Air Force personnel and militiamen backed up the NBI agents who have participated in the raid.

No one has yet been arrested in the raid, but the National Bureau of Investigation, the lead agency, has identified the plantation owner and his cohorts, Bunye said.

On Wednesday, or just two days after her SONA, the President was presented with three suspected drug peddlers who were apprehended with some P1.7 million worth of cocaine and methamphetamine hydrochloride or “shabu” during a joint operation made by the police and the military in Barangay Bantilan, Infanta, Quezon.

In a brief ceremony at the parade ground of Camp Crame, PNP chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. presented to the President the three suspects identified as Radil Ramos, Belen Ortaliza and retired Philippine Army Staff Sergeant Mariano Ortaliza.

Just two days before her SONA, on July 20, the President also personally inspected the shabu worth about P118 million during a raid conducted by the police in a drug laboratory in Quezon City.

Last October 13, Quezon province police operatives have also seized 500 kilos of shabu, which the President described in her SONA as the “biggest drug haul in history.”

Bunye said that joint operations by the PNP and the military against drug traffickers are in compliance with the President’s directive not to allow any safe haven to kidnappers, drug traffickers and terrorists.

In her SONA, the Chief Executive has called on both the police and soldiers to work together to stamp out all criminals who undermine the strong Republic that her administration is building.

Gov’t can’t afford to be wishy-washy in building a strong Republic — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said that her administration cannot afford to go “wishy-washy” but will do whatever is right for the good of the country in line with her policy of building a strong Republic as she vowed in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday.

The President stressed this point during an informal dinner with Region VII-based mediemen in Dumaguete City on Thursday (July 25).

“Nobody will ever be completely happy with whatever I do. I just have to do what I think is right for our country,” the President said.

In introducing reforms under a strong Republic, the President noted the need to file charges against any erring member of the judiciary that include government prosecutors.

She said building a strong republic includes strengthening of the institutions and how to make the government not captive to vested interests and pressure groups.

“Why do I need a strong Republic? Because you can have beautiful programs to create jobs. But you can’t totally succeed unless you have strong institutions and unless you have a government that does not cower under the pressure of pressure groups,” the President told reporters.

In her SONA, the President said for a country to be as good as it can get, many of the right decisions are tough decisions.

“I have made some of the toughest and I will make even more tough decisions in the years to come because the easy way out may postpone the pain but only prolong the problem,” the President said in her SONA.

A Republic, according to her, “is like as shield that needs a strong arm to hold it up” and a “roof and walls that need to be constructed.”

“A Republic is an edifice towards the building of which each must give the finest stone within their ability to shape. In the end, this stone is the only thing by which one will be remembered,” the President said.

U.S. to keep preferential treatment of RP tuna, says GMA

MARAWI CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the intense campaign undertaken by her administration to protect the country’s tuna industry and keep its preferential treatment in the United States market has paid off.

In her remarks at the 3rd National Conference of the Ulama League of the Philippines held at Barangay Matampay here, the President said that she was informed this morning by Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo that the US Congress did not pass a bill that would allow duty-free entry of tuna from the countries that constitute the Andes mountain ranges in Latin America.

“Our fears that we will lose our preferential treatment for tuna in the US market has been put to rest,” the President said.

According to the President, it was important for her administration to keep the preferential treatment of the tuna exports to the US since the industry is the lifeblood of Muslims, Christian and Lumads in Mindanao.

The President said that she has written directly to US President George W. Bush to help in maintaining the preferential treatment for Philippine tuna in the American market.

She said she was glad to learn that instead of removing this advantage through the passage of a legislation that would allow the duty-free entry of tuna from South America, the US government has even increased its financial assistance to the Philippines by an additional \$70 million.

The President said the bulk of this new American financial package will go to Mindanao.

It can be recalled that in late May this year, the President expressed her appreciation to American Senators Ted Stevens and Daniel Inouye for protecting the Philippine share of the canned tuna market in the United States.

The senators, during a courtesy call in Malacañang, assured the President that they would exert efforts in convincing members of both houses of the US Congress to maintain the present duties on the South American Andean tuna.

Several bills seeking to make Andean tuna duty free were pending in the US Congress.

If these bills will be passed in the US Congress, these will be very prejudicial to our canned tuna from Mindanao, the President then said.

In a letter to the US Congress, the two senators said one of their major concerns is the Philippines, particularly Mindanao “where the notorious Abu Sayyaf is kidnapping innocent people, seeking ransom and wreaking havoc through bombings and murders.”

Mindanao’s major employer is the canned tuna industry, the two senators added.

“The Andean trade preference expansion, which will be before us in a few days in its current form, will do extreme harm to the tuna industry in Mindanao,” the senators’ letter said.

The two US senators said the proposed duty-free treatment of canned tuna from the Andean region would put the canneries in Mindanao out of business.

“If the major employer in the area is not able to maintain economic stability which has tenuously existed for several years and declares bankruptcy, most experts predict that the chaos in Mindanao will become monumental,” Senators Stevens and Inouye said.

GMA stresses 3 components of her administration’s quest for peace in Mindanao

MARAWI CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today emphasized the three main components of her administration’s quest for peace in Mindanao: one, that peace and development should go hand in hand; two, that peace should be pursued with due consideration to constitutionality, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity; and three, that Filipinos should recognize that we have a multi-ethnic society.

In her speech before the 3rd National Congress of the Ulamas League of the Philippines here, the President noted that peace could not be sustained without development while development without peace will not flourish.

The President said “there is no sense to buy peace by dividing the country’s property and territory.”

According to the President, Filipinos should realize that Philippine society is a multi-ethnic one which should be founded on social justice for all.

The President said Filipinos respond to many names such as Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Ilocano, Cebuano, Tagalog, and mestizo. “This is a wondrous testimony to our rich and varied heritage as a nation,” she said.

The President said that while she seeks peace, she would like to emphasize that there is no room for terrorism and inhuman brutality.

“We must condemn and address decisively these two acts,” the President said as she noted the relevance of the conference theme which was “Islam: Its Contribution to Peace in the Philippines.”

The President said there is no better time than now to emphasize that Islam, like the other great religions of the world, is founded on peace. “Islam is a religion of peace and forgiveness,” the President said.

As a child, the President said, she was exposed to various races and religious practices, adding that she has Muslim lineage, as well as Cebuano, Ilocano and Iliganon.

“My impressions at that early age shape my attitudes as President now which are based on understanding, tolerance, and strong faith in the goodness of the Almighty. This is the same attitude from which my presidency has pursued its policy of peace,” the President said.

Gov’t has fully implemented peace pact with MNLF — GMA

MARAWI CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the government has fully implemented the provisions of the peace agreement that it signed in 1996 with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

In her speech at the 3rd National Conference of the Ulamas League of the Philippines, the President noted that Republic Act 9054 has enabled the conduct of the plebiscite that defined the areas that would comprise the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Five provinces: Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Tawi-tawi, Sulu and Basilan, and the Islamic city of Marawi now constitute the ARMM as a result of that plebiscite held in November last year, the President said.

Also elected during that plebiscite was ARMM Governor Parouk Hussin and Vice Governor Mahid Mutilan.

“The 1996 peace agreement is being fully implemented, funds are being spent for development and not dissipated in curious lifestyles,” the President said.

The President also noted that the MNLF forces are now almost completely integrated into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

The last batch of 500 MNLF forces for integration in the AFP, and 250 for integration into the PNP are now undergoing processing and training, she related.

The ARMM now has its regional security force of almost 1,500 integrees to keep the peace in the autonomous region.

The President said she issued specific instructions that all development rehabilitation efforts in conflict-affected areas at the ARMM will be spearheaded by or synchronized with the ARMM government.

Meanwhile, efforts in the non-ARMM areas affected by the conflict will be synchronized by the Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA) in tandem with concerned national agencies and local government units (LGUs).

“With peace now prevailing in Central Mindanao, our projects here can resume at a faster pace,” the President said.

Last Friday, the President ceremoniously turned on the main switch of a house in Barangay Barimbingan, signifying the electrification of 21 barangays and eight municipalities around Lake Lanao.

“They have been waiting for this since the time of Adam and Eve,” the President said, referring the long-delayed electrification of the barangays and towns.

She also said her administration acknowledges the contributions of Muslim brothers, putting their talents to good use, citing as example Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon Datumanong.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 27, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033222/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july27.htm>

The President's Day: July 28, 2002

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- **GMA: Gov't hunting down Pentagon, Abu Sayyaf members because they are terrorists, criminals**
- **GMA orders special prosecutor to handle atrocities, massacre cases against Abu Sayyaf**
- **GMA votes in Lubao barangay elections**
- **GMA to ask Powell for more humane, dignified treatment of deportees**

GMA: Gov't hunting down Pentagon, Abu Sayyaf members because they are terrorists, criminals

MARAWI CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday stressed that the government is hunting down members of the Pentagon Gang and the Abu Sayyaf not because they are Muslims but because they are terrorists and criminals.

At the same, the President called on the Ulama or Muslim scholars and professionals to take an active part in the war against criminality and poverty in Mindanao.

In her speech before the Third National Conference of the Ulama Leagues of the Philippines here, the President said the Pentagon Gang and the Abu Sayyaf are two groups that are masquerading as champions of Islam.

“They are not champions of Islam. They are traitors to the tenets of Islam which is a religion of peace and forgiveness,” she said.

The President stressed that the administration is not waging a religious war but would want to promote religious understanding.

“Criminals are criminals whether they are Muslims, Christians or pagans,” the President said.

In her call on the Ulama to participate in keeping the peace and order in Mindanao, the President said the Ulama could take part in the war against criminality.

The President noted that the Ulama are also the key to solving poverty and the low development index in Muslim areas.

“Let's develop a culture of peace rather war, unite rather than divide, stay united for peace and development in the attainment of a strong Republic,” she said.

The President earlier attended the traditional Maranao wedding of Dr, Camid Jun Dumarpa, son of Congresswoman Faysah Maniri-Racman Dumarpa, to Fayda “Fay” Gandamra, daughter of Department of Transportation and Communication Secretary Salikh Dumarpa of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

In short remarks after the wedding, the President said the wedding marks anew the partnership of the national government and the ARMM government.

She said: “Hindi lamang sila ang kinakasal. Si Congresswoman Dumarpa ay kasama sa national government dahil congresswoman. Si Secretary Gandamra ay kasama ng Autonomous Region dahil DOTC Secretary ng autonomous region. Kaya itong araw na ito kinakasal muli yung national government at autonomous region ng Muslim Mindanao. Alam ko na si congresswoman kasama ang ibang congressman na narito ay susuporta dahil silang lahat ay ninong at ninang sa kasal na ito. Sila ay susuporta na maging matatag nitong pagkagabay sa trabaho ng national government at Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Alam ko rin na yung ating mga officials of

ARMM ay tutulong din sa national government na magkaisa at ng ating patakaran para maging matatag ang ating Republika ng Pilipinas.”

GMA orders special prosecutor to handle atrocities, massacre cases against Abu Sayyaf

LUBAO, Pampanga — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the Department of Justice (DOJ) to designate a special prosecutor to handle the charges against the Abu Sayyaf members who were responsible for the series of atrocities as well as in the massacre of about 20 families in Basilan last September.

During a luncheon meeting with local mediemen at the Plate and Platters Restaurant in Guagua, Pampanga, the President phoned Justice Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee and ordered him to assign a special prosecutor to handle the said case.

“I want a specific prosecutor to make sure that it moves fast and be given preferential attention,” the President said.

In her telephone conversation with Teehankee, the President asked the justice undersecretary to appoint Prosecutor Leo Dacera, who used to head the Witness Protection Program of the DOJ, to handle the case.

According to the President, Dacera will be working with the prosecutors in Zamboanga where the cases against the Abu Sayyaf are filed.

At the same time, the President called on the other victims of the atrocities of the Abu Sayyaf bandits to come out and file the necessary charges against the terrorist group.

On the issue of the American soldier who allegedly shot and wounded a suspected Abu Sayyaf member, the President said she has already instructed Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes to look into the said allegation.

“To go to the process of looking into it, Angie Reyes will take care of that,” the President said even as she challenged certain groups to also look into the atrocities committed by the Abu Sayyaf bandits.

“Why are they not looking on the violations of the Abu Sayyaf? That’s why I’m bringing out these atrocities that they have been doing,” she said.

GMA votes in Lubao barangay elections

LUBAO, Pampanga — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cast her vote in the barangay elections here in her home province, 13 days after the electoral exercise here was deferred by the Commission on Elections (Comelec) due to the flooding caused by the series of storms that hit the country.

The President, who arrived here at around 11:15 a.m., went straight to Precinct 1A of the Lubao East Elementary School at Barangay San Nicolas where she cast her vote for the election of barangay chairman and kagawads here.

She was listed as No. 84 in the roster of voters in the said precinct with voter’s identification number 25046663.

From the voting precinct, the President, together with her party, motored to the Plate and Platters Restaurant along the San Fernando-Olongapo Road in the municipality of Guagua for lunch.

Before reaching the restaurant, the President made a brief stop at a fruit stand along the highway in Guagua where she bought a kilo of ‘lanzones’ to the surprise of the lady fruit vendor and a handful of buyers.

At the Plate and Platters, the President, together with First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, treated her party and several local mediamen with delicious “Kapampangan” foods such as fried “pugo,” crispy pork rind (chicharon), chicken stew, fried pork and sautéed banana heart.

Among those who joined the President for luncheon were Pampanga Gov. Manuel “Lito” Lapid, Lubao Mayor Dennis Pineda, Region IV Philippine National Police (PNP) Director Reynaldo Berroya, PNP Provincial Commander Sr. Supt. Arturo Cacdac, and Philippine Army 7th Infantry Brigade Commander Major Gen. Alberto Braganza.

GMA to ask Powell for more humane, dignified treatment of deportees

GUAGUA, Pampanga — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she will personally take up with United States Secretary of State Collin Powell the “humane and dignified treatment” of overstaying Filipinos when the latter visits the Philippines early next month.

“I don’t want a ConAir type of deportation. They should be brought a few at a time through a commercial flight, and not a chartered flight with people handcuffed. I don’t think that’s the right way to treat Filipinos. I’m gonna take that one up” the President told reporters during a luncheon at a local restaurant here.

She was referring to the deportation of about 60 Filipinos who were arrested in the United States and sent back to the Philippines in a chartered airline.

ConAir was in reference to a recent movie starring Nicolas Cage and John Cusack where a group of the most dangerous and notorious prisoners in the US are transferred to a super-maximum security prison aboard a jail-like chartered plane.

It was reported that the Filipino deportees were handcuffed during the flight from the United States to the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport in Clark, Pampanga.

The President said she has already informed the United States government that she wants to discuss that issue with Secretary Powell during their meeting.

“I have already sent word because they asked me what would I want to take up. I want to take that one up, I said,” the President stressed.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also said she will asked Powell to convey her thanks to US President George W. Bush for ensuring the access of Philippine canned tuna to the United States as well as for the additional US\$70 million additional support to the Philippines.

The President said she has written directly to Bush to help in maintaining the preferential treatment for Philippine tuna in the American market.

Yesterday, the President said the country’s fears that it will lose its preferential treatment for tuna in the US has been put to rest following the non-passage of a bill that would have allowed the duty-free entry of tuna from the Andes countries in Latin America.

She pointed out that it is important for her administration that the preferential treatment of the tuna exports to the US be maintained since the industry is the lifeblood of Muslims, Christians and Lumads in Mindanao.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

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- **GMA says strong republic to uphold people's constitutional rights**
- **GMA vows swift justice for Abu Sayyaf victims**
- **GMA announces pricing incentive to cut power rates for big power users**
- **S.P. reports \$1.891-B B.O.P. surplus from January-April**
- **24,000 jobs expected in call centers – DOLE**

No basing rights for U.S. in proposed MLSA, says Palace

Malacañang today assured the nation that the proposed Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) would not allow permanent basing rights to the United States in the Philippines as feared by some sectors.

In an interview, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the MLSA is basically a document that would spell out accounting procedures on all military equipment and facilities that the US would bring into the country during training exercises.

He said that without proper accounting procedure, which is required by the US government, the Americans would be forced to bring the equipment back to the US instead of donating them to the Philippine military.

According to Bunye, the MLSA is based on existing pacts, like the RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) and the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

Bunye also said that incoming Foreign Secretary Blas F. Ople and Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes would make a full briefing on the provisions of the MLSA at the Senate.

He also said that the MLSA is not a treaty but only an executive agreement and, therefore, is not subject to ratification by the Philippine Senate.

In a related issue, Bunye said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has already instructed Secretary Reyes to conduct an investigation on the alleged involvement of an American soldier in the shooting of an Abu Sayyaf member in Basilan.

But Bunye lamented that some groups are quick to point out so-called abuses committed by the military and the American forces participating in the Balikatan exercises in Basilan but slow in reacting to atrocities committed by the Abu Sayyaf bandits.

“Bakit kapag yong Abu Sayyaf ang nakakapugot ng ulo, nakapatay ng tao, ay hindi sila ganoon kasigasig (Why is it that when the Abu Sayyaf beheads or kills innocent civilians or soldiers, they are not that aggressive,” Bunye said.

Yesterday in Lubao, Pampanga, the President herself ordered the Department of Justice to immediately file criminal charges against the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan for committing “rampant, very, very clear human right violations.”

The President said that reports relayed to her by Brig. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, then commander of the Army's 103rd Brigade, said that in September last year, the Abu Sayyaf were engaged in beheading men, raping women in Balobo, Lamitan and Isabela in Basilan.

GMA says strong republic to uphold people's constitutional rights

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the government would uphold the constitutional rights of the people “with the full force of a strong Republic,” as she lashed at critics who claimed “we are engaged in human rights violations.”

The President made this promise as she received in Malacañang this morning victims of Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) atrocities committed last year.

The President received six of the victims, namely Glicería Ramirez, Lydia Ybañez, Hermie Revillas, Fernando Romeo, Ruel Abellon and Faizal Binasing.

The husbands of Ramirez and Ybañez were beheaded by the ASG.

The six are residents of Barangay Tairan, Lantawan and Barangay Balobo, Lamitan, all in Basilan province, the terrorist kidnap-for-ransom ASG separately raided in 2001.

She also promised swift justice for the ASG victims, as she said the government would continue its relentless fight against terrorists and criminals.

“One of the things we have had to undergo when we bear down strongly on terrorism and crime is the criticism, the allegation that we are engaged in human rights violations,” the President stressed.

But she told her critics: “We will not validate your propaganda by engaging in human rights violations.” She also noted that “many of you commit human rights violations yourselves.”

She warned that the government “shall not relent in the fight against terrorists and criminals hiding behind the veil of human rights advocacies or other seemingly deceptively legitimate political advocacies.”

The President asked her critics: “Why don’t you yourselves interview these victims of the Abu Sayyaf and see and listen for yourselves what it means to be a victim of the worst form of brutality and inhuman treatment?”

She recounted the ASG raid on the Golden Harvest farm in Barangay Tairan, Lantawan on June 11, 2001 when the ASG burned down 10 houses and the community chapel, abducted 15 men, beheaded two of their hostages and made the others slaves until the latter were rescued by the military in separate encounters from October to December that same year.

She also retold the story of 34 men, women and children the ASG, disguised as soldiers, took hostage from Sitio Baquinao, Barangay Balobo, Lamitan on August 2, 2001.

After forcing the victims to walk to neighboring Barangay Larbeco, the ASG beheaded nine of the 10 male hostages and shot and killed the last male hostage upon reaching Barangay Buhe Lange. Eleven of the hostages later escaped from their captors.

On August 5, 2001, the ASG released the remaining hostages, unable to get any ransom from the latter’s poor families and after feeling the pressure of a military pursuit, search and rescue operation, but not after raping some of the women hostages.

GMA vows swift justice for Abu Sayyaf victims

“We shall redeem your pain; we shall redeem your loss.”

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today echoed this vow before victims of Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) atrocities committed last year.

She also promised swift justice for the ASG victims, as she said the government would continue its relentless fight against terrorists and criminals.

The President received in Malacañang this morning six of the victims namely Gliceria Ramirez, Lydia Ybañez, Hermie Revillas, Fernando Romeo, Ruel Abellon and Faizal Binasing.

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The President lauded Presidential Security Group head Brig. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., who headed the Lamitan rescue operation. Esperon was then the brigade commander in Basilan.

"This senseless massacre of Balobo and Tairan residents is only two of the so many ruthless and barbaric acts of terrorism perpetrated by the ASG showing total disregard for the human rights of the victims and abuses on women's chastity, honor and dignity," she said.

"This is a war (against terrorism and criminality) we will wage in behalf and with the rage of all the victims – those whose businesses were ruined by extortion, those held down in poverty by fear, those whose lives were snuffed out by addiction, and those taken hostage and killed," she added.

She said she had asked Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Ernesto Carolina to bring to Malacañang those who suffered the Abu Sayyaf's brutality and inhuman treatment "so I could see them personally, empathize with them and help them."

She stressed that since she delivered her State of the Nation Address a week ago, she had been presenting criminals and felons caught in a renewed war against crime and terrorism. "But I think we must also take time to think about the victims in this war," she stressed.

Before the ASG victims, the President declared: "We shall not be deterred in the fight to the finish against the Abu Sayyaf."

She said the rights of the victims were of paramount importance, as she assigned more prosecutors to pursue the cases against captured ASG members and those who were still at-large.

Among those assigned were Fiscals Ricardo Cabaron and Peter Medalla and State Prosecutor Leo Dacera.

“I have asked the prosecutors in Region IX (Western Mindanao), as well as the prosecutors in the National Capital Region, to give me an update on the cases,” she said, pledging swift justice for the ASG victims.

GMA announces pricing incentive to cut power rates for big power users

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced a joint program agreed upon by the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) and the Manila Electric Company (MERALCO) to implement a pricing incentive that would reduce by about 25 percent the power rates for large industrial customers in the country.

In a meeting with various stakeholders in Malacañang, the President presented the program dubbed as Special Program to Enhance Electricity Demand (SPEED), a pricing incentive aimed at stimulating electricity demand and optimizing utilization of the existing power plants by offering discounts on the incremental consumption of power above the current base load (CBL).

With SPEED, the President said this will cut the price of electricity to P2.30 per kilowatt (kWh) from the present P3.10 for NAPOCOR industrial customers and P2.80 per kWh from the present P3.72 per kWh for MERALCO industrial customers.

“This administration is committed to reduce in the cost of doing business so that our industries can become competitive,” the President said.

She stressed that her administration wants to build a strong Republic by making a bureaucracy that is very strong and that can help in solving the country’s problem.

The adoption of SPEED is in response to the President’s directive in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 22 “to work together to give price incentives to large users so that excess power can be utilized, economic activity can be encouraged, and jobs can be created.”

The pricing program will have to be approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC).

In the same meeting, the President said a special task force will be created to implement the pricing incentive as well as to intensify its marketing.

The President noted that only one week ago, she asked NAPOCOR and MERALCO to get together to look for ways to give price incentives to the large users of electricity so that the latter can increase their demand and thus spur economic activity and generate employment.

Citing her pronouncement during her SONA, the President said her administration did not invent the Power Purchase Adjustment (PPA).

“We inherited this power problem. But as you can see, we don’t use our time pinning blame. We use our energy looking for solutions,” the President said.

On cross subsidies as in the case of the Visayas which is being subsidized by Luzon, the President saw the need to make the electricity system in that area more efficient so that they can reduce their cost before the removal can be implemented.

“What we are doing there is precisely the reform of the electric cooperatives which is our big, big source of the very high power rates in the Visayas,” she said.

On the other hand, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez said the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) hope to replicate and expand the coverage of the program to other industries nationwide by talking to other distribution utilities such as the Davao Light and Power Co. (DALIGHT).

Perez said SPEED will be implemented in phases. The first phase will allow some 219 large industrial customers with a minimum of 1,000 Kwh monthly demand and above to avail themselves of the program starting September.

The second phase, he added, will allow another 437 industrial customers with a minimum of 500 kWh monthly demand to be included by October this year.

He said MERALCO and NAPOCOR will give fixed discount of 92-centavos and 80-centavos per kwh respectively for a minimum period of one month or a maximum of 24 months.

For his part, DTI Secretary Manuel Roxas II said the implementation of the pricing incentives is “another milestone in the administration’s resolve to lower the cost of power.”

“We know for a fact that high power cost has been one of the issues raised by the private sector with regard to their high operating cost,” Roxas said in a statement released to the media.

B.S.P. reports \$1.891-B B.O.P. surplus from January-April

The country’s balance of payments (BOP) from January to April yielded a surplus of \$1.891 billion, a reversal from the \$755-million deficit recorded in the same period last year.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Rafael B. Buenaventura said the BOP surplus was brought about by the continued surplus in the current account and the strengthening of the capital and financial account.

Buenaventura said the current account surplus widened by 79.7 percent to \$2.484 billion from the level registered in the period under review. This was attributed to the higher net inflow in income account, reduced net outflow in the services account and sustained surplus in the goods account.

In the goods account, exports rebounded in April, after more than a year of continued decline, with a year-on-year growth of 23.2 percent. This brought total exports for the first four months of 2002 to \$10.577 billion or an increase of 0.6 percent compared to last year’s level.

Contributing to the turnaround was the robust growth in exports of machinery and transport equipment, processed food and beverages, and sugar and products, exports of which continued to surpass their performance last year.

More importantly, exports of electronics turned in an impressive year-on-year growth of 29.9 percent in April after fourteen consecutive months of contractions, bringing down the cumulative decline in electronics exports to 2.4 percent.

The stronger export performance reflected the increased demand from Asian markets particularly Taiwan, China, Korea, Malaysia and Hong Kong. Demand from these markets helped offset lower exports to the U.S. and Japan, the country’s traditional export destinations.

Meanwhile, imports of goods grew three months in a row beginning February after seven successive months of slump, climbing to a high of 18.8 percent in April. Imports for January to April reached \$9.890 billion, up 3.0 percent from the level a year ago.

Imports of capital goods and raw materials and intermediate goods, particularly materials and accessories for the manufacture of electrical equipment, expanded by 8.8 percent and 5.6 percent, respectively, following inventory build-up by producers and manufacturers in anticipation of greater production demand ahead.

Higher remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) continued to be the main factor behind the more than twofold increase in the income account to \$1.962 billion in January to April.

Remittances from OFWs, which comprised about 90 percent of gross income receipts, expanded by 45.3 percent to \$2.827 billion during the review period. The growth in remittances reflected in part the 4.4-percent increase in the number of newly deployed OFWs during the first four months.

The trade-in-services for the first four months of 2002 registered a net outflow of \$315 million, 47.5 percent lower than the net outflow recorded in the comparable period in 2001.

The narrowing of the deficit was traced mainly to lower net payment of transportation services and of miscellaneous business, professional and technical services that contracted by 39.2 percent and 65.0 percent, respectively, from the comparable levels last year.

Higher net receipts from travel services, which accelerated by 8.0 percent to \$325 million also contributed to bring down the net service outflow during the period in review.

Prospects for the country's tourism industry remained positive following the on-going promotion efforts of the government to attract tourists and the relatively improving peace and order situation in the South.

The net outflow of the capital and financial account for the period in review was down to only \$506 million from \$2.311 billion in January to April 2001.

This developed following higher net direct investments inflows and the reversal of the portfolio investment account to a net inflow from a net outflow last year.

From a net outflow of \$884 million in January to April 2001, portfolio investments for the first four months of 2002 reversed to a net inflow of \$1.691 billion due to increased non-residents' investments in resident-issued foreign denominated debt securities, particularly government-issued medium-term bonds.

Meanwhile, non-residents' investments in equity securities were highest in April 2002 at \$175 million, bringing the cumulative portfolio investments in equity securities to \$297 million.

This level was more than twice that posted last year, reflecting renewed investor confidence in the local equities market.

Meanwhile, net inflows of direct investments nearly doubled to \$1.504 billion compared to \$808 million posted in the comparable period last year.

Behind this was the remarkable increase in non-residents' investments in equity capital and higher intercompany loans extended by parent companies to their local subsidiaries.

Non-residents' direct equity investments expanded by almost six times to \$672 million during the first four months of 2002.

The bulk of the investments represented the \$557 million worth of shares in a local brewery company purchased by a Japanese firm in March 2002.

The rest were directed to other manufacturing companies, services industries, and financial institutions.

Further, intercompany loans to local subsidiaries by their parent companies rose by 26.5 percent to \$711 million.

The net outflow in the other investment account went up by 65.4 percent to \$3.696 billion in the first four months of 2002 due mainly to the higher net deposits abroad by resident banks' to cover their clients' import payments and to diversify their portfolio.

As of end-April 2002, the BSP's Gross International Reserves reached \$17.1 billion, up by 9.2 percent from the level in end-December 2001.

At this level, reserves were adequate to cover 5.5 months worth of imports of goods and payment of services and income.

Using other reserve coverage measures, the level of reserves was 3.2 times the level of the country's short-term external debt based on original maturity or alternatively, 1.5 times the amount of short-term external debt based on residual maturity.

24,000 jobs expected in call centers – DOLE

The country's growing call center industry is expected to generate some 24,000 jobs for skilled workers in the next two years, a report of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) showed.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said the TESDA report indicated that the training of more skilled workers in the government-supported power and telecommunications grid would ensure the industry's expansion in the Philippines.

Labor Undersecretary Manuel Imson, citing the TESDA's Labor Market Intelligence Report (LMIR), said the availability of highly-skilled Filipino workers fluent in English had continued boosting the country's bid to become the global "call center capital" and a major international e-services hub.

Earlier, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo stressed the country's vital role as a center of quality, world-class information and communications technology (ICT) services.

The President pointed to ICT as the "strategic tool that would propel the Philippines to its proper niche in the global village in the 21st century."

TESDA Director General Dante Liban earlier vowed to step up the agency's efforts in strengthening the country's human resource, especially in "priority" industries.

He said the TESDA "should now take a bigger leap" in ensuring workers' employability.

Released by the TESDA's Planning Office, the LMIR described the call center business as the country's "latest sunshine industry."

It noted the "vast growth potential and bright job prospects" in the field, as the Philippines has so far filled up only 10,000 "seats."

The TESDA said round-the-clock call center operations are handled by "seats" composed of two or three personnel – or customer service representatives – who manage telephone lines in work shifts.

"Customer services" handle client queries and complaints and provide solutions through telemarketing, computer product help desks, financial services, and assistance in transport and freight, insurance, hotels, and information technology.

Government experts have predicted that the country, with its English-speaking workforce and capacity to provide premium, multilingual, and multimedia services in wide-ranging ICT applications, could clinch the "call center capital of the world" status in this decade.

Citing Department of Trade and Industry projections, the LMIR also expected local call center revenues to increase from US\$173 million to US\$864 million in 2004, following the industry's growth by more than 200 percent from 2000 to 2001.

Efforts to push the industry and its employment opportunities, the LMIR added, were being fast-tracked, especially with the creation of an ICT corridor linking Metro Manila with the rest of the country.

There are 16 industry players comprising the Call Center Association of the Philippines, the LMIR said.

It specified that this year alone, at least four foreign call center companies have announced plans to establish offshore operations in the Philippines, which would generate some 2,000 jobs.

The giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company has also announced a \$5.5-million investment in a 500-seat venture with Parlance Systems, Inc. and in other industry agreements.

The Reese Brothers in the US also bared plans to invest in a call center project at the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, which would open an additional 2,000 jobs.

The LMIR, however, cautioned that the country must continue to improve its infrastructure and labor competencies to attract more call center and other ICT investments.

To ensure quality, the TESDA has developed call center competency standards in linkage with the Contact Federation Philippines.

The TESDA said these standards – covering customer service representatives (Level 1), telesales or telemarketing officers (Level 3), and team leaders (Level 4) — have been readied for industry validation.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 29, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033250/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july29.htm>

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- **GMA swears in Ople as Foreign Affairs Secretary**
- **Low income LGU's to benefit from studies worth P3-M**
- **533,318 OFW's deployed since January, says P.O.E.A.**
- **Group expresses continued support for GMA**
- **E-procurement system now implemented in all departments, Cabinet told**
- **Palace to propose P800.7-billion budget for FY 2003**

GMA swears in Ople as Foreign Affairs Secretary

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today swore into office former Senator Blas F. Ople as Secretary of Foreign Affairs in ceremonies at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall.

The Chief Executive, who assumed the position of Foreign Affairs Secretary in a concurrent capacity last July 16, relinquished her post following the oath-taking this morning of Ople, whom she appointed as Secretary of Foreign Affairs last July 23, 2002.

Ople, 75, replaced Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. who resigned earlier.

A native of Hagonoy, Bulacan, Ople was elected senator for a six-year term in 1992. He was re-elected in May 1998 for a second and final term.

Ople was chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations from 1992 until his appointment as DFA Secretary.

As chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Ople steered to approval some 37 international and bilateral treaties that have opened more links between the Philippines and the rest of the world particularly in trade, investments, employment, cultural exchanges, workers protection and the environment.

He successfully sponsored a resolution in 1999 on the ratification of the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement which is an instrument that strengthened Philippine-US security alliance.

Together with then-Senator Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Ople sponsored the ratification of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade Uruguay Round creating the World Trade Organization.

Ople was also author of one version of the Overseas Voting Bill, a provision he authored in the 1987 Constitution, and has introduced a bill reforming the Philippine Foreign Service and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Among the other many achievements of Ople during his stint as senator include the following: authored a bill updating the Philippine Immigration Act of 1940; strongly supported a new partnership with the United States based on sovereign equality and mutual respect; supported special efforts to link the Philippines to the economic dynamism of East Asia, especially the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

In September 1967, Ople was appointed Minister of Labor and Employment by the late President Ferdinand Marcos. He held the position from 1967-1971 and then from 1972 to early 1986.

Aside from Ople, President Macapagal-Arroyo also administered the oath of office to Silvestre Afable as Head of the Presidential Management Staff with a Cabinet rank; Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. as Officer-in-Charge-Chairman of the Dangerous Drugs Board; Miguel Coronel as executive director of the Dangerous

Drug Board; Anselmo Avenido, Jr, as Director General of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency; Efren Fernandez, as Deputy Director General for Operations of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency; and former Congressman Dante Liban as Director General of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA);

The President also swore in Police Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco and Police Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay who were promoted to three-star rank.

Low income LGU's to benefit from studies worth P3-M

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has completed 11 feasibility studies and capability building programs worth P3.07 million leading to the implementation of various livelihood and development projects for low-income local government units (LGUs).

The studies included the Pre-Feasibility Study (Pre-FS) on the ylang-ylang oil livelihood project in Anao, Tarlac; Pre-FS on the rehabilitation and improvement of water system and administration in Llanera, Nueva Ecija; capability building on project development for selected 4th to 6th class LGUs in Region VII;

Pre-FS on the Magdiwang mountaineering facilities project in Magdiwang, Romblon; FS on the Guian nature tourism destination in Guian, Samar; FS on jackfruit, banana, seaweed, lapu-lapu production in Region VIII; FS on the municipal waterworks improvement/expansion projects for six towns in Region X; and FS on the establishment of municipal grains center in Sta. Josefa, Agusan del Sur.

The completed studies were funded under the Project Development and Monitoring Fund (PDMF), the NEDA said in a report to Malacañang.

The PDMF has targeted 4th to 6th-class LGUs for project studies, master planning and capacity building programs for project development, monitoring and evaluation.

NEDA's regional offices under Deputy Director-General Augusto Santos administered the fund and would provide technical help to the LGUs.

Santos said the LGU of Anao, Tarlac saw the potential to develop an industry from ylang-ylang trees, which teem in the area. Some communities have been producing herbal oils and products out of it, but needed to boost their marketing and production capacities.

In Llanera, Nueva Ecija, the pre-feasibility study was conducted to explore ways to rehabilitate its water system, while the LGU of Magdiwang in Romblon made a survey to develop its mountaineering facilities.

The feasibility studies in Eastern Visayas were endorsed in 1999 by the Regional Development Council as part of its efforts to provide livelihood windows for 4th to 6th class municipalities in the region.

The FS on the Guian nature tourism destination was consistent with the region's objective to harness its potentials as an adventure destination of the world.

The project originally covered Sulangan alone, but was eventually expanded to include the entire town of Guian. Sulangan and its nearby islands in Guian, Eastern Samar have been declared a National Tourism Reserve and Protected Landscape/Seascape.

In Region X, four out of six municipalities in Bukidnon and Misamis Occidental have completed feasibility studies on the municipal waterworks improvement and expansion. These are in Pangantucan and Kadingilan in Bukidnon, and in Panaon and Sinacaban in Misamis Occidental.

Project funding came from the Financing from the Municipal Development Fund Office (MDFO). Two other towns – Dangcagan, Bukidnon and Medina, Misamis Oriental – were in the final stages of feasibility study completion.

The construction of the farm-level municipal grains center in Sta. Josefa, Agusan Sur was also underway, after a study proved the project viable. The Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional (AECI) has agreed to finance the construction and operations of the Grain Center.

Aside from Sta. Josefa, the project covered the nearby towns of Bunawan, Trento and Veruela.

Santos said the 11 studies were the first batch of projects completed under PDMF with 31 more scheduled to be finished this year.

“Our work does not end here. To be really useful, we have to make sure these projects are actually implemented. The next step now is to source out funds. Projects must now be linked up with existing fund facilities,” Santos said.

533,318 OFW’s deployed since January, says P.O.E.A.

More than half a million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) were deployed worldwide as of July 21, a report of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) said.

POEA Administrator Rosalinda Baldoz said the OFW deployment reached 2,640 daily from January 1 to July 21, exceeding by 4.1 percent the 2,536 OFWs deployed daily in the same period last year.

The POEA earlier reported that increases in deployments in most OFW destinations balanced the slight decline in Hong Kong, which remained the second top OFW destination.

POEA statistics as of May showed that the number of newly hired and rehired OFWs rose in Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and in major host countries in the Middle East.

Percentage-wise, deployment grew the highest in the following economies in the first five months of 2002 compared to last year’s figures: the United Kingdom, 48.6 percent to 7,461 from 5,021; Kuwait, 31.3 percent to 10,731 from 8,172; the United Arab Emirates, 16.8 percent to 22,187 from 18,989; Japan, 9.2 percent to 30,555 from 27,990; Singapore, 8.9 percent to 14,496 from 13,314; Taiwan, 3.9 percent to 20,815 from 20,027; and Saudi Arabia, 0.3 percent to 90,360 from 90,064.

OFW deployment in the first five months of 2002, however, declined in three other top destinations namely Brunei, by 8.4 percent to 5,774 from 6,306; Hong Kong, 6.5 percent to 54,071 from 57,826; and Italy, by 1.3 percent to 9,991 from 10,120.

Citing Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas figures, Baldoz said OFW remittances continued to push the economy, posting a 38.1-percent increase in the first quarter of 2002.

As of March 2002, remittances moved closer to the \$2-billion (P100- million) level, increasing to \$1.963 billion (P98 billion) from \$1.422 billion recorded in the same period in 2001.

Land-based OFW remittances rose by 39.7 percent to \$1.680 billion over last year’s \$1.203 billion, while those of seafarers, by 29.6 percent to \$283.7 million over \$218.9 million.

Group expresses continued support for GMA

One of the civil society groups that came out to call for the resignation of former President Joseph Estrada has declared continuing support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her efforts to bring stability and prosperity to the nation.

The Cagayanos Advocacy for Reforms and Empowerment Inc. (CARE), in a statement, said it reiterates support for the President “lest we be included as among those civil society groups who are planning to withdraw support from the administration just because of their misplaced and unreasonable complaints.”

CARE was formerly known as Cagayanos Action for the Resignation of Erap.

The statement noted that at the height of the protest actions against Estrada, CARE members risked lives fighting for this administration.

CARE members stressed that they are glad to have been part of the movement that put the President into power. “Now, we are back to our normal, simple private lives with no demands from the President, not asking for favors or concessions because we continue to help her move our country forward through these difficult times,” the statement said.

CARE noted that the Council of Philippine Affairs (COPA), Bayan and other groups are “just too demanding, selfish and *mayabang*.”

It said that for as long as the President continues to do what is right for the country then COPA and Bayan and those “noisy” civil society groups will just be a minority. “Their noise will not matter because there are more Filipinos who are tired of all the rattling and bickering,” the statement said.

“We just want to help the President and we pray that everybody would help in these times of crises...our hope for this government lies in our observation that the President is gaining more momentum in her work. She is very serious and dedicated to serve the Filipino people,” it added.

E-procurement system now implemented in all departments, Cabinet told

All departments and department level entities have implemented the government electronic procurement system, or e-procurement, in line with the directive of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to reduce red tape and eliminate graft and corruption in state offices.

In a report to the Cabinet meeting held in Malacañang this morning, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said 57 percent of government entities lower than departments, 91 percent of government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) and 72 percent of state universities and colleges have also adopted the e-procurement system.

The DBM said that it has also conducted a study, in collaboration with the Development Academy of the Philippines, on how to further streamline the delivery of six “critical” government services.

These include passport applications, issuance of business permits, retirement processing, veterans claims processing, application for licensure, examination and registration as professionals, and issuance of decrees of land registration.

According to the DBM, the study resulted in the reduction in the number of signatories in some transactions and the elimination of some unnecessary documentary requirements.

As part of its anti-graft campaign, the Department of Education (DepEd) said that it has implemented a “checkless payroll” for some 54,000 teaching and non-teaching employees.

Through this system, the DepEd said it was able to do away with the delays in paying the salaries of its personnel as well as illegal and unauthorized deductions.

The Department of Justice (DoJ) has amended the Rules of Court to further simplify and speed up the disposition of cases.

Under its anti-red tape and anti-graft program, the DoJ has also recommended to the Supreme Court that cases filed with Regional Trial Courts (RTCs) should be decided within one year and for the Bureau of Corrections to carry out the death penalty within six months from finality of high court decision.

At the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), a team has been constituted to institute reforms in labor adjudication processes of DOLE agencies with quasi-judicial and regulatory functions.

The Department of National Defense, on the other hand, reported to the Cabinet that it had reduced the processing of various DND clearances from 7-10 days to 5-7 days.

The DND also reported that the Philippine Veteran Affairs Office (PVAO) has eliminated its backlog of 43,540 claims for payment of pensions, of which 10,635 were approved and 32,905 were disapproved.

At the Department of Agriculture, a task force on smuggling was created to monitor all reports of smuggling of agriculture goods and commodities. It has also ordered the use of government ports for rice imports to ensure effective monitoring and control.

The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) has the following targets by June 2003:

- streamlining of simplified civil application systems in remaining 76 cities, 33 capital towns, four growth center municipalities and 1,278 other municipalities;
- installation of one-stop-shop processing centers in the remaining 48 cities, 27 capital towns, 23 growth center municipalities and 1,270 other municipalities; and
- establishment of customer complain desks in the remaining 69 cities, 27 capital towns, 24 growth center municipalities and 1,277 other municipalities.

Palace to propose P800.7-billion budget for FY 2003

Malacañang announced today that the national government will submit a budget proposal of P800.7 billion for fiscal year 2003, P20 billion more than the approved budget for FY 2002.

Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin said that the proposed 2003 General Appropriations Act will be submitted to the House of Representatives in the second week of August, at least one week before the deadline provided by the Constitution.

According to Boncodin, the budget proposal will be supported by revenues of P640.6 billion, of which P465.6 billion will come from the Bureau of Internal Revenue, P106.8 billion from the Bureau of Customs, and the balance from other agencies.

Boncodin said the budget deficit for 2003 is expected to be limited to 3.2 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), which is lower than the targeted level of 3.3 percent of the GDP this year.

Meanwhile, the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) has affirmed its commitment to the P130 billion deficit target (2.3 percent of GDP) this year. For FY 2003, the deficit-to-GDP ratio of 3.2 percent will mean a P138-billion deficit.

Boncodin said that next year's budget will support the call of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to build a strong Republic.

Hence, the budget allocation will conform with the priorities laid down in the President in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA), particularly in eliminating graft and corruption, ensuring peace and order and the provision of basic public services in the education, health and social sectors, Boncodin said.

"The budget will continue to focus on the President's priority program in agriculture and agrarian reform, tourism, poverty reduction and law enforcement," Boncodin said.

She said that the details of the budget proposal would be made available to media and other interested parties as soon as the budget documents are ready.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 30, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033302/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july30.htm>

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Gov't seeks to stay within P130-B budget deficit target

The government hopes to meet its targeted budget deficit of P130 billion for this year.

If the deficit goes beyond the target, it will be so small that it may as well go unnoticed.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said today the government remained committed to keep itself within this year's budget deficit ceiling.

"Gagawin namin ang nararapat para ma-attain 'yun (We will do what must be done to attain it)," she said in a radio interview this morning.

Boncodin said she was confident the state's revenue earning agencies like the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Bureau of Customs (BoC) would likewise meet their target collections.

She said that during Tuesday's Cabinet meeting, BIR and Customs officials reported strides in their collections.

"Noong June at saka July, inaasahan namin na iyong kanilang shortfall ay lumiliit na (We expect a significant decrease in their shortfall in the June and July collections)," she added.

Further, the government's expenditures have normalized, she said, stressing that there was a big chance of recovery before the end of the year.

Boncodin also disclosed that the budget deficit for the year 2003 was pegged at P138 billion, or only 2.5 percent higher than this year's level.

"Our budget is getting bigger. We shall be proposing to Congress a budget of P800.7 billion next year. But this would only be 2.5 percent higher than the 2002 budget," she said.

The proposed budget, she stressed, would be spent on a comprehensive program that would promote investments in a strong Republic, *"akmang-akma sa SONA (which is very relevant to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's second State of the Nation Address)."*

The fight against graft and corruption in the bureaucracy would not need a big amount of money since it is regulatory in nature. But stabilizing peace and instituting order – through the police, military and judiciary — to promote investments would need funds, she said.

“We have allocated funds to recruit an additional 5,000 policemen, jail guards and firemen in the effort to bring about peace and order nationwide,” she added.

Another focus of next year’s budget is agricultural modernization. Boncodin disclosed.

She noted that under the law, the budget for agricultural modernization should not go below P20 billion yearly. Allocated for this purpose was a budget of P18.7 billion while the Land Bank of the Philippines would put in some P5 billion for credit

The government is also projecting economic growth at 9 percent in 2003, she added.

The sale of government shares in the Malampaya oil fields would help offset the budget deficit, Boncodin said.

“We have not entered this possibility in the main estimate, as the sale is still in the works,” she said.

GMA leads ground-breaking rites for Honda transmission plant in Laguna

BIÑAN, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led government officials and Honda Motor Company executives in ground-breaking rites for the P1-billion state-of-the-art transmission plant of the Japanese firm which is expected to begin operations in October 2003.

The President, assisted by Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II and Honda Senior Managing Director Katsuro Suzuki and other local officials of Laguna, first lowered the time capsule and officially led the ground breaking to start off the construction of Honda’s new transmission plant in ceremonies held this morning at the Laguna Technopark here.

The plant is a fulfillment of Honda’s commitment to expand its operations in the Philippines which was committed by the company to President Macapagal-Arroyo during her visit to Japan in May this year.

Suzuki, who welcomed the President upon her arrival at the company transmission site, said today’s ground-breaking ceremony marks the second phase of the project which is to supply transmissions to Honda’s global network.

He said transmission units from the Laguna factory will be exported to Honda factories in North America, Europe and Asia.

“Honda is initially investing 2 billion Japanese Yen to produce some 140,000 transmission units a year, and generate over 200 new employment opportunities,” Suzuki said.

When fully operational, Suzuki stressed that the transmission plant will generate US\$65-million exports annually and additional jobs for highly skilled Filipino technicians.

The transmission project in Laguna, according to Suzuki, represents Honda’s commitment to “the long-term development of Philippine automotive industry.”

He pointed out that the Philippines under the stewardship of President Macapagal-Arroyo is an important part of his company’s “Made by Global Honda” Program “to optimize our global procurement and product supply by efficiently utilizing our factories around the world.”

Before the ground-breaking ceremony, the President was briefed by Honda Cars (Phil.) president Kenji Otaka on Honda Motors’ investments in the Philippines.

On the way to the ground-breaking area, the President inspected the various transmission units and other Honda products.

Ilocanos in U.S. voice support for GMA war on corruption, criminality, poverty

A large group of Ilocanos based in the different cities in the United States has expressed its support to the efforts of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to rid the country of graft and corruption, fight criminality and alleviate poverty.

This information was relayed by Rep. Roque Ablan, Jr. (First Dist.- Ilocos Norte) who just returned this week from a successful meeting with the leaders of the Ilocano National Association (INA) in the United States, which covers cities like Honolulu, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, San Francisco, San Diego, Washington, D.C., and New York.

According to Ablan, the INA, through its overall chairman Dr. Carlos Manlapaz, believes that Filipinos should unite to support the program of the President as stated in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 22.

“We now have a sincere leader to pursue solutions to our country’s reputation,” Manlapaz was quoted as saying.

The INA executive also expressed the association members’ appreciation to the inspiring SONA of the President, saying that the country might have had good presidents in the past “but she has excelled because of her political will which is the one that really counts.”

“Let’s not judge her now, judge her later and give her a chance to prove that she is right,” Manlapaz said.

In a statement, Ablan cited President Macapagal-Arroyo for being the first President among many nations in the world to exert efforts to fight crime and terrorism in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

During his trip to the United States, Ablan urged all Filipino expatriates there to get their act together and support the President.

GMA bares P205-M tax diversion scam, orders arrest, filing of raps against suspects

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced “a major breakthrough in our campaign against graft and corruption.”

The President made the announcement at the National Bureau of Investigation.

She added that the BIR, working closely with the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), had just uncovered a massive tax diversion scam reaching P205 million under which payments to the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) were diverted to private accounts.

This was uncovered in the course of the BIR’s investigation of corporations that seemed to have stopped filing taxes and LBP’s ongoing review of large deposits and withdrawals in compliance with Republic Act No. 9160, otherwise known as the Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001.

The corporations that the BIR investigated issued checks for payments to the bureau. As proof of tax payment, they presented receipts issued to them by the LBP. However, upon scrutiny by the BIR, the receipts were found to be falsified.

“I have directed Justice Secretary Hernando Perez to conduct a full-blown investigation of this scam, towards the early arrest of the suspects and the filing of plunder charges in court,” the President said.

She added that hold-departure orders shall be issued against the suspects as they are identified.

“The Republic will seek the maximum penalty against these economic saboteurs,” the President stressed, adding that “We will leave no stone unturned in this investigation.”

The President said LBP officials who did not report the huge transactions related to the scam will be investigated for violations of the Anti-Money Laundering Law.

She said that she had given instructions to LBP president Margarito Teves to undertake a thorough assessment to preclude a repetition of the scam and similar anomalies

The NBI reported that from January 2001 to June this year, about P205 million in check payments to the BIR were fraudulently diverted to four accounts held by fictitious persons at the LBP Binangonan Branch.

The President said that on her instructions, the NBI this morning filed charges for violations of the Anti-Money Laundering Law against Artemio San Juan, LBP branch manager in Binangonan.

“Mr. San Juan failed to disclose a report to top management and subsequently to the Anti-Money Laundering Council deposit transactions of these accounts whose amount exceeded P4 million per transaction or a series of transactions exceeding P4 million,” the President said.

She pointed out that under the Anti-Money Laundering Law, P4-million transactions have to be reported to the Anti-Money Laundering Council.

But in 17 instances, more than P4 million were deposited and San Juan did not report any of these, she said.

Last night, the NBI invited San Juan for questioning. And after investigation and gathering of evidence against him, he was placed under arrest.

The NBI today filed before the Chief State Prosecutors Office a 17-count violation of the Anti-Money Laundering Law against San Juan.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said San Juan will be held accountable for failure to report these big transactions, which is a violation of the Anti-Money Laundering Law as well as other unlawful acts that may be uncovered in the course of the investigation which is taking place.

The President said that further investigations will be conducted on the possibility of the existence of plunder or other violations by San Juan and other unknown personalities.

The President said that hold-departure orders will be issued against the suspects once they are identified.

At this juncture, the President introduced San Juan to the media.

“We will follow the paper trail from the BIR and the LBP to the last account in the hands of private individuals. No one will get away with stealing the money of the people. They will all face the harshest punishment under the law,” the President vowed.

“As I said in my State of the Nation Address (SONA), tax-evasion is a white-collar crime and the response is a white-collar response—systems improvement, audit, prosecution. But the punishment is blue collar, kalaboso (imprisonment),” the President reiterated.

The President stressed that “this will be an unrelenting effort of our strong Philippine Republic.”

She added that the tax collection system will be cleaned up as a primary institution of good governance.

“We will stamp out corruption and fraud in the bureaucracy. And we will call upon the business sector and the general public to support us in this campaign,” she said.

The President revealed that she would go to the BIR tomorrow because of another set of scam the bureau has also uncovered and that “we will be running after. And this is with respect to an under declaration of the Value-Added Tax (VAT) by at least 300 firms accounting for as much as P4 billion.”

“So you can see what we are doing. The tip of the iceberg is Mr. San Juan and the message we want to send is, we mean business,” the President said.

Upon arrival at the NBI the President was welcomed by Justice Secretary Perez, NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco, and Land Bank president Teves.

Thereafter, they proceeded to Director Wycoco’s office, where they briefed the President.

Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño and Land Bank vice president Helen Pico were also in the briefing panel.

GMA presents Nigerian man arrested for cocaine trafficking

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presented to the media a suspected Nigerian drug pusher who was arrested for the illegal importation of less than 700 grams of high-grade cocaine with a street value of about P7 million.

In a statement read at the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) headquarters in Manila, the President identified the suspect as Goswill Emenike, a.k.a. “Willy,” single, 29 years old and a resident of No. 16-A Queens Road, Project 8, Quezon City. The suspect is said to be a physical therapy graduate from St. Jude College in Manila.

The President said the arrest of the Nigerian national and the confiscation of cocaine is the first case that will be tried under the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 or Republic Act 9165 which was passed under her administration.

“This is the first successful drug controlled delivery operation done in the Philippines and the first of its kind to be tried under the new drug law,” the President said.

The operation was a combined effort of the NBI, the Bureau of Customs under Commissioner Antonio Bernardo and the National Drug Law Enforcement and Prevention Coordinating Center (NDEPCC).

Last July 19, a United Parcel Service express parcel (overnight bag) bound for the Philippines was seized by the United States Customs at the Miami (Florida) International Airport.

It was revealed that the cocaine was packed in a brown plastic packet concealed inside the false bottom and cover of an overnight kit and was transported thru the UPS. The said package originated from Cochabamba, Bolivia.

On July 27, 2002, the US Drug Enforcement Administration requested the NBI, the BOC, and the NDEPCC to conduct a drug controlled delivery operation on the seized package to determine who were involved in the cocaine importation.

Later, the US Customs sent the cocaine package to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) via Continental Air Micronesia and the package was received by the BOC which turned it over to US-DEA representative in Manila and to the NBI for a joint drug controlled delivery operation.

On July 29, 2002, the combined authorities, including two NBI men who posed as driver and delivery man of the UPS, went to the said address of the suspect and delivered the package consigned to a certain "Jorge Nmadu" and care of a person by the name of "Willy."

It was revealed that suspect Emenike personally received the package by presenting to the undercover agents his identification card.

The suspect was then placed under arrest and seized from him the overnight bag which contained the cocaine.

Emenike is now detained at the NBI Detention Center.

GMA signs EO reorganizing BIR

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has reorganized the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to make it a taxpayer-focused organization so that it can meet its targets in revenue collection urgently needed to finance and sustain the government's vital economic programs.

In a luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps today, the President said she has signed a still unnumbered Executive Order to reinforce the BIR's tax administration and collection capabilities.

"There is going to be large taxpayers unit, a small taxpayers unit, tax-exempt taxpayers unit and another unit for government corporations," the President said.

The President, who will be attending the BIR foundation anniversary tomorrow, said that the reorganization of the revenue collection agency starts tomorrow, August 1.

A special feature of the EO is the creation of an operations group which is composed of the following services, each of which will be headed by an Assistant Commissioner:

1. The Large Taxpayers Service, which is composed of two divisions, namely: Banks, Insurance and Service Sectors Division, and Manufacturing, Industry and Agricultural Sectors Division;
2. The Excise Taxpayers Service, which will be composed of five divisions, namely: Alcohol, Wine and Liquor Sector Division; Tobacco, Cigar and Cigarette Sector Division; Petroleum, Mineral and Miscellaneous Sector Division; Data Reconciliation and Analysis Division, and Field Operations Division;
3. The Non-Large Taxpayers Service which shall be composed of three divisions; Banks, Insurance and Service Division; Manufacturing, Industry and Agricultural Sectors Division and Emerging Industries/Business Sector Division;
4. The Individual Taxpayers Service which is composed of three divisions – Compensation Earners Division, Mixed Income Earners Division, and Professionals, Self-Employed, Estates and Thrusts Division;
5. The Government and Tax-Exempt Entities Service will be composed of three divisions – Government Agencies Division, Tax-Exempt Entities Division, and Special Taxpayers Division.
6. The National Investigation Service;
7. The Regional Offices, which shall be directly under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner for Operations but shall executive and implement the policies and programs formulated and prescribed by the Non-Large Taxpayers Service, Individual Taxpayers Service and the Government and Tax-Exempt Entities Service for the enforcement of the Internal Revenue Laws of the Philippines.

Each regional offices will be headed by a regional director.

GMA wants 300 firms prosecuted for under declared VAT

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered Justice Secretary Hernando Perez to help the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) speed up the filing of cases against some 300 companies that under declared their value added taxes (VAT) that robbed the government of some P5 billion.

The President also asked Perez to complement the number of lawyers to attend on the cases so that their prosecution could proceed in haste.

“I asked Nani (Perez) to give (BIR chief Rene Bañez) 12 (lawyers). The 12 already went today and they have started working, and tomorrow (Thursday), I want to see the results of their work,” she said during the regular luncheon meeting with the Malacañang Press Corps at the State Dining Room.

She said she would attend the Ateneo Law School homecoming to seek help and “get volunteers for the 300 cases.”

“I’ll also get some of the lawyers who volunteered when I was Vice President, those who were helping to handle the cases against child abuse and exploitation of women. I’ll ask them to help ... to volunteer for this one,” she added.

The President said a branch manager could already be charged with VAT under declaration, adding that she had told the BIR to file the charges “right away.”

“We’ll see who is involved. We have to have (a group) like the Sycip, Gorres and Velayo (SGV) financial forensic to do the paper trail,” she said.

“I don’t want to pass judgment. But what I did say was that the bureaucracy does not run like a corporation. We have to strengthen the institution and bring in that ethic of effective implementation,” she added.

“I want fast action,” she stressed, adding that making the BIR as a showcase of good governance “is a continuing effort.”

She had asked (Press Secretary Ignacio) Toting (Bunye) to keep bringing out the reports about fighting corruption. Marami (There are plenty),” she said.

She also lauded BIR Commissioner Bañez for improvements in tax collections and for reaching his targets. “That was why we got upgraded from negative to stable,” she said.

Marohombsar can’t set demands for surrender, Palace says

Malacañang today reiterated its earlier stand that fugitive Pentagon kidnap gang leader Faisal Marohombsar should not set demands for his surrender to the authorities.

“The stand of the President has always been clear that Marohombsar cannot make these demands. So, if he wants to surrender to General Braganza, that’s up to him,” Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said today in his regular press briefing.

Bunye also said that henceforth, it would be Maj. Gen. Alberto Braganza, commander of the Army’s 7th Infantry Division, who will announce developments in the surrender feelers of Marohombsar.

Braganza, former senior military aide of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, has said that he was able to talk to Marohombsar by telephone Monday.

According to Braganza, Marohombsar has expressed his willingness to surrender, adding that he was giving the fugitive bandit leader to give himself up either today or tomorrow.

In debunking reports of a news blackout on Marohombsar, Bunye said that it was General Braganza himself who requested that any announcement about the fugitive's surrender should come from him so as not to derail the operations.

“So, that's what we are following,” Bunye said.

Top officials to brief Congress on MLSA, Palace assures critics

A three-man panel composed of Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople and Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes will present separate briefings to the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives as soon as they finished the final draft of the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA).

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the MLSA draft has not been finalized yet.

“The reason why they are not releasing the draft yet, to tell you the truth, the draft has not yet been finalized,” Bunye told reporters.

Under the updated draft dated last July 26, the Press Secretary said several provisions have been revised drastically to incorporate the suggestions made by Vice President and former Foreign Affairs Secretary Teofisto Guingona.

Bunye said the latest draft was also discussed in a meeting yesterday at the Palace attended by Ople, Perez, Reyes and other Cabinet officials.

In that meeting, he said even Education Secretary Raul Roco had some fine points to add to make the MLSA more acceptable.

Bunye expressed the hope that the final draft will be acceptable to the initial critics of the MLSA.

According to Bunye, there are several key provisions which, if incorporated, will address the objections raised by even the harshest critics of the MLSA.

He said under the agreement, there is a provision that will address the basing rights, prohibiting the construction and establishment of US military base facility or permanent structure.

Another provision, he said, is that storage units and ports shall at all times remain under the control and supervision of the host country.

Bunye stressed that under the draft agreement, the MLSA will be only for the period of five years and can be terminated upon six months notice by either party.

As proposed, the agreement will be signed by Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Roy Cimatu and the Commander in Chief of the US Pacific Forces (CINCPAC), Admiral Thomas Fargo.

The MLSA, Bunye said, is not peculiar to the Philippines since it is also being used in 51 other countries, including big powers such as Canada, Britain and Germany.

“It's not something extraordinary as far as MLSA agreements are concerned,” he pointed out.

As soon as the final draft is completed, Bunye said a copy will be immediately sent to the counterpart panel in the United States.

He further explained that the MLSA, being an executive agreement, can be signed by other officials of the government.

“It is the same agreement being signed in other countries wherein the chief of staff signed their agreements,” he said.

GMA to discuss with Metro Mayors proposed control over police

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she will meet again with the mayors of Metro Manila to discuss proposals on returning to them the administrative control over members of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

“If the Executive Order is not yet there, then we will sit down and draw it up together,” the President said during her regular luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps.

The President said she wanted to give the Metro Manila Mayors, who are deputies of the National Police Commission, the power to hire, fire and discipline the police, subject to appeal.

“Because right now, their only power is to recommend the hiring, firing or disciplining,” the President said. But under the Executive Order that is being drafted, the mayors can “do this but subject to appeal.”

The President announced her approval of the proposal during the joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and the Regional Peace and Order Council of Metro Manila at the Manila Hotel on July 16.

The President then instructed PNP Chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. to work out within two weeks the details of an Executive Order that would be the guiding directive for the Metro Manila Mayors.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: July 31, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033314/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/july31.htm>

The President's Day: August 1, 2002

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- **GMA cites Judge for bravery in convicting kidnap-for-ransom suspects**
- **Ople appointment to DFA post gets positive response from the public**
- **GMA ratings rise in Metro Manila, says HB&A survey**
- **Metro Manilans give thumbs up to GMA's order for military to join anti-drug campaign**
- **GMA warns erring firms: pay right taxes or face full force of law**
- **Governors' league declare full support for MLSA**
- **GMA to receive U.S. State Secretary on Saturday**

GMA cites Judge for bravery in convicting kidnap-for-ransom suspects

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated Pasay City Regional Trial Court Branch 116 Judge Eleuterio Guerrero for convicting the kidnapers of Fritzie So who was abducted for ransom on November 12, 2000.

Judge Guerrero found accused Roberto Yap Obeles, Johnny Bautista, and Jerry Morales guilty beyond reasonable doubt for kidnapping Ms. So and sentenced them to die by lethal injection.

The Chief Executive said that "brave judges" such as Judge Guerrero "who convict kidnapers and others who commit heinous crimes should be encouraged."

The President said there had been accusations by some sectors that "we only have pictures of arrests but do we ever have convictions?"

"So I want to go there to congratulate the judge," the President said. She said she will also congratulate and encourage at least two people of Justice Secretary Hernando Perez who helped in the prosecution of the case.

Saying there is no monetary reward for judges and prosecutors for doing their job in the war against heinous crimes, the President said "I guess the most that we can do is put them in the front page and thank them for a job well done."

This was the first kidnap-for-ransom case in which the accused were meted the death penalty after the President declared an all-out war against crime and terrorism in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 22.

Ople appointment to DFA post gets positive response from the public

The appointment of former Senator Blas F. Ople as foreign affairs secretary has elicited a positive response from the public despite strong objections by some civil society groups.

A survey conducted by HB & A Research International Inc. from July 26 to 29, 2002 showed that 51 percent of the respondents said they agreed with the appointment of Senator Ople as foreign secretary despite objections raised by some members of the civil society.

The survey result showed that only a fourth, or 23 percent, disagreed with Ople's appointment, while 26 percent were undecided.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo appointed Ople as foreign affairs secretary on July 23. He was sworn in to his new post on July 30.

She personally chose Ople to handle the DFA after the resignation of Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. because of his outstanding achievements as a senator, particularly in the field of foreign policy relations.

A native of Hagonoy, Bulacan, Ople was elected senator for a six-year term in 1992. He was re-elected in May 1998 for a second and final term.

Prior to his appointment, Ople was chairman of the Senate committee on foreign relations from 1992 to 2002.

As chairman of the foreign relations committee, Ople steered to approval some 37 international and bilateral treaties that have opened more links between the Philippines and the rest of the world, particularly in trade, investments, employment, cultural exchanges, workers protection and the environment.

Ople successfully sponsored a resolution in 1999 ratifying the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement, an instrument that has strengthened Philippine-US security alliance.

GMA ratings rise in Metro Manila, says HB&A survey

A few days after President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo delivered her State of the Nation Address (SONA) centering on the idea of building a strong republic, the President's satisfaction rating rose significantly and her approval rating marked a directional increase, compared to a month ago in a public opinion survey conducted by HB&A Research International.

The President's satisfaction and approval ratings were measured in a HB&A study made from July 26 to 29 and from June 22 to 25. Both studies covered 300 respondents in 17 cities and towns in Metro Manila. Both had a margin of error of +/- 5.7 percentage points.

Last week's study showed that 48 percent of the respondents were "nasisiyahan (satisfied)" with the President's performance, as against 40 percent in the June study, or an increase of +8 percentage points. Dissatisfaction dropped to 29 percent in the July study from 32 percent in June.

The 8-percentage points increase in the satisfaction rating and the 3- percentage points decrease in the dissatisfaction rating resulted in a significant and meaningful +11 points increase in the net margin of satisfaction, from +8 in the June to +19 in the July study.

The President's "sumasang-ayon (approval)" rating also increased to 53 percent in July from 50 percent in June.

The study further showed a significant decrease in the number of respondents who said they did not approve (hindi sumasang-ayon) of the way the President handled her job, registering 29 percent in July as against 38 percent in June.

As a result, the net margin of approval rose by 12 percentage points to +23 in July from +12 in June.

The HB&A study said the two popularity rating indicators – satisfaction and approval – could not be compared to one another since questions asked were different. The study suggested the need to track and compare each rating over a period of time. But the same indicators could provide comparative perspective to survey results obtained by other agencies.

In the June study and consistent with the approval and satisfaction ratings, 42 percent of the respondents said they "liked her" when asked how they felt towards Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo as a person, not as President.

However, compared with the disapproval or dissatisfaction ratings, only 11 percent of the respondents said they "disliked" Mrs. Macapagal Arroyo.

The HB&A study explained that when the respondents rated the President, they looked at performance where many variables interplayed. But when asked about feelings, they expressed deep sentiments, particularly those who showed dislike.

About 37 percent said they “didn’t know” or “can’t say” if they liked her or not, indicating a large group still did not feel “connected enough” to even give a net feeling towards the President as a person.

In the July study, when the level of unqualified trust or confidence towards the President was measured, 37 percent of the respondents expressed a certain level of trust while 23 percent said they did not trust her.

With both positive and negative scores posting comparatively lower figures than approval or satisfaction ratings, the percentage of those who could not respond was a high 40 percent, consistent with the June study result on feelings toward the President as a person.

Other findings in the July survey showed that:

Metro Manila residents did not seem aware of the SONA, considering there was adequate tri-media coverage. Only 45 percent said they were aware of the SONA, versus 55 percent who said they were not. Outside Metro Manila, the awareness level may even be lower considering lower media penetration.

Despite relatively good performance ratings for the President, there was still a need to address the level of hope especially in so far as the prospect for an improved economy was concerned. Only about 25 percent said they expected conditions to improve in the next 12 months while 15 percent said they expected conditions to worsen. A high 59 percent said they were on a wait-and see stance.

Despite strong objections from some sectors of civil society, especially in the Metro Manila area where such sentiments were highlighted by tri-media, 51 percent said they “agreed with the appointment (of Sen. Blas Ople as Foreign Affairs Secretary) while 26 percent went undecided.

As regard proposals to transfer police administrative control and supervision from the National Police Commission to the respective Metro Manila mayors, only 38 percent agreed while 43 percent disagreed, with 19 percent saying they didn’t know.

When asked if they wanted to “scrap the color coding scheme” in Metro Manila, 43 percent agreed while 47 percent said otherwise. Only 10% had no opinion, most probably because they were not directly affected as users of public transportation.

Finally, in response to the suggestion to use the military in the fight against illegal drugs, a high 59% agreed. For reasons not probed in the survey, 28% disagreed while 13% were undecided.

HB&A said it would track and report, at least on a monthly basis, the sentiments of Metro Manila residents covering current social, political and economic issues. Its next report would be issued in August.

HB&A — incorporated in 1997 by lawyer Eduardo delos Angeles, Jose Sandejas and Antonio Abaya and counting Jose Pardo and Henry Ligot among its founding members – conducts regular market researches for its clients, among which are the country’s top 1,000 corporations.

HB&A also does market development researches for foundations and non-government institutions, as well as opinion surveys as part of its public service.

Metro Manilans give thumbs up to GMA’s order for military to join anti-drug campaign

Majority of the residents in Metro Manila agreed with the decision of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to use the military in the stepped-up campaign against the manufacture and trafficking of illegal drugs.

A survey conducted from July 26-29, or just four days after the President delivered her second State of the Nation Address (SONA), showed that 59 percent agreed with her decision to use the resources and manpower of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the anti-drug campaign.

The survey was conducted by the prestigious HB&A Research International among 300 respondents, picked at random from the 17 cities and municipalities in Metro Manila.

The research firm said that their survey had a margin of error of +/- 5.7 percentage points.

Thirty four percent among the respondents “strongly agreed” to the President’s decision, while 25 percent “somewhat agreed.”

The survey also showed that only 28 percent of the respondents said that they disagreed with the decision, while 13 percent was undecided.

In her SONA, the President announced that she has ordered the AFP to field military intelligence units and soldiers in drug raids in support of civilian law enforcement units.

The President said that henceforth, the drug menace is now a national security problem instead of just a police matter.

She said that drug lords will now be treated as enemies of the state.

“In this war with the drug trade there will be no compromise and no quarter, not for fear or favor,” the President said in her SONA.

GMA warns erring firms: pay right taxes or face full force of law

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today warned company owners to pay the correct tax or face the full force of the law.

“Kaya kung alam ninyo na kayo ay nandadaya, bago kayo maabutan ng batas, amyendahan na ninyo ang inyong VAT declaration o magbayad na kayo ng tamang buwis (If you know that you are cheating, correct your value added tax – VAT — declaration and pay the right taxes before the long arms of the law catches up with you),” the President said.

The President aired the warning during a visit at the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) head office in Quezon City where she was given an update on the agency’s bid to speed up the prosecution of some 300 companies who have under declared their VAT.

She said the government had “uncovered tax cheating of P400 million, but still counting, because this only covered three of the 19 revenue regions.”

She directed the BIR to file cases against the tax cheats, using the full force of the law without fear or favor, as she stressed during her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 22.

“Without fear, especially on the part of BIR Commissioner Rene Bañez, because you can see that there is this move to malign his integrity,” the President told members of the media in a press briefing.

She disclosed that the BIR had filed collection and criminal cases against the Southland Security and the Coffel Air Industries today. She said the government should collect its money and send the perpetrators to jail.

Next week, five more cases would be filed. By the end of August, all 300 companies found to have under declared their VAT, at an average of 63 percent, would be charged.

She added that the BIR has closed down two firms because of tax cheating. Closed were the Susana Martin Bulacan and the New San Agustin Oil Manufacturing in Malabon.

Susana Mart, however, amended its VAT and has reopened. Instead of the erroneous VAT declaration of only P200,000, the firm is now paying some P1 million. This is because of law enforcement, she said.

The President had earlier directed Justice Secretary Hernando Perez to assign 12 lawyers from the Office of the Corporate Counsel to help the BIR's in-house lawyers in prosecuting the 300 cases.

She also said that she would seek lawyer-volunteers from among the alumni of the Ateneo Law School to help in the cases.

She commended VAT Task Force Head Deputy BIR Commissioner Lita Aguirre for her technology-based audit, saying the audit of the 300 firms was done not on location but right in the BIR's computer center in Quezon City.

She also acknowledged the Philippine Institute for Development Studies under the National Economic and Development Authority for facilitating the development of innovative benchmarking system for the VAT.

Together with the VAT Management System developed by the Department of Finance, the system of identifying firms to be audited has been made easier, the President said.

Governors' league declare full support for MLSA

Stressing that the administration needs all the cooperation and support necessary to build the foundations of a strong republic, the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP), the association of governors around the nation, today declared full support for the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA), the imminent agreement between the Philippines and the United States.

In adopting resolution No 2002-23 in a meeting in Davao City, the LPP noted that the MLSA is in consonance with the RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) of 1951, the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) of 1999 and the United Nations Charter.

“Relevant resolutions pursuant thereto, thus requires no ratification by the Senate,” the LPP said.

The LPP further noted that the MLSA can contribute immensely to our efforts to modernize the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

It would “thereby enable our government to promptly and efficiently respond to internal and external threats to our stability, peace and security.”

The resolution was approved by LPP Secretary General and Bulacan Governor Josefina de la Cruz and attested by the national president and Davao del Norte Gov. Rodolfo del Rosario.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye earlier said the MLSA would not allow permanent basing rights to the US in the Philippines as feared by some sectors.

He also stressed that the MLSA is based on existing pacts, like the RP-US MDT and the VFA.

He also said that the MLSA is not a treaty but only an executive agreement and, therefore, is not subject to ratification by the Philippine Senate.

Bunye has assured that Foreign Secretary Blas F. Ople and Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes would make a full briefing on the provisions of the MLSA at the Senate.

GMA to receive U.S. State Secretary on Saturday

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will receive United States Secretary of State Colin Powell in Malacañang on Saturday as the latter concludes his eight-nation Asian tour to strengthen the global coalition against terrorism.

In a press briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio “Toting” Bunye today said Powell, who is scheduled to arrive in Manila Friday evening, would briefly meet with the President and Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople.

Bunye said Powell would also hold a press briefing right after his meeting with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

In their meeting, the President and Secretary Powell are expected to discuss the continuing cooperation between the Philippines and the US on the fight against global terrorism as an offshoot of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.

In a speech last month before the Asia Society in New York City, Powell expressed elation over the Philippine-US cooperation against terrorism.

“I am proud, so proud, that American forces are helping to train and equip their Philippine Army counterparts to combat groups such as the Abu Sayyaf, a terrorist organization which regularly kidnaps, as you know too well, civilians for ransom,” he said.

On the issue of the US role in the Asian region, Powell said the United States would continue to be the “balance wheel of security in Asia” upon which the region’s stability depends.

“There should be no doubt that America’s commitment to Asia’s security and stability is an enduring one, for Asia’s sake and for our own. We are a Pacific power. We will not yield our strategic position in Asia,” the secretary said

A retired US military leader, Powell is the first black secretary of state in US history.

The son of Jamaican immigrants, Powell was born in New York City and attended the City College of New York as a cadet in the Reserve Officers Training Corps.

After serving two tours of duty in the Vietnam War (1962-1963, 1968-1969), he held a succession of important military and civilian positions, becoming national security adviser to President Ronald Reagan in 1987.

Promoted to the rank of four-star general in April 1989, Powell was named chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in August, the first black officer to hold the nation’s highest military post.

Powell played a pivotal role in planning and executing the invasion of Panama in 1989 and the Persian Gulf War (1991).

He retired from the military in September 1993.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 1, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033325/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug01.htm>

The President's Day: August 2, 2002

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- **Bangko Sentral keeps policy rates steady**
- **GMA not focusing sight on 2004 but specific goals, says Palace**
- **GMA to employers; avoid driver-kidnapper, use gov't background check systems**
- **NEDA says P102-M Caraga food improvement sufficiency program under way**
- **Palace looking for Desierto's successor**
- **GMA presents to media 3 suspected dollars forgers**
- **GMA, Powell to meet tomorrow in Malacañang**

Bangko Sentral keeps policy rates steady

The Monetary Board (MB) of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) today kept the key policy rates unchanged at 7 percent for the overnight borrowing or RRP rate and 9.25 percent for the overnight lending or RP rate.

The BSP's policy rates have been on an even keel since March 15, a report reaching Malacañang said.

Based on the assessment of a comprehensive set of information bearing on the inflation outlook, the MB believed that inflation would continue to be generally benign in the near term due mainly to positive supply-side factors.

These factors included expectations of adequate food supply, recent moderation in oil prices and the broad stability in the exchange rate as well as continued softness in demand conditions, although there were signs of improving economic activity.

But the Board said that while the near-term risks to inflation have diminished, inflationary headwinds could still surface over the policy horizon.

These pressures could be in the form of uncertainties concerning the full impact of the El Niño weather phenomenon on agricultural output, a possible uptrend in world oil prices and the adjustments in power and water rates and their expected second-round effects on the prices of other commodities and on wages.

The MB also pointed out that the stimulus from the external sector could not be as strong as earlier anticipated, given the uncertainty about the timing and pace of the economic upturn in the United States and other major economies.

Based on these considerations, the Board viewed that monetary policy should continue to focus on ensuring conditions to strengthen domestic demand.

This involved keeping policy rates steady to foster a low market interest rate environment, one that remained supportive of the economy's growth objective while ensuring that price pressures would be well contained.

GMA not focusing sight on 2004 but specific goals, says Palace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is not concentrating her sights on the 2004 presidential elections but is carrying on specific programs to attract more investments, fight crimes and eradicate poverty within the decade.

"Ang kanyang pinagtutuunan ng pansin ay hindi muna yung elections ng 2004 (Her administration is not focusing on the 2004 elections)," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in an interview.

Bunye also noted that in the reported IBON survey, which reportedly showed the President trailing behind other personalities if elections were held today, 27 percent of those surveyed was undecided.

“In my opinion, the elections are still far, and second, we are seeing that not everyone is giving his opinion as to whether they would vote for one particular candidate or not,” Bunye said.

Bunye cited the President’s improved satisfaction in another independent survey as indicative of the real sentiment of the people.

A few days after the President’s State of the Nation’s Address, her satisfaction rating rose significantly and her approval rating marked a directional increase, compared to a month ago in a public opinion survey conducted by HB&A Research International, Bunye said.

The HB&A study showed that 48 percent of the respondents were “nasisiyahan (satisfied)” with the President’s performance, as against 40 percent in the June study, or an increase of +8 percentage points. Dissatisfaction dropped to 29 percent in the July study from 32 percent in June.

“Yun ay magandang indikasyon na unang una, sa SONA, pinakita ng ating Pangulo, ito yung aking nagawa at ito yung aking gagawin. Diyan nag-react itong mga tao (This is a good indication that the President was able to convey in her SONA the programs that she had accomplished and what she intends to do. This is where the people reacted positively),” Bunye said.

The President’s satisfaction and approval ratings were measured in a HB&A study made from July 26 to 29 and from June 22 to 25. Both studies covered 300 respondents in 17 cities and towns in Metro Manila. Both had a margin of error of +/- 5.7 percentage points.

GMA to employers; avoid driver-kidnapper, use gov’t background check systems

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged employers to be extra careful in hiring family drivers who could later turn out to be a member of a kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gang.

The President called on people to avail themselves of government services that verify if the person to be hired has criminal records. This included police and barangay clearances.

She also disclosed government moves to make employers avail themselves of National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) clearances on-line.

She said she would ask Justice Secretary Hernando Perez if the NBI on-line services have been put in place.

“I urge everyone to use this means as a first line of defense against hiring potential threats to your family safety,” she said during the presentation of four KFR suspects said to have been involved in the abduction of 15-year-old Kathleen Pacquing last July 23.

The Pacquing’s family driver, Nelson Pilar, was one of the suspects presented. Pacquing was freed on July 30. Police arrested Pilar and three others on Thursday (August 1) in their lair in Imus, Cavite.

A report from the Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (PACER) unit named the three other suspects as Joseph Randy Mendoza, 32; Maria Victoria Acuatín, 38; and Joselito Mortega, 31. Still at large is Joselito Diaz.

The PACER report said Pilar admitted to have provided information on the victim’s movements.

Most of the suspects have been earlier charged with various crimes to include homicide and rape, the report added.

The President lauded the joint elements of PACER, National Capital Regional Police Office (NCRPO) and Imus Police Station for their quick action.

The police “is working double time hunting down the 21 target KFR groups,” she said, adding that the police have also been solving current cases while rescuing Kidnap victims and arresting their kidnappers.

“Every arrest and every rescue brings us closer to our goal. There will be no rest until kidnappers get the justice they deserve,” she stressed.

Philippine National Police Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. presented the four suspects to the President and Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr.

The President said this was not the first time that a family driver has been involved in a KFR incident.

She recalled that Florante Concepcion, arrested by the PACER unit last July, was part of the group that abducted his employer, Mary Grace Cheng Rosagas, in June.

Concepcion was also presented to the President in Malacañang last July 21, a day before she delivered her State of the Nation Address (SONA) that focused on the government’s tenacious fight against criminality.

Meanwhile, the Chief Executive handed over the reward money worth some P853,000 to a friend of a police informant for the latter’s contribution to the successful police bust of a shabu laboratory in Varsity Hills in Quezon City last July 18.

During the operation, the NCRPO Metro Manila Drug Enforcement Group under Police Senior Superintendent Nicasio Radomal seized 44.9 kilos of shabu, 50.67 kilos of epidrine and equipment for making shabu. Also arrested during the bust were seven Chinese nationals.

NEDA says P102-M Caraga food improvement sufficiency program under way

The Philippine and Spanish governments have signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to improve food sufficiency, specifically rice and fish, in the CARAGA region.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) signed for the Philippine government while the Agencia Espanola de Cooperacion Internacional (AECI) represented the Spanish government.

A NEDA report said the MOA provided a program worth some P102 million expected to benefit the people in four towns, namely, Jabaonga in Agusan del Norte; Prosperidad and Sta. Josefa in Agusan del Sur; and Tandag, Surigao del Sur.

The report said the program would be carried out in two phases.

Phase I, which covers one year, costs P42.12 million with the AECI providing P36.92 million and the municipal governments sharing P5.266 million as counterpart fund.

The MOA covers only Phase I which has four components: the putting up of three farm level grains center (FLGC) and of 24 small warehouses in the identified towns; provision of facilities for Tandag fishport; strengthening of people’s organization and setting up of a project management office.

The FLGCs will be equipped with mechanical dryers, rice mills, moisture meters, hauling trucks and other equipment needed for packaging and handling milled rice.

The small warehouses will be provided with a flatbed mechanical dryer. The FLGC component includes the provision of operating capital for partner-cooperatives.

For the Tandag fishport, only the preparation of a feasibility study and detailed engineering for the port facilities will be undertaken. But with the implementation of Phase II, an ice plant and cold storage and a market center building for the fish port will be built.

Phase II, to be implemented in two years, costs P59.73 million with P40.13 from the AECI and the rest, to be shouldered by the respective municipal governments.

Implementing agencies of the program are the NEDA-Caraga Region and the four municipalities.

Palace looking for Desierto's successor

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is looking for a person with integrity and competence to replace outgoing Ombudsman Aniano Desierto.

Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye today said that as far as the President was concerned, the recommendation of Judicial Bar Council (JBC) would be respected.

“Naniniwala siya sa kakayanan ng JBC na mag-submit ng mga pangalan ng mga tao na talagang may sapat na qualification (The President believes in the ability of the JBC to recommend persons who qualify),” Bunye said during his regular press briefing.

He said he still had no idea who the potential candidates were for the position Desierto would vacate. Desierto's term ends today.

He added that the JBC, headed by Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Jr., would be releasing only the list of candidates until the position has been formally vacated.

Besides Davide, the JBC is composed of two Supreme Court justices and representatives from the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Department of Justice.

GMA presents to media 3 suspected dollars forgers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presented to the media at the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) headquarters three suspected counterfeiters and thousands of pieces of fake United States currency and bank notes totaling quadrillions of dollars which were confiscated during separate operations in Manila and Quezon City.

In a statement, the President identified the arrested suspects as Rustico Cabillar, 46, a resident of Sarmiento, Novaliches, Quezon City; Marnelli Pepino, 22, also of Novaliches, Quezon City; and Jose Rogando of Tondo, Manila.

The President said the seizure of the counterfeit money is so far the biggest made by government authorities.

The suspects were arrested during joint operations of the NBI and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

Investigation report showed that the suspects tried to sell several pieces of \$100 bills to NBI informants at the cheap price of P600 each.

Yesterday, the combined NBI-BSP operatives caught suspect Rogando in the act of receiving marked money after the latter handed over 150 pieces of fake US dollar bills to a government agent posing as a buyer in Sta. Cruz, Manila.

During investigation, Rogando pointed to Cabillar as the source of the fake US bills.

Seized from the suspects were numerous US Federal Reserve notes, Wells Fargo bank certificates, thousands of fake \$100 bills, transparencies, printing equipment and other paraphernalia that include computer and several compact discs.

The suspects, who are currently detained at the NBI Detention Center, were charged with violation of Article 168 of the Revised Penal Code.

GMA, Powell to meet tomorrow in Malacañang

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will bat for a more humane treatment of Filipino deportees from the US, greater access of Philippine tuna in the US market and the lifting of a negative travel advisory on the Philippines when she meets United States Secretary of State Colin Powell tomorrow, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said today.

On the eighth and last leg of his Asian tour, Powell is due to arrive in Manila this evening fresh from signing a pact in Brunei with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) aimed at making the region more responsive to future terrorist threats.

Bunye said the President is expected to meet with Powell around 9 a.m. in Malacañang.

The President is also expected to likewise raise the invitation for President George W. Bush to visit the Philippines in the near future, Bunye said.

Bunye said the President would also take up the plight of Filipino World War II veterans in her meeting with the US official.

The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) is not expected to be taken up as it is not included in the talking points between the Philippine and US sides, Bunye said.

“Definitely, the President announced that they will not be discussing the MLSA and we have indications also from the other side that Secretary Powell will not bring that up,” Bunye said.

Bunye said the President’s meeting with Powell would be “a very brief five-minute meeting.”

The two would move on to a small-group meeting followed by an expanded meeting with other government officials.

Around 10:30 a.m., Secretary Powell and Foreign Secretary Blas Ople will hold a joint press conference at the Heroes Hall.

Under the US-ASEAN agreement, the US will raise its technical and logistical aid to ASEAN “to prevent, disrupt and combat” international terrorism.

The Philippines is the last stop for Powell who has already visited India, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Indonesia.

In Powell's speech last month before the Asia Society in New York City, he expressed elation over the Philippine-US cooperation against terrorism.

"I am proud, so proud, that American forces are helping to train and equip their Philippine Army counterparts to combat groups such as the Abu Sayyaf, a terrorist organization which regularly kidnaps, as you know too well, civilians for ransom," he said.

On the issue of the US role in the Asian region, Powell said the United States would continue to be the "balance wheel of security in Asia" upon which the region's stability depends.

"There should be no doubt that America's commitment to Asia's security and stability is an enduring one, for Asia's sake and for our own. We are a Pacific power. We will not yield our strategic position in Asia," the secretary said

A retired US military officer, Powell is the first black secretary of state in US history.

The son of Jamaican immigrants, Powell was born in New York City and attended the City College of New York where he was a cadet in the Reserve Officers Training Corps.

After serving two tours of duty in the Vietnam War (1962-1963, 1968-1969), Powell held a succession of important military and civilian positions, becoming national security adviser to President Ronald Reagan in 1987.

Promoted to the rank of four-star general in April 1989, Powell was named chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in August, the first black officer to hold the nation's highest military post.

Powell played a pivotal role in planning and executing the invasion of Panama in 1989 and the Persian Gulf War (1991).

He retired from the military in September 1993.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 2, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033340/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug02.htm>

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East Asia, ASPAC banking officials note growth prospects, resiliency of regional economies

Ranking officials of 11 central banks and monetary authorities in the East Asia and Asia-Pacific region have noted the resiliency of regional economies in view of the substantial progress reached in economic, corporate and financial restructuring.

But the governors agreed that the regional economies needed to sustain ongoing efforts to strengthen their respective financial sectors in the face of uncertainties and risks that continue to test the durability of the international financial system.

These uncertainties and risks included the Brazilian debt problem and the corporate accounting scandals in the US.

The governors met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia last July 27 for the Executives' Meeting of the East Asia and Pacific Central Banks (EMEAP), the seventh since its inaugural meeting in Tokyo in July 1996.

The EMEAP meetings were intended to strengthen cooperation among EMEAP members on central banking operations and policy issues.

The Kuala Lumpur meeting was attended by the governors and managing directors of the Reserve Bank of Australia; People's Bank of China; Hong Kong Monetary Authority; Bank Indonesia (Deputy Governor); Bank of Japan; Bank of Korea; Bank Negara Malaysia; Reserve Bank of New Zealand (Acting Governor); Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP); Monetary Authority of Singapore; and the Bank of Thailand.

During the meeting, the governors discussed regional and global economic and financial developments.

They cited the potential for further increases in intra-ASEAN trade and its impact on the growth prospects of the EMEAP economies.

They likewise affirmed the role of the EMEAP in continuing its focus on the core business of central banks and monetary authorities that are of immediate relevance to the region.

As such, EMEAP vowed to go on initiating practical, high-quality policy-oriented research projects on economic and financial developments and issues, as it continues to strengthen policy dialogues with other international bodies like the International Monetary Fund.

Gov't to raise Filipino women's status, welfare

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is committed to improve the status and welfare of women by creating policies and programs directed to promote the latter's active participation in national development.

At the same time, the President seeks to provide more jobs and productivity improvement opportunities for women, said Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas during the 1st National Conference on Building Partnerships for Sustainable Gender and Development conducted recently by the Ugnayan ng Kababaihan sa Pulitika (UKP).

Canlas said the government has been exerting effort to integrate women's concerns in its plans and programs over the years.

He said a manual on formulating gender-responsive development plans had been developed to identify the strategic intervention points and necessary procedures to put together gender concerns in growth planning in the regional levels.

"This manual offers useful guides to government agencies integrating gender concerns in their respective planning activities," he added.

Canlas said gender concerns have been properly addressed in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan 2001-2004.

The plan served as the blueprint under which all government programs, projects and activities of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration would be based.

He said that in the area of public investment programming, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), which he also heads has prioritized programs and projects promoting the participation of women in national development.

Canlas assured the UKP that the government would allocate at least five percent of the General Appropriations Act to gender and development concerns.

"There are on-going efforts directed at assessing the current policy with the aim of creating meaningful impact on women's status and welfare," Canlas said.

To promote gender and development in the bureaucracy, he said the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women continued to implement the Institutional Strengthening Project to empower the capabilities of oversight, implementing, statistical, and sub-national agencies.

He said there were also a number of programs to address violence against women's lack of economic empowerment such as the National Family Violence Prevention Program and the Productivity Skills and Capability Building Program.

Canlas highlighted the government's success in eliminating constitutional, legal, administrative, cultural, behavioral, social and economic obstacles to women's full participation in sustainable development and public life.

According to Canlas, the impact of women's involvement in multi-stakeholder partnerships was quite evident at the community level in areas such as health, education and natural resources management and protection.

Just recently, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development (HD) Report 2002 showed that the Philippines topped East Asia and the Pacific and ranked 35th in the world on initiating gender empowerment measures.

This confirmed the Macapagal-Arroyo administration's resolve to improve women's status and welfare, Canlas said.

The UNDP HD Report also indicated that the country's gender-related development index of 0.751 has placed it at No. 63 in the world.

GMA stresses on building healthier nation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today echoed her resolve to build a healthier nation free from poverty that threatened to breed diseases and spawn social menaces such as criminality and terrorism within the decade.

In a radio message aired nationwide, the President stressed the importance of a physically fit community of people.

"Tulad ng pagkain, tahanan at edukasyon, ang kalusugan ay pangunahin nating pangangailangan. Ito ang puhunan ng ating buhay, kaya't kailangan itong pangalagaan (Like food, a home and education, we regard health as a basic need. We draw our livelihood from being healthy; thus, we have to care for our health)," she said.

This was the reason why the government had embarked on a priority health program that aimed to benefit the country's poor communities.

As early as last year, the President vowed to have at least 500,000 members of the urban poor registered with the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP), as stated in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) last year.

In her second SONA last July 22, she reported that the target had been met, even exceeded, as more than four million people have been registered with the NHIP.

She said beneficiaries of the PhilHealth GMA ID card being given under the NHIP could avail themselves of free or subsidized government health services.

She added that the people could also buy half-priced selected but branded medicines in at least 70 government-run hospitals and in National Food Authority rolling stores, where rice continued to sell at P14 a kilo, deployed nationwide.

In her radio message, the President also reiterated her concern over homeless Filipinos, as she reported that some 180,000 families have been provided ownership of the lots where their homes stand.

The number, she said, was over and above the targeted 150,000 beneficiary-households of the government's housing program.

Similarly, SONA targets were also achieved in the fields of education, job generation, agricultural modernization and micro-finance, among others.

"Sana ay madama ng ating mga mamamayan ang katapatan ng pamahalaan na tugunan ang kanilang mga pangangailangan (I hope the people feel the government's sincerity in meeting their needs)," she said.

But more importantly, the President said: *"Nangingibabaw pa rin ang aking hangaring masugpo ang kahirapan sa loob ng dekadang ito at mawakasan ang krimen at terorismo upang ang ating mga pamilya ay mamuhay nang tahimik at mapayapa* (To eliminate poverty within the decade and end the threat of criminality and terrorism so that our families may live in peace remain top among my intentions)."

She said the full force of government would defend democracy and safeguard national peace and security.

“Hindi rin natin titigilan ang paglaban sa katiwalian at iba pang hamon sa katatagan ng ating Republikang Pilipinas (We will not stop fighting corruption and other threats to our strong Philippine Republic),” she added.

She asked the people to remain firm and not to be swayed by the black propaganda and deception of those who malign the government’s good intentions, particularly relating to giving justice to those who became victims of criminals and terrorists.

She recalled that the country weathered through a number of internal and global problems last year. *“Pero marami pa tayong dapat gawin (But we still have a lot to do),”* she said.

“Kailangan ko ang tulong ninyo upang patuloy tayong magtagumpay sa mga hamong hinaharap natin ngayon at haharapin pa sa mga darating na araw (I need your help so that we can continue to win over challenges we face today and those we will meet in the coming days),” she appealed.

R.P.- U.S. talks very productive, reinvigorate ties in common desire to bring peace, progress to world

The two small group and expanded meetings today between Philippine and American officials led by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and visiting United States Secretary of State Colin Powell were very productive, reinvigorating RP-US relationship in a common desire to bring peace and progress to the world.

This was the assessment made by Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople in his opening statement during a press conference that followed the two meetings in Malacañang this morning.

“The challenge now is to bring the momentum generated by our strengthened security and defense cooperation to bear on other aspects of our relationships,” Ople said in briefing media representatives on the talks between the President and Powell, who is in Manila on the last leg of a swing through Asia.

Ople said the talks – first in the main living room of Malacañang between a small group of six led by the President and Powell and then in the main office of the President between a larger group of Philippine and American officials – took more than an hour and covered a “wide range of issues of direct interest and importance to both our countries.”

“The talks were in the nature of free and open discussions among old friends on ways to further improve our relationship and how best to face current and future challenges as strategic partners,” Ople said.

There were no discussions on the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement, Ople added.

Ople said the President raised several issues with Secretary Powell, including trade, financing, development cooperation and tourism issues.

The President also expressed appreciation to the US for its efforts and contribution towards the success of the strategic partnership between the Philippines and the US, Ople said.

“The global war against terrorism, the partnership between our two countries in this war, and regional and global efforts versus terrorism were also discussed,” Ople added.

The Foreign Secretary said the President cited in particular the central role played by Secretary Powell in the successful adoption last August 1 in Brunei of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations-US joint declaration on cooperation to combat international terrorism.

The President also pointed to the successful conclusion of Balikatan 02-1, Ople said, adding that “there were many valuable lessons learned by both our militaries that can add much value to future training exercises between our two countries.”

The President also raised issues relating to Filipino World War II veterans and to Filipinos in the US, Ople said.

Powell vows enduring U.S. partnership, support to RP

The Philippines “can count on America’s enduring partnership and support.”

United States Secretary of State Colin Powell stressed this today in a press conference with the media at the Heroes Hall of Malacañang, as he capped his overnight visit to the Philippines, the eighth and last leg of his Asian tour.

“It is very fitting that Manila is the capstone of my visit to Southeast Asia, because the alliance between the United States and the Philippines has been a bulwark of freedom and stability in the Asian-Pacific Region,” Powell said.

He recalled that 60 years ago, Filipino and American soldiers fought side by side in the Battle of Bataan. “Today, we stand shoulder to shoulder again in the fight against terrorism,” he said.

He noted that U.S. President George W. Bush, in November last year, had expressed his heartfelt appreciation to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for the latter’s “principled and courageous stand against terror.”

“We applaud the Philippines’ role in forging the May 2002 trilateral cooperation agreement with Indonesia and Malaysia,” he added. Powell also visited Kuala Lumpur last July 29 and Jakarta on August 2.

Under what was dubbed as an agreement on information exchange and establishment of communication procedures, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia would cooperate in preventing the use by anyone of their land-air-sea territories for committing or furthering terrorism, money laundering, smuggling, piracy or robbery at sea, hijacking, illegal entry, drug trafficking, marine pollution and illicit arms trafficking.

The agreement was signed by Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., for the Philippines, Foreign Minister N. Hassan Wirajuda of Indonesia and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar of Malaysia last May 7, during President Macapagal-Arroyo’s visit to Kuala Lumpur.

“As Filipinos know only too well, terrorism threatens every country and every continent. The United States is impressed by the Philippine army successes against the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group,” said Powell.

He said the gains made in the fight against terrorism in the Philippines have “significantly reduced the Abu Sayyaf’s operationability, even as we mourn Abu Sayyaf’s victims.”

He also lauded the Filipino soldiers who have died in the fight against the Abu Sayyaf and in the effort to secure the safe release of hostages. “We honor their bravery and their sacrifice.”

The US State Secretary said his country “is proud that our armed forces are helping to train and equip their Philippine Army counterparts to combat terrorism in the Philippines.”

But while the RP-US joint Balikatan military exercises successfully ended last July 31, he said that “our excellent cooperation with the Philippines will continue on the civilian as well as military side.”

A case in point is the US’ ongoing development assistance program in the country. “We are devoting over \$100 million this year on such areas as law enforcement, judiciary, the role of law and education. All of these support President Arroyo’s war on poverty,” he said.

“We also remain strongly committed to our development programs to foster lasting peace in Mindanao,” he added, stressing support for American investments in the Philippines and President Macapagal-Arroyo’s efforts to build a strong republic.

This, he said, would “set the stage for economic activity that can really make a difference in Mindanao and elsewhere in the country.”

Earlier, Powell said he was very pleased to be back in the Philippines. As a young captain during the Vietnam War, Powell been in Subic and Clark, where American naval and air bases used to operate.

Powell also said he had a successful conversation with President Macapagal-Arroyo. They reviewed at least four issues that existed “between our two countries.”

GMA, Powell discuss R.P. -U.S. concerns

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today received United States Secretary of State Colin Powell in Malacañang, and both officials conferred on a wide range of issues of direct interest and importance to the two countries.

Powell, on the eighth and last leg of his Asian tour, called on the President at the Palace’s Main Living Room along with US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone around 9:00 a.m. Foreign Secretary Blas Ople and Philippine Ambassador to Washington Albert del Rosario were also present.

During the meeting, Powell told the President that the Philippines remained the “highlight” of his Asian tour as he noted the country’s active participation in the global coalition against terrorism.

The President, meanwhile, cited Powell’s recent signing in Brunei of an agreement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations that would make the region more responsive to future terrorist threats.

Powell said President George W. Bush personally conveyed his gratefulness for President Macapagal-Arroyo’s support on the war against terror.

Meanwhile, the President raised the issue of Philippine tuna exports to the US, saying she hoped that moves in the US favoring “pouched tuna” would not affect the preferential treatment for canned tuna from the Philippines.

She said thousands of workers in the tuna industry in Mindanao have been battling for the access of Philippine canned tuna in the US market.

The President also pitched for the more humane treatment of Filipino deportees from the US, saying, “There’s a lot of sensitivity here.”

She said that in the future, she hoped that US authorities would not use handcuffs on deportees, to which Powell said: “We are very mindful of your concern.”

Powell again thanked the President for the support of the Philippines and her leadership in the fight against terrorism.

The President, meanwhile, noted that the people of Basilan were very grateful to the US forces for the security that they brought into the area and the infrastructure that they built.

After the meeting at the Main Living Room, the President, Powell and the other officials moved on to the Music Room where the President was briefly introduced to members of the U.S. delegation.

The two proceeded to her office to preside over an expanded meeting, accompanied by eight officials on each side.

During the meeting, the President raised the possible lifting of a negative travel advisory on the Philippines, noting her efforts to curb criminality. “We’ve been bearing fruits on a daily basis,” the President said.

She noted that because of the successes, China has lifted its own negative travel advisory on the country.

The President noted that next year is “Visit Philippines Year,” of which one of the government programs is to invite Americans to the country to commemorate the Leyte Landing.

Powell said that once he gets back to the US, he would immediately undertake a review of all travel advisories.

“My bias is to lift travel advisories... I want people to travel. I want Americans to travel to the Philippines,” Powell said.

Among other concerns the President discussed with Powell were the toxic waste in the former US military facilities, possible delisting of the Philippines from the Financial Action Task Force on the anti-money laundering list, the issues of the Amerasians in the country and the possible recruitment of Filipinos in the US Navy, issues on air services and independent power producers (IPP) and the World War II veteran benefits

Powell then briefed the President on the US Millennium Challenge Account, a mechanism that provided development assistance to countries committed to democracy and on how the Philippines could take advantage of its benefits.

Aside from this, the US government is giving the Philippines a total of \$155 million worth of military and development assistance this year.

Afterwards, the President reiterated her invitation for President Bush to visit the Philippines, to which Powell replied that he “will certainly encourage that” and that he “would look at his schedule next year.”

Powell said he felt quite at home in the Philippines, relating that he was cheered by the people upon embarking from the car at the Manila Peninsula, where he stayed for the night.

“This is not a typical experience for me,” he said.

Powell cites gains in global war against terrorism

United States Secretary of State Colin Powell today rated the war against global terrorism as “doing well.”

Powell also cited President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for “taking bold, strong stances for democracy,” as he noted the positive contributions of the Philippines in the fight against terror, saying the country has been in the forefront of leadership in Southeast Asia with respect to that war.

In a press conference with the media at the Malacañang Heroes Hall, Powell said the Taliban, which had been harboring the Al-Qaeda terrorist group of Osama Bin Laden, had been destroyed and the Al-Qaeda “is on the run.”

“(The Al-Qaeda terrorists) are hiding. (But) there is still a danger to the world and we are going to continue to rout them out,” Powell stressed.

He said US President George W. Bush made it clear from the very beginning that “this is a campaign that will not be concluded for a few months or even a year. It is going to take a long time.”

In an interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review* last July 29, Powell said the US has “demonstrated to all the nations in Southeast Asia that terror is a threat to all of us.”

“It may come in the form of Al Qaeda, and learning more and more about Al Qaeda and how they are in so many of these countries or how they are trying to get themselves imbedded in these countries having been displaced in Afghanistan,” he said in the interview.

“And there are many other terrorist groups. It is not something that is unique to America. What is common in all these terrorist organizations is the need for the entire international community to respond,” he added.

Powell stressed the need to link with America’s friends and allies in law enforcement, intelligence and response efforts, noting the leadership role the US had to play.

To get the terrorists, “we have to connect our intelligence systems, connect our law enforcement systems, look at the financial transactions that these terrorists groups use to sustain themselves,” he said.

He cited the political declaration that he and representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations signed in Brunei last August 1.

The declaration focused on such issues as exchanging information, exchanging intelligence, building the capacity to do this in a more effective way and strengthening our bilateral ties.

The declaration, he said, was further evidence that everybody recognized the danger of terrorism, understood the importance of working together in fighting the threat to global security.

“I am very pleased about the level of cooperation we are receiving and I think we are making progress,” he added.

“People are being picked up around the world. A number of nations in Southeast Asia have made important apprehensions in recent weeks,” he noted.

The US official also noted the importance of the Philippines for “making a positive contribution on the global war against terrorism.”

He lauded the signing of a trilateral agreement between the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia signed on May 7 this year in Kuala Lumpur during the visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to Malaysia.

He also took time to cite the other day’s signing of the ASEAN plus US Declaration in Brunei and what had been done with respect to the RP-US joint Balikatan military exercises and going after the terrorist Abu Sayyaf.

“The Philippines has been in the forefront of leadership in Southeast Asia with respect to the global war against terrorism,” he stressed.

“I found support throughout Southeast Asia for this campaign because there is not a nation in Southeast Asia who has not, at one time or another or today, been under the threat of terrorism,” he said.

“And the message that I want to give to all of them, and especially to the Philippines, is that the United States is united with you. But we see it is more than just war against terrorism, more than just military to military, but a broader relationship that also focuses on economic development, development assistance, trade, poverty elimination, educational activity, everything we can do to strengthen democracy throughout Southeast Asia, and especially to help leaders like President Arroyo who are taking bold, strong stances for democracy. We want to be seen and stand alongside her and leaders like her,” Powell said.

U.S. providing \$155M in military, development assistance to Philippines this year, says Powell

The United States government is providing a total of \$155 million worth of military and development assistance to the Philippines this year, United States Secretary of State Colin Powell today announced.

In a joint press conference with Foreign Secretary Blas Ople at the Heroes' Hall in Malacañang, Powell said the \$100 million worth of assistance is aimed at supporting improvement efforts on areas such as law enforcement, judiciary, the rule of law and education.

The \$55 million intended for the campaign against terrorism, meanwhile, is still being worked out. "We are now working out the arrangements as to how that money will be spent and what accounts will be provided," he said.

Powell said the significant thing is that the amount of support the US is providing the Philippines—both in terms of military support and in terms of development assistance—is being significantly increased. "We hope that will remain the case for several years to come," Powell said.

Powell also reported that the Philippines is a leading candidate to the Millennium Challenge Account, a mechanism that provides development assistance to countries committed to democracy.

"I am quite sure that the Philippines will be a front candidate for support under the Millennium Challenge Account and that would be a couple of years in the future," Powell said.

Meanwhile, Powell emphasized that the Mutual Logistics Service Agreement is essentially an administrative arrangement between the two parties.

"It is usually negotiated and dealt with at the fairly middle-level management level within our Department of Defense. It doesn't usually come to this level of attention or interest," Powell said.

Powell assures dignified treatment for deportees

United States Secretary of State Colin Powell today recognized as a "sensitive issue for the Filipino people" the undignified treatment American authorities made on Filipinos who were recently deported from the US.

Powell, in a press briefing following a meeting with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and some Cabinet members in Malacañang, said he would return to the US with "a message for my colleagues" and the department concerned with deportation to do their jobs in a way that is dignified.

Earlier, President Macapagal-Arroyo told the visiting American official that deported Filipinos should not be "handcuffed," as what happened to deportees from the US on board a chartered flight.

"I will let them know that even though we must follow our own laws with respect to deportation, and deportation must occur, we have to do it in a way that is dignified and is sensitive to the feelings of the people being deported," Powell said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also asked Powell to see if he could work out the grant of amnesty to overstaying Filipinos, particularly if amnesty has been granted to people of other nationalities.

Nothing mysterious about MLSA, says Powell

United States Secretary of State Colin Powell today clarified that the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) is "essentially" an administrative servicing arrangement between the Philippines and the United States and that there was nothing "mysterious about it."

In a press briefing and during talks with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang, Secretary Powell said the MLSA was “usually negotiated by middle level management within our Department of Defense and does not usually come to this level of attention and interest.”

But he said he was aware that the MLSA was “a matter of great interest in the Philippines.”

He hoped that once the contents and benefits of the MLSA have been explained thoroughly by the US defense department and the Philippines’ armed forces, “the Filipinos people will understand that there is nothing mysterious about it.”

“It is not an effort to ensure ourselves in any way into the Philippines that would be troubling anyone. It doesn’t deal with that at all,” he said.

“It is strictly a set of arrangements between the two sides for logistical support and accountability,” he added.

In a later media briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said there were several provisions in the MLSA, which if incorporated, would address the objections of even its harshest critics.

Bunye said the agreement contained a provision that would address the basing rights, prohibition of construction and establishment of US military base facilities or permanent structures.

He said the MLSA also provided that storage units and ports should at all times remain under the control and supervision of the host country.

GMA cites PNP quick response, citizen cooperation in arrest of highway-robbery-gang

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded Philippine National Police (PNP) officials for the arrest of three uniformed scalawags, including a police superintendent, and two civilians for highway robbery, extortion and carnapping.

“I believe this is the highest ranking police officer that we arrested and it shows the strong resolve of our PNP leadership headed by Gen. (Hermogenes) Ebdane to clean up the ranks,” the President said in a statement.

Ebdane presented to the President and to media suspects Police Superintendent Virgilio Jose, chief of the General Service Office of the PNP-Maritime Group; Senior Police Officer 1 Gonzalo Gultiano; Police Officer 1 Sergio Bendoy and civilian assets Gaudencio Espibon and Marlu Amora.

The President said the war against crime “does not distinguish between citizens and police,” adding that the uniform was not a protective shield against justice and the law.

She cited citizen cooperation and trust in the police that led to the rescue of six victims of a highway-robbery the suspects staged in Barangay Talaba, Cavite last August 2.

Lenny Prior, a relative of one of the victims, reported the incident to the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (PACER) unit that responded and arrested the suspects.

“When citizens report crime, the police do solve them with speed and efficiency,” she said.

She said this was a solid example of how responsible citizenship could help win the streets and keep every family safe.

With police and people in close cooperation, there are better chances for criminals to get the justice they deserve, she added.

Ebdane, in a report, said the victims — Ernesto Aringay, Rosalinda Garcia, Virginia Calipco, Rosque Prior, Arlene dela Cruz and Rodolfo Saspa — were on their way to San Andres Bukid, Manila to attend a birthday party.

On the road, the victim's vehicle was blocked by a red Toyota Corolla car. Three armed men introduced themselves as police officers, took the six victims at gunpoint, commandeered their vehicle and divested them of their personal belongings including jewelry worth P30,000, five cellular phones and P5,000 in cash.

A demand of P100,000 was also made in exchange for the victims' freedom.

While negotiations were ongoing, Ebdane said the victims were held in separate groups, one in Mandaluyong City and the other in Quezon City.

PACER operatives rescued Aringay and Garcia while in the custody of P/Supt. Jose.

The four other victims were rescued near Hotel Rembrandt, Quezon City.

Confiscated from the suspects were their car with plate number USL-990, P35,000 in cash, several firearms, cellular phones and the personal belongings of the victims.

Powell to review negative travel advisory on RP

United States Secretary of State Colin Powell today said he would undertake a review of travel advisories around the world following a request of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, in their meeting today, to lift the negative advisory on the Philippines.

Powell made the commitment during an expanded meeting with the President at her office in Malacañang. Powell earlier had a separate meeting at the Main Living Room with the President along with U.S. Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone and Foreign Secretary Blas Ople.

"I will review the status of travel advisories and see what we can judge," Powell told the President.

He said he had a bias for lifting travel advisories. "My bias is to lift travel advisories... I want people to travel. I want Americans to travel to the Philippines," he said.

During the meeting, the President raised the possibility of lifting the negative travel advisory on the Philippines.

She cited government efforts to curb criminality. "We've been bearing fruits on a daily basis," she added.

The President said that in recognition of her administration's campaign against criminality, China has lifted its own negative travel advisory on the Philippines.

The President noted that next year is "Visit Philippines Year." One of the program's highlights is to invite Americans to the country to commemorate the Leyte Landing.

GMA cites role of Aglipayan Church in building nation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the significant role of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) or the Aglipayan Church in the country's struggle against foreign invaders and for its contribution in building a strong Republic.

In the President's speech during the IFI's Centennial Celebration at the Quirino Grandstand in Luneta, Manila, she noted that 100 years ago, the Aglipayan Church was in the forefront of defending the country's independence from foreign hands and was also responsible in initiating the nation's first labor movement.

"Your establishment of the labor movement has expressed not only our independence from foreign rulers but also against the oppression of powerful Filipinos," she said.

Aside from its vast contribution to the country's history, the President said the IFI, through its founder, the late Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, left behind many of its members and relatives who continued to contribute a lot to nation building as well as in maintaining peace and order.

She cited in particular Philippine National Police (PNP) Deputy Director Edgardo Aglipay, a descendant of the IFI founder, who formerly served as PNP director in Region III and later as chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO).

The President thanked Gen. Aglipay for his contribution to her administration and in the maintenance of peace and order in the country.

In order to build strong institutions for a strong Philippine Republic that will represent the people rather than a few vested interests, the Chief executive said "the Filipino people must wage a moral revolution from the top through leadership by example."

"Only moral strength can be the invincible foundation of good governance and only good governance can serve as the pathway to peace, justice and the conquest of poverty," she said.

When she assumed the presidency in January last year, the President said she was committed to the achievement of good governance based on three pillars that included a moral foundation to guide leadership at all levels, the assurance of transparency in all government actions and the principle of good governance as an ethic of effective implementation throughout the bureaucracy.

President Macapagal-Arroyo expressed her belief that good governance is the right path to achieve peace, justice, and alleviate poverty in the country.

According to her, one way to defeat graft and corruption is to reduce red tape in various government agencies and institutions.

In the span of one year, she said red tape had been reduced in 12 departments and 19 agencies of the government, noting that in securing housing permits, the signatures needed had been reduced from 188 to 45.

At the latter part of her speech, the President thanked the officers and members of the Aglipayan Church for being good citizens of the Republic.

"Thank you for being an inspiration to us in government and for making us worthy of being your rightful representatives," she said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 3, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033349/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug03.htm>

The President's Day: August 4, 2002

04 AUGUST 2002

- **Gov't hits hard on robbery-holdup gang up north**

Gov't hits hard on robbery-holdup gang up north

The government has scored another victory in the fight against criminality with the arrest of members of the Sagada-Kalinga group, one of the most notorious holdup gangs operating in the provinces of the Cordillera Autonomous Region, Benguet, Pangasinan and La Union.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. and Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. today presented to media 12 members of the Sagada-Kalinga group, including two provincial police officers.

Cordillera Police Regional Office Director George Aliño and Police Regional Police Office I Director Arturo Lomibao were also present during the presentation.

Presented were suspects John Malidom, Jr., Heralde Bag-ay, Romeo Binoloc, Alex Uvido, Jonathan Fokan, Nelson Bag-ay, Peter Bocalen, Gilbert Balunsat, Edmundo Boswal, David Pucalan, Aslo Ambonoc and Junel Balutoc.

In short remarks, the President told the PNP officials that the Filipino people are grateful "for your hard work."

But she pointed out that there were more criminal syndicates still out to victimize communities. "We await more arrest in the days to come," she said.

She lauded Ebdane and the men and women of the PNP for their success in going after and eliminating criminal gangs and syndicates.

She personally congratulated the members of the Cordillera Police Regional Office (CPRO), the PRO I, PACER, Benguet Provincial Police Office, and the Binalonan, Pugo and Tuba police stations.

"I encourage them, and I hope the people will also encourage them, to keep doing the good job that they are doing," she added.

The President ordered Ebdane to publish the picture of another Sagada-Kalinga group leader.

She also said disclosed the full implementation of a reward system for the capture of criminal gang and syndicate members.

She said the government gave a reward of P5 million to the informant who pointed to Abu Sabaya, the spokesman of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf.

The other day, she also gave an P853,144.99 reward to the informant who effected the multimillion-peso shabu bust in Varsity Hills, Quezon City.

A report from the PNP Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (PACER) unit said the Sagada-Kalinga group had been involved in a series of robbery-holdups of restaurants, passenger buses and even pawnshops in the Benguet-La Union areas.

The group was also tagged in at least five bank robberies in Pangasinan and La Union.

Records showed that PACER elements tracked and arrested the gang members following the robbery of Salting Restaurant along Marcos Highway in Barangay Baloy Sur, Tuba, Benguet last July 30.

The gang took an aggregate P120,000 in cash and valuables from the restaurant and from passengers of a bus parked in front of the restaurant.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 4, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033401/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug04.htm>

The President's Day: August 5, 2002

05 AUGUST 2002

- **GMA plays hands-on role in anti-criminality drive**
- **GMA announces filing of criminal charges against 4 suspected rice smuggler**
- **GMA calls on barangay officials to rally behind administration war against criminality**
- **GMA welcomes back 27 NPA rebel returnees in Laguna**
- **GMA lauds PNP, DOJ, VRB for arrest of several crime suspects in Metro Manila**
- **July inflation dips to 2.6%; lowest since February**
- **GMA launches Gabay ng Mamamayan Action Center**
- **GMA opens Laguna's new San Cristobal Bridge**

GMA plays hands-on role in anti-criminality drive

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will continue to play a "hands-on" role insofar as the government's campaign to rid the country of criminals and terrorists is concerned.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today stressed this, as he noted serious efforts being made by the military and the police along the lines of preserving the peace and maintaining order nationwide.

In a radio interview, Bunye said it was the President's style to be on top of the peace and order campaign.

"Gusto niyang ipakita na talagang seryoso siya sa kanyang binitiwang pangako sa State of the Nation Address na isa sa pangunahing pagbibigyang pansin ay 'yung anti-criminality campaign (The President wants to show that she is serious in carrying out an effective anti-criminality campaign, as she announced in her July 2002 SONA)," he said.

The campaign includes all forms of smuggling, which is not an ordinary crime, but economic sabotage, he added.

The President has placed great emphasis on weeding out syndicates involved in smuggling, he said.

As this developed, the Bureau of Customs (BoC) is set to file today criminal charges against four persons involved in smuggling some 35,000 bags of rice at the Port of Tabaco in Albay on September 23 last year.

A report reaching Malacañang said smuggling charges under Section 3601 of the Tariff and Customs Code and falsification under Article 171 of the Revised Penal Code would be filed against Antonio Chua Jr., Carlos Carillo, Pierre Toundjis and Yushawu Awudu, a Ghanian national.

GMA announces filing of criminal charges against 4 suspected rice smuggler

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that the Bureau of Customs is filing criminal charges against four individuals suspected of smuggling 35,000 bags of rice in the port of Tabaco, Albay.

The Chief Executive made the announcement at the Department of Justice (DOJ) in the presence of Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo, Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, Philippine National Police chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane and other officials.

In a complaint-affidavit executed by Clemente P. Heraldo and Leonito A. Santiago, chief and special investigator respectively of the Bureau of Customs, the following were charged with smuggling and falsification of public documents: Antonio Chua, Jr. of Tabaco, Albay; Carlos Carillo, also of Tabaco, Albay; Pierre "Peter" N. Toundjis,

president of El Greco Ship Manning and Management Corporation; and Yushawu Awuda, a Ghanian national and ship captain of the vessel “M/V Neptune Breeze.”

The President also ordered Secretary Perez to file charges against Judge Arnulfo Cabredo for issuing a temporary restraining order (TRO) that prevented the Bureau of Customs from detaining the rice shipment.

She likewise asked the DOJ to file charges against other erring judges, particularly those involved in criminal activities such as the one in Subic in Zambales, and in Pasig.

Records of the Bureau of the Customs showed that on Sept. 23, 2001, a vessel, the “M/V Criston,” loaded with 35,000 sacks of suspected smuggled rice, docked at the port of Tabaco.

On the same date, the Deputy Collector of the said port issued a warrant of seizure and detention against the vessel and its cargo of 35,000 bags of rice.

However, before the Bureau of Customs could actually take custody of the said rice shipment, Judge Arnulfo B. Cabredo of the Regional Trial Court of Tabaco, Albay, upon petition of the consignees, Antonio Chua and Carlos Carillo, issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) restraining the Bureau of Customs from detaining the shipment.

On Nov. 7, 2001, at the height of typhoon “Nanang,” and despite the existence of a warrant of seizure and detention, the vessel “M/V Criston” left without proper clearances from the said port.

Records also showed that on Nov. 17, 2001, a vessel bearing the name “M/V Neptune Breeze” was spotted at the port of Mariveles, Bataan. Acting on the request of the Bureau of Customs, the Philippine Coast Guard apprehended and detained the vessel at the said port on the ground that the “M/V Neptune Breeze” was the same vessel “M/V Criston” that escaped from the port of Tabaco on Nov. 7, 2001.

As a result, a seizure case was instituted at the Port of Manila, to determine the persons liable for the unlawful act. During the proceedings, El Greco Ship Manning and Management Corporation, through its president, Peter Toundjis, appeared and presented itself as the operator of the “M/V Neptune Breeze.”

During the hearing of the seizure case, the Bureau of Customs established that the rice cargo of the “M/V Criston” was brought to the port of Tabaco without the necessary import documents.

The documents presented, the BOC said, were all spurious, making it appear that the rice cargo was locally sourced and not imported.

According to the BOC, Chua and Carillo, being the consignees of the shipment, are responsible for the unlawful importation of rice.

On the other hand, the culpability of Toundjis, president of El Greco, is apparent from his act of presenting a spurious fixture note embodying a purported contract between the “M/V Neptune Breeze” and Orica Explosives to make it appear that the vessel “M/V Neptune Breeze” is not the “M/V Criston.”

The captain of the vessel “M/V Criston,” Yushawu Awuda, was also recommended to be criminally charged because of his act of presenting spurious documents to mislead the proper authorities in determining the port of origin of the shipment.

It was also revealed during the hearing that from the physical examination and inspection of the vessels and macro etching of the engines of both vessels by the PNP, that “M/V Criston” and “M/V Neptune Breeze” are one and the same.

GMA calls on barangay officials to rally behind administration war against criminality

STA. CRUZ, Laguna—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the country’s barangay officials to rally behind her administration’s stepped-up war against all forms of criminality.

In her speech at the mass oath taking of newly elected barangay officials of Laguna, the President said that in the fight against criminality, she would be depending not only on the military and the police but also on the local executives, particularly the barangay officials.

“*Kaya ako narito hindi lamang para batiin kayo at gawin ang inyong panunumpa, kung hindi na rin para i-recruit na nga kayo dito sa ating giyera kontra sa katiwalian, kontra sa kriminalidad* (That is why I am here not only to administer your oaths but also to recruit you in our battle against corruption, against criminality),” the President said.

The President said that the war against poverty cannot be won for as long as there is rampant corruption and criminality in our society.

The President also stressed the underlying theme of her State of the Nation Address (SONA), which is an all-out war against criminality.

During the occasion, the President also announced that she had signed an executive order providing death benefits to all barangay officials.

But the President added that she hoped the barangay officials would not avail themselves of the death benefits because she wanted them to live for a long time.

According to the President, she had cited in her second SONA two prerequisites in the building of a strong republic.

One of these prerequisites, the President said, is that the people should not be used as an instrument of the powerful but of the poor.

The second prerequisite, the President said, is that the bureaucracy or the institutions should be stable enough so that we can move forward and attain our objectives.

GMA welcomes back 27 NPA rebel returnees in Laguna

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today welcomed back to the folds of the law 27 former members of the communist New People’s Army (NPA), who she said should start a new life under a Strong Republic.

In a speech during the mass oath-taking of newly-elected barangay officials at the San Luis gymnasium in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, the President said her government intended to eliminate poverty within the decade to stop people from believing in twisted ideologies and seeking refuge in mountains and hills.

She said the government has been seriously involved in an all-out no-nonsense war against criminality and terrorism. “*Basta’t terorista, ginigiyera natin ‘yun* (We will wage war against terrorists),” she added.

She noted that poverty could have driven people to go to the hills and believe in philosophies meant to destroy democratic institutions.

But “*wini-welcome naman natin kung sila ay bumabalik* (we welcome those who return to government),” she said.

The President said the rebel returnees would be given enough funds to start with a livelihood project. She led officials in awarding livelihood checks to the rebel returnees.

She also asked Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. to brief Laguna's newly-elected village leaders on how to dissuade people from joining rebel movements.

She urged the barangay leaders to practice good governance and bring themselves and their services to the heart of their villages.

She said the Gabay ng Mamamayan Action (GMA) Centers could play a vital role in the speedy delivery of social services.

GMA lauds PNP, DOJ, VRB for arrest of several crime suspects in Metro Manila

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Videogram Regulatory Board (VRB) for the arrest of several suspected criminals operating in Metro Manila.

The President also extolled the concerned citizens who gave the police and law enforcement agencies vital information that led to the arrest of these suspects under the National Capital Regional Police Office's (NCRPO) Magic Eye Program which encourages the public to report not only criminals but also abusive policemen.

"The partnership between the police and the citizenry is the strongest defense we have against criminals. Working together against crime, we build our strong Republic," the Chief Executive said as she presented to the media this morning at the DOJ five members of the Honda robbery-holdup gang and two big-time suspected carnappers as well as other criminal suspects operating in the Binondo area in Manila.

"You can see that with every arrest, we show how strong our resolve is to put every criminal behind bars. And with every arrest, we see how citizen cooperation contributes to positive police action," the President stressed.

The President announced that over the weekend the PNP-NCRPO arrested five members of the Honda robbery-holdup gang linked to at least 45 heists on jewelry shops and restaurants in the metropolis.

According to the President, the information leading to the arrest of the five Honda gang members came from a concerned citizen.

The arrested members of the Honda gang were identified as Reynante Salvacion, alias "Rene," 23, a high school student of No. 611 San Nicolas St., Barangay San Nicolas, Gaudalupe, Makati City; Gino Mahinay, alias "Dodong," 32, a taxi driver, of No. 6 Ferdinand St., Vista Verde, Cainta, Rizal; Emerito Lague, alias "Bong," 34, a seaman, of Pre Fad Guadalupe, Makati City; Dexter Saren, alias "Dex," 29, a seaman, of No. 19 Rose St., Kingstown, Caloocan City; and Jay Canlas, alias "Jon-Jon," of Blumentritt St., Sta. Cruz, Manila.

The NCRPO composite team pounced on the suspects at around 1:10 a.m. at the Mina Balay Bar and Grill Restaurant along V. V. Soliven St., Barangay San Isidro, Cainta, Rizal after a tip-off from a concerned citizen.

According to PNP officials, the tipster learned about the NCRPO "Magic Eye" program and tipped off the robbers to the police. The suspects reportedly met at the restaurant after committing a robbery.

Police operatives seized four .38 caliber revolvers and a black bag containing eight car license plates (WRT-639; USW-149; WKP-145; UJH-685; WAR-753; UFY-585; UKV-824; and WJZ-753), assorted pieces of jewelry, two M-16 armalite rifles, a maroon ballcap, two bonnets, several tools consisting of pliers, screwdrivers, and wrenches, a cash box with vouchers of Macro International, and ammunition. Also seized were a maroon Honda Civic (UJD-796), a green Revo (WTB-823), and a Nissan taxi (PXX-189).

The five Honda gang members are detained at the San Juan Station Investigation Division pending the filing of several counts of robbery in band against them.

The President also presented to the media two suspected members of big-time carnappers “who were caught in the act of sniffing shabu.”

She pointed out that the two suspects, identified as Victor John Ignacio, alias “Kokoy” and “VJ,” 27, jobless of No. 421 Mayfair St., Montevista Subdivision, Barangay Sto. Nino, Cainta, Rizal; and Raymundo Bautista, 25, jobless, of No. 463 Tenement, Taguig, Metro Manila, carnapped at least 20 cars since 1999.

Police operations conducted by the teams, armed with a warrant of arrest for carnapping (Criminal case nos. 00-1417 and 00-1418) issued by Makati City Regional Trial Court Branch 66 Judge Ricardo Rosario against Ignacio, pounced on the suspects at around 9:10 p.m. Saturday in Barangay Sto. Nino, Cainta, Rizal. The operatives arrested Ignacio and Bautista while they were engaged in a shabu session.

The President lauded the efforts of newly-appointed Senior Superintendent Pedro Bulaong, Western Police District Director, for arresting criminals operating in the Binondo area, including the holdup- robbery at the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) in the area.

She also mentioned the operations conducted by VRB chairman Ramon “Bong” Revilla, Jr. on fake cassette disks (CD).

Revilla, according to the President, is now concentrating the VRB’s efforts on the manufacturers of the fake CDs.

She announced that Revilla is giving rewards to individuals who can give information to the VRB on manufacturers of fake CDs. Rewards will range from P250,000, P500,000 and P1 million depending on how big the fake CD manufacturers are.

July inflation dips to 2.6%; lowest since February

The country’s inflation rate further dropped to 2.6 percent in July, bringing the average inflation rate since January to 3.4 percent.

A report from the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) reaching Malacañang said this was the lowest inflation rate recorded since February.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas said this positive development could lead to lower than the 4.5 to 5.5 percent target inflation for the year.

“Based on the average inflation rate so far this year, the average inflation for 2002 is most likely to hit 3.2 to 3.5 percent barring further unexpected shocks,” Canlas said.

Citing statistics of the National Statistics Office (NSO), NEDA said the month-on-month inflation was stable at 0.2 percent in July, mainly due to the 3.9-percent drop in electric bills associated with the cut in purchased power adjustment (PPA) costs.

Domestic fuel retail prices also declined by P0.36 per liter, bringing down fuel prices by 0.3 percent.

But food prices slightly rose by 0.6 percent from the previous month as monsoon rains hit the country and led to disruptions in market supply.

The report said prices of rice went up 0.9 percent; eggs, 0.1 percent; fish, 0.6 percent; fruits and vegetables, 2.3 percent, and miscellaneous food items, 0.1 percent.

However, meat prices went down by 0.3 percent; corn, 0.1 percent; and dairy products, 0.1 percent. This bucked the downtrend.

The report also noted that the reductions in electricity bills brought down inflation in the National Capital Region and in areas outside Metro Manila.

In Metro Manila, inflation decelerated to 2.9 percent in July 2002. The average electricity bill dropped by 6.1 percent in July from the level a month ago.

In areas outside Metro Manila, year-on-year inflation was lower at 2.5 percent in July. Electricity bills in these areas also dropped at the average rate of 2.0 percent from the previous month.

Secretary Canlas said the benign inflation rate is expected to further stabilize treasury bill rates.

“This will in turn generate interest savings for the national government, thus improving the chance to meet the deficit target for the year,” he said.

The favorable inflation report came at the heels of the 12.3 percent rise of exports in June.

GMA launches Gabay ng Mamamayan Action Center

STA. CRUZ, Laguna – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today officially led the nationwide launching of the Gabay ng Mamamayan Action (GMA) Center which will be established in all barangays in the country to provide the people with direct access to information and referral systems, particularly on basic services, from the national government.

In her speech before some 10,500 newly-elected barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan officials held at the San Luis Sports Complex here, the President announced that the GMA Center will focus on direct government help in the barangay level.

The President also said the GMA Center would provide information and assistance on investment and job placement, livelihood, peace and order, health and sanitation and social welfare services, infrastructure, sports development and disaster preparedness.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. said the establishment of the GMA Center is the acknowledgement of the barangay’s significant role and in support of the SONA targets of the President and the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

He said the GMA Center project is expected to bring the government’s programs and services closer to the grassroot level.

The GMA Center shall have as members the Barangay Council, the Barangay Secretary and Treasurer, and other lay community leaders who will man the center as Action Officers for every major concern. The Punong Barangay shall be the head of the center.

The President also administered the oath of office to some 10,500 newly-elected Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan officials from 28 towns and two cities (Calamba and San Pablo) in Laguna.

The President admitted that aside from personally inducting and congratulating them, she went to Laguna barangay and SK officials to get their support in the fight against graft and corruption, criminality and poverty in the local level.

GMA opens Laguna's new San Cristobal Bridge

CALAMBA, Laguna – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today opened to vehicular traffic the newly renovated San Cristobal Bridge along the Manila South Road here.

Prior to her arrival, the President together — with Laguna Governor Teresita Lazaro, Vice Governor Dan Fernandez, Calamba City Mayor Severino Lajara and Laguna 2nd District Representative Joaquin Chipeco, Jr. — received a briefing on the construction of the P53.5-million bridge by Public Works and Highways Undersecretary Teodoro Encarnacion.

After the project briefing, the President rode in a mini-truck for the inaugural drive-thru at the 73-linear meter four-lane bridge. She was assisted by Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., Encarnacion, Governor Lazaro, Mayor Lajara and Chipeco.

Because of typhoons Reming and Senyang in November 1999, the bridge was damaged. Its substructures sustained massive erosion and scouring on the foundation.

The Department of Public Works and Highways ordered the permanent closure of the bridge and opted for its immediate replacement.

The old bridge was a two-lane structure built in 1948. It served as a major connection between Manila and Laguna, linking several provinces such as Batangas, Quezon and the Bicol Region.

The bridge was also a vital link to the municipalities of San Pablo, Binan, Sta. Rosa, Cabuyao, and Calamba, all in Laguna.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 5, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033412/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug05.htm>

The President's Day: August 6, 2002

06 AUGUST 2002

- **NEDA-ICC okays 7 infra projects worth P28.7B**
- **Bunye congratulates AFP arnis team for winning 5 gold, 3 silver medals in int'l tourney**
- **GMA extends condolences, orders full assistance to relatives of 2 Filipinas in Israel bombing**
- **GMA calls on Congress to speed up passage of priority bills**
- **GMA convenes LEDAC on administration bills**
- **GMA did not categorically tag Ramirez as suspect in multimillion-peso tax fraud, says NBI**
- **Buenaventura calls on LEDAC to adopt changes in anti-money laundering act**

NEDA-ICC okays 7 infra projects worth P28.7B

The interagency Cabinet-level Investment Coordination Committee (ICC) of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has approved seven infrastructure projects worth P28.7 billion.

The projects are expected to further perk up socio-economic activity in major agri-industrial parts of the country, as they seek to improve living conditions of beneficiary-communities.

A NEDA report reaching Malacañang said the lion's share of the approved funding went to the construction of the Agno River Integrated Irrigation Project.

The P10.8-billion Agno River irrigation project aims to water some 70,800 hectares all year round.

It is also expected to increase the production of paddy rice and diversified crops in the service area that will make farming a highly competitive and profitable business in Pangasinan and Tarlac.

Further, the project is also expected to raise per capita income, upgrade the living standards of the people and create job opportunities in the Ilocos and Central Luzon regions.

The Agno River project scope includes the repair of the San Roque diversion weir and intake; construction of the re-regulating pond with a capacity of 4.6 million cubic meters; construction of a canal at the right bank of the Agno River to supply service areas of the Agno River Irrigation System; and the construction of siphon across Agno River that will link the main canal of the lower Agno River Irrigation System.

The government of Japan, under its 26th Yen Loan Package, will fund the project.

Another project, the P5.38-billion Laguindingan Airport Development Project, involves the construction of a new international-standard airport at Laguindingan.

This will replace the Lumbia Airport in Cagayan de Oro and the Balo-i Airpot in Iligan City.

Funding will come from the Korean Economic Development Cooperation Fund.

The NEDA-ICC said three road projects of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) worth an aggregate P4.79 billion were likewise approved under Japan's 26th Yen Loan Package.

These are the Palawan South road project; Mabini circumferential road project; and the upgrading of the inter-urban highway system project Phase I.

The P1.07-billion Palawan South road project aims to ensure a road network linking less developed communities to the mainstream of socio-economic development.

It involves the rehabilitation of 178.56 kilometers through asphalt concrete improvement and overlay, including the widening of the existing road from five meters to 6.10 meters with the provision of gravel shoulders on both sides.

The project also includes the construction of a 48-linear meter reinforced concrete deck girder at the Tagbarungis Bridge in the Puerto Princesa-Inapsan-Aborlan section.

The P316.3-million Tourism Roads: Mabini circumferential road project aims to link 11 barangays in the town of Mabini, serving as the main access of the interior villages to alternative markets in the town centers while assuring farmers of higher returns from their agricultural produce, and propelling development in the potential agricultural lands within the road influence area.

It involves the construction of 19.62 kilometers of 200-millimeter thick Portland cement concrete roadway and the replacement of one-overflow and three-ford bridges to reinforced concrete deck girder and pre-stressed concrete deck girder totaling 121.1 linear meters.

The upgrading of the inter-urban highway system with the construction of three bypasses along the Sta. Rita-San Jose section is worth P3.37 billion.

It involves the construction of a two-lane, 6.6-kilometer bypass road in Plaridel and a 2,020-linear meter interchange. It also includes the construction of a two-lane 11.3-kilometer bypass road in Cabanatuan, a 1,125-linear meter reinforced concrete deck girder bridge (Pampanga River Bridge), and eight other reinforced concrete deck girder bridges.

The project aims to mitigate serious traffic congestion and support socioeconomic development within the region.

Also approved was the P4.52-billion Pasig-Marikina river channel improvement project, Phase I.

The project intends to alleviate the living and sanitary conditions in Metro Manila due to massive flooding caused by the overflowing of the Pasig-Marikina River which results in severe damage to lives, properties and infrastructure.

The project will lessen the overflowing of the Pasig River at times of heavy discharge by raising the river's conveyance capacity through riverbank elevations.

Under the project, some 18.2 kilometers of parapet wall and 17.6 kilometers of revetment walls will be erected, while the dredging and excavation of some 7,000 cubic meters of riverbed deposits are made from Delpan Bridge to Napindin Channel.

The works include the repair of about ten kilometers of damaged stretches of river walls to prevent erosion and collapse of riverbanks.

Lastly, the Valenzuela-Obando-Meycauayan area drainage system improvement and related works project, worth P3.24 billion, aims to mitigate flood damages in the area.

The project provides structural and non-structural facilities to effect the reduction of flood related damages in Malabon, Navotas as well as Obando and Meycauayan in Bulacan.

Floods in these areas have worsened, aggravated by high tides in Manila Bay, inundating low-lying parts and affecting some 400,000 people.

Both the Marikina-Pasig and Valenzuela-Obando-Meycauayan flood control projects will be financed under Japan's 26th Yen Loan Package.

Bunye congratulates AFP arnis team for winning 5 gold, 3 silver medals in int'l tourney

Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio "Toting" Bunye yesterday expressed his support to the sports of arnis, a highly sophisticated fighting style that originated in the Philippines.

Bunye at the same time congratulated the members of the General Headquarters team of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) who called on him after winning no less than five gold medals and three silvers in the Qualifying Rounds of the Cebu International Arnis Tournament.

The said international arnis competition was held in Dumanjug and Ayala Center in Cebu City on July 19-25, 2002.

Among those who paid a courtesy visit on Bunye were gold medal winners Sgt. Christian Millan, Sgt. Rogelio Rentuma, Cpl. Regie Sanchez, Cpl. Jose Renante Ibanez and Joan Talledo; and silver medalists T/Sgt. Elmer Garlan, Randy Dano and Jeffrey Agustin.

They were accompanied by Col. Jerry Albano (Philippine Army) and Capt. Marciano Jesus Guevarra (Philippine Air Force) from the Special Services Office of the AFP-GHQ.

The GHQ team is composed of nine military personnel and three dependents. Five of the team members enter the world championship tournament after winning in the qualifying round.

Aside from gold and silver medals, the two other members of the GHQ team also won bronze medals. They are S/Sgt. Antonio Capatoy and Sgt. Danilo Talledo.

Aside from the Philippines, the other countries that competed in the Cebu International Arnis Championship Tournament were the United States, New Zealand, Germany, Australia and other member-countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN).

Arnis is of Philippine origin. When the country was invaded by the Spanish, the invaders required guns to subdue their fierce opponents. The deadly fighting skills of Filipino warriors nearly overwhelmed them, and they dubbed the native stick style "escrima" (skirmish).

Escrima was subsequently outlawed, but the techniques did not disappear. They were preserved in secret, sometimes under the very noses of the conquerors in the form of dances or mock battles staged in religious plays known as "moro-moro."

These plays featured Filipinos, sometimes costumed as Spanish soldiers wearing arnis, the harnesses worn during medieval times for armor. The blade fighting forms and footwork were identical to those used in escrima. The word arnis soon became corrupted to arnis, and the name stuck.

Historically, arnis incorporated three related methods: "espada y daga" (sword and dagger), which employs a long blade and a short dagger; solo "baston" (single stick); and "sinawali" (to weave), which uses two sticks of equal length, twirled in "weaving" fashion for blocking and striking (the term derives from sinawali, the bamboo matting woven in the Philippines).

GMA extends condolences, orders full assistance to relatives of 2 Filipinas in Israel bombing

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has conveyed her condolences and deepest sympathies to the families of the two Filipina care-givers who were among those killed in a Palestinian suicide bombing in northern Israel last Sunday.

The President also ordered concerned government agencies to extend all possible assistance to the families of Adelina Cunanan of Minalin, Pampanga, and Rebecca Ruga of Bansud, Oriental Mindoro.

The two Filipina overseas workers were among the nine people who died when the bus they were riding exploded in northern Israel.

In today's meeting of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC), Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople said he had conveyed the President's expression of sympathy and condolences to the victims' relatives in the Philippines.

Ople also told the LEDAC members that in his recent telephone conversation with Philippine Ambassador to Israel Marciano Paynor, Jr., the envoy told him that the two Filipina victims were positively identified by the Tel Aviv forensic and police authorities.

Secretary Ople said arrangements are now being made to ship the remains of Cunanan and Ruga to Manila as soon as possible.

"Perhaps this weekend, all the procedural requirements will be made so that the bodies will be sent to Manila," Ople said.

Ople said he was also assured by Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas that benefits to which the survivors of the victims are entitled under the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) are now being worked out.

He said these benefits would include insurance and burial expenses.

Ople also reported to the President that the Israeli government will bear the cost of transporting the remains to the Philippines.

According to Ople, as soon as the bodies arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, OWWA will take care of all costs, including the expenses of transporting the remains to Pampanga and Oriental Mindoro.

He also said that because both Cunanan and Ruga are documented workers, and therefore covered by the Institute of National Insurance of Israel, the families of the victims will be entitled to full insurance benefits from the Israeli institution.

GMA calls on Congress to speed up passage of priority bills

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the leaders of both houses of Congress to speed up the enactment urgent administration measures, particularly bills included in the common legislative agenda.

The Chief Executive issued this call to Senate President Franklin Drilon and House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. and other legislators during the 90th Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) Meeting held this morning at Malacañang's State Dining Room.

The President said she purposely did not include many bills in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) because "I didn't want to impose so much on Congress."

"I had already about 16 or so priority measures in the last Congress and we only added two, the Transco franchise bill and the Anti-Terrorism bill," she said, adding that if she had asked for so many bills "then it will be harder to prioritize because we have so many priorities."

During her second State of the Nation Address last July 22, the President underscored the urgency of enacting six legislative measures, namely, the Anti-Terrorism Act, legislative franchise for Transmission Corporation (Transco), Special Purpose Asset Vehicle (SPAV), Absentee Voting Law, Citizenship Retention Law, and farmland as loan collateral bill.

Briefing the President and LEDAC members on the status of the administration bills, Secretary Gabriel Claudio, Presidential Legislative Adviser and head of the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office (PLLO), said that four of the six legislative measures enunciated by the President in her SONA are part of the current LEDAC common legislative agenda.

These are SPAV Law, Absentee Voting Law, Citizenship Retention Law, and farmland as loan collateral bill.

Claudio also said the following three administration measures are now in the advance stages of the legislative mill:

- SPAV Law – approved on third reading in the House; recalled from the floor and remanded to the committee in the Senate;
- Absentee Voting Law – is in the period of amendments in the House; to be re-opened for the period of interpellation in the Senate to accommodate further clarificatory questions; and
- Citizenship Retention Law – awaiting floor sponsorship in the Senate, and is already in the period of interpellation in the House.

According to Claudio, the three measures set to make considerable headway this week are the following:

- Transco franchise bill — can finally be tackled on the floor any time soon since it has been reported out of the House committee even before Congressional adjournment in June. The said franchise bill must originate exclusively from the House, hence the Senate will have to await the House-approved version.
- The proposed bill giving small farmland collateral value may be wrapping up committee-level consideration this week. The House appropriations committee has scheduled a hearing tomorrow (Wednesday) relative to the guarantee clause of the substitute bill prepared by the House agrarian reform committee. Senate bill pending in committee.
- Anti-Terrorism Bill – is a bit delayed upon request by certain House members for more time in order to address human rights issues at committee level. Senate versions also pending in committee.

Claudio said that consideration of the anti-terrorism bill provide an opportunity to incorporate provisions against terrorism financing and pertinent amendments to Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA).

“This measure will therefore be our strongest response against global terrorism and will make the AMLA conform to international standards as recommended by Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura in his memorandum to the President,” Claudio said.

Claudio also reported that to date, four measures included in the “wish list” have recently been entered into the statute books and thus would bring the number of laws enacted under the present Congress to nine. These are the following:

- Anti-Money Laundering Act (RA 9160),
- Rent Reform Act of 2002 (RA 9161),
- General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2002 (RA 9162),
- National Service Training Program (RA 9163),
- Synchronized Barangay and SK Elections (RA 9164),
- Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 (RA 9165),
- AFP Salary Increase (RA 9166),
- Film Development Incentives Act (RA 9167), and
- Plant Variety Protection Act (RA 9168).

Claudio noted that of the remaining bills in the common legislative agenda, two are pending in the bicameral conference committee, the Free Patents Law and Eid'l Fitr National Holiday; three were approved on third reading in either chamber, Magna Carta for Barangay Business Enterprises, SPAV Bill, and Securitization Bill; one approved on second reading in either chamber, Housing and Urban Development Bill; and five are pending in plenary in either chamber – including the Removal of the Documentary Stamps Tax, Railways Modernization Act, and Amendments to the Civil Service Code.

He also said that only five measures have not taken off the committee level such as – the Indexation of Sin Taxes, Amendments to the PDIC Charter, Corporate Recovery Act, Massive Reforestation Program and Electoral Reforms.

GMA convenes LEDAC on administration bills

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today convened the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) in Malacañang and asked the leaders of Congress to fast track the enactment of priority bills she mentioned in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 22.

The President, who is the chairman of LEDAC, also discussed with the members of the LEDAC the proposed national budget for 2003, whose theme is “Investing in a Strong Republic.”

During the discussions on the budget for next year, the subject of the early retirement of government workers and proposed amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Law were also discussed.

The Executive department briefed the lawmakers and other members of LEDAC on the Mutual Logistics and Support Agreement.

Saying “it is still a work in progress,” Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes said the revised MLSA is now in the hands of the United States government for review.

The President agreed to the proposal of Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. that the LEDAC meeting be held at least once a month.

The President said “let us make it a date then, every first Tuesday of the month,” to hasten action on administration bills. The last time the LEDAC met was on December 6, 2002. LEDAC was formed to coordinate the efforts of the legislative and executive departments of the government in policy making.

Among the legislators who attended the fourth LEDAC meeting under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration were Senate President Franklin Drilon, Senate President Pro Tempore Manuel Villar, Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda and Senators Rodolfo Biazon, Aquilino Pimentel, Jr. and Robert Barbers; Speaker de Venecia, House Majority Leader Neptali Gonzales II, and Reps. Jose Ma. Salceda, Rolando Andaya, Jr., Raul Gonzales, Oscar Moreno, and Gerry Salapuddin.

From the Executive Branch, those present were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Heherson Alvarez, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye and Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable, Jr. and LeDAC Private Sector Representative Guillermo Luz.

GMA did not categorically tag Ramirez as suspect in multimillion-peso tax fraud, says NBI

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) today clarified that, contrary to reports, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has not positively tagged the lady cashier of the Binangonan (Rizal) branch of the Land Bank of the

Philippines (Landbank) as a suspect in the multimillion-peso fraud involving officials of the Landbank and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

In a letter to Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said that while he was interviewing Acsa Ramirez, the Landbank Binangonan branch cashier, the President passed by the NBI to inquire on the progress of the investigation into the largescale tax diversion fraud.

“Consequently, she (the President) decided to meet Ramirez but the President did not categorically announce whether Ramirez was a suspect or not,” Wycoco said.

Wycoco said that Ramirez, who has been cashier of the Binangonan branch since April 2002, was invited by the NBI to shed light on certain matters relevant to the ongoing investigation of the tax fraud.

The Department of Justice has charged Artemio San Juan, the Binangonan Landbank branch manager, with 17 counts of violation of the Anti-Money Laundering Act.

According to Wycoco, San Juan has faulted Ramirez for the opening of the Bonsalagen Account “because her reporting to the management of the suspicious P27-billion check deposit was merely an afterthought of her signing (approval) of the check’s clearing.”

The discovery of the Bonsalagen account triggered the special audit that resulted in the discovery of the multimillion-peso fraud at the Landbank Binangonan branch.

San Juan has claimed that Ramirez also had a hand in the approval of the opening of the account, Wycoco said.

Ramirez was already the cashier of the Landbank Binangonan branch when majority of the multimillion-peso deposits were made on four fraudulent accounts, Wycoco said.

Wycoco said that Ramirez was allowed to go home after her first interview last August 1 but was requested to return on August 4 for polygraph examination but Ramirez has never returned.

Buenaventura calls on LEDAC to adopt changes in anti-money laundering act

Governor Rafael Buenaventura of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) today urged the members of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) to address at least two concerns in the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA) of 2001 so that the Philippines would be stricken out from the list of non-cooperative countries and territories (NCCT) in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

At the fourth LEDAC meeting under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, Buenaventura said that the remaining weaknesses of AMLA, or Republic Act No. 9160, have significantly impaired the effectiveness of the anti-money laundering system in the Philippines.

He said there is a need to expand the definition of “covered transactions” in the AMLA to include any suspicious transactions regardless of the threshold amount.

Buenaventura also said that the AMLA or the BSP must be clothed with the authority to inquire into suspicious deposits without the need for a court order.

In this connection, Buenaventura, as chairman of the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC), urgently proposed the following amendments to AMLA:

- lower the threshold amount from P4 million to P500,000 for covered transactions;

- the reporting of suspicious transactions to AMLC regardless of the amount involved; and
- the grant of authority to AMLC and the BSP to inquire into or examine, even without court order, deposits or investments related to any money laundering offense, unlawful activity or other violations of the AMLA.

Buenaventura expressed the belief that the proposed amendments to the AMLA would effectively address the major concerns of the FATF and would pave the way for the removal of the Philippines from the NCCT list.

Buenaventura, however, told the LEDAC members that the FATF did acknowledge that the Philippines has made substantial progress since the passage of the AMLA.

“That’s the reason why no sanctions have been imposed on us, and they are giving us time,” Buenaventura said.

“They also recognized that we are a democracy and it is not something that we can easily adopt and therefore leaves a lot of discussions, particularly in the legislature,” Buenaventura said.

In his press briefing later this afternoon, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye stressed the need to lower the threshold amount from P4 million to P500,000, saying that in other countries the benchmark is only \$10,000.

“So, the proposal is any amount involving P500,000 must be automatically reported to the Anti-Money Laundering Council,” Bunye said.

According to Bunye, the members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate must now discuss these proposals.

He also said that for as long as the Philippines is moving toward this direction, the government has nothing to worry.

“But we have to be able to come up with some concrete results to be able to avoid being continuously listed among the non-cooperative countries,” Bunye said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: August 6, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033424/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug06.htm>

The President's Day: August 7, 2002

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- **GMA orders filing of raps against 3 DPWH directors on P139-M vehicle repair anomaly**
- **People happy over reduced electric bills**
- **GMA personally condoles with Cunanan's family**
- **GMA stresses need to ensure democracy in RP**
- **Press statement of Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye**

GMA orders filing of raps against 3 DPWH directors on P139-M vehicle repair anomaly

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the filing of appropriate charges against three bureau directors and 38 employees of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) for their alleged involvement in the more than P139-million vehicle repair anomaly.

The President, who motored to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) office in Quezon City, also ordered the suspension of the three officials beginning today.

"These bureau directors must be at the top of the list of respondents and they must be suspended or put under preventive suspension," the President said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo likewise asked Government Corporate Counsel Amado Valdez to be in charge of the prosecution against the three DPWH officials.

She expressed the hope that her order would serve as strong signal to others who would think that they could get away with wrongdoings even if they are Presidential appointees.

According to her, the DPWH is made up of good men and women she do not want the majority, who are good, to be tarnished by the few who are bad, adding that "the higher they go, the harder they fall."

"They have to think twice and they have to behave," the President said.

A report obtained from the DPWH identified the three bureau directors as Emily Tanquintic, Director III, Controllershship and Finance Management; Bert Paborito, Director III, Administrative and Manpower; and Florendo Arias, Director III, Bureau of Equipment.

Last January 9, DPWH Secretary Simeon Datumanong created a committee to investigate reports about the alleged anomaly in vehicle repairs.

On June 23, 2002, the committee chaired by lawyer Lorenzo Sulaik, disclosed the involvement of 41 employees of the department, reaching up to the level of bureau directors.

These employees, according to the report, are assigned with the Bureau of Equipment, Controllershship and Financial Management Service and Administrative and Manpower Management Services.

As of June 2002, the cost of repairs under question was more than P139 million.

Since those higher officials are presidential appointees, the DPWH report said their cases were referred to the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC).

People happy over reduced electric bills

Financial relief and a lot of savings. These are but two of the most important things many residents of Metro Manila and nearby provinces now enjoy with plunging power rates.

“I used to budget P1,700 from my measly income to pay my monthly power bill. Last June and July, I was relieved to find out that my electric bills went down to P1,200 and P1,000, respectively,” says Myrna Rodriguez, a government employee who lives in Kamuning, Quezon City.

“I could use the savings for more important things like more food on our table, small home repairs, new clothes for the children or a first-aid kit,” echoes Francis Apoderado of Sta. Cruz, Manila whose P2,000 electric bill in June went down by over P500 in July.

Rodriguez and Apoderado are but only two of the many persons who are glad the government has taken a fearless stand in cutting down the costs of power.

Baby Cayaba, a newshen, exclaims: “Thanks to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, everyone’s future is becoming brighter.”

Cayaba narrates that she and husband Cris could not believe their eyes when they saw their July power bill. “It was all of P1,080. In June, it was P1,800 and in May, P2,500.”

A Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) report shows that the year-on-year inflation in July 2002 has slowed down to 2.6 percent from 3.0 percent in June 2002.

Inflation is the increase in the volume of money or credit relative to available goods resulting in a substantial and continuing rise in the general price level.

The BSP says the continuous drop in the inflation rate is mainly due to the 3.9-percent dip in electric bills associated with the cut in purchased power adjustment (PPA) costs.

The report notes that the power rate reductions has brought down inflation in the National Capital Region and in areas outside Metro Manila.

In Metro Manila, inflation decelerated to 2.9 percent in July 2002. The average electricity bill went down by 6.1 percent in July from the level a month ago.

In areas outside Metro Manila, year-on-year inflation was lower at 2.5 percent in July. Electricity bills in these areas also dropped at the average rate of 2.0 percent from the previous month.

Virginia Aquino of Taytay, Rizal and Lolita Narcasi of General Mariano Alvarez in Cavite share a common observation. Both are in the “untiring” business of dipping their hands on money matters in so far as looking after their families is concerned.

Aquino and Narcasi look forward to increasing their assets, perhaps a washing machine, a small refrigerator or a colored 14-inch television to grace their humble homes. Of course, they will use their power bill “savings.”

Maximo Agustin of Pulilan, Bulacan, with his “extra money,” hopes to buy a few pieces of aluminum roofing and plywood “to make his house more livable.” Agustin’s power bill went down to P700 in July from over P1,000 in May.

Aquino, Narcasi and Agustin are from outside Metro Manila. But they are within reach of President Macapagal-Arroyo’s bid to provide the people, particularly the urban poor, more ways to enjoy the benefits of a productive life and a secure environment.

A report from the Department of Energy shows that an additional 1,513 barangays nationwide have been provided electricity as of mid-July.

Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, Jr. says the electrification program is designed to encourage more economic activity in rural areas and create more jobs for Filipinos, a basic component of President Macapagal-Arroyo's agenda to win the war against poverty within the decade.

Since electricity is a vital component of economic development, the President has vowed, in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July 2001, to "light up" four unenergized barangays daily for a year.

Perez says the accelerated O-Ilaw Electrification program has provided power to 522 barangays in Luzon, 598 barangays in the Visayas and 393 barangays in Mindanao.

In her second SONA delivered before the joint session of Congress last July 22, the President has stressed that the people's electric bills have been "a pet concern for the moment. I think about it all the time."

She has stressed that the Philippines used to have the second most expensive power rates in Asia. "Now we have gone down to 6th ... the first fruit of a comprehensive ten-point plan we have put in place to reduce power costs."

"With cheaper power will come a more competitive economy, and more investors," she has said, hinting that this will further lead to more jobs and a better life for Filipinos.

GMA personally condoles with Cunanan's family

MINALIN, Pampanga – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today motored to Barangay San Francisco in this town to personally condole and sympathize with the family of Adelina Cunanan, one of the two Filipina caregivers who died in a Palestinian bomb attack in northern Israel last Sunday.

The President informed Pablo and Ines Lagunilla, parents of Cunanan, that she would not be able to visit the family when the remains of victim arrive this Friday. She said she will be in Virac, Catanduanes on that day.

The President, who transferred to one of her escort vehicles when she reached the town proper, braved the floods and rough road in going to a chapel in Barangay San Francisco, which is near the house of Cunanan's parent.

In the barangay chapel, which was flooded, the President talked to the family of Cunanan and assured them that all possible assistance from concerned government agencies will be extended to them.

The President personally handed her cash assistance of P50,000 to Ines Lagunilla, the mother of Cunanan.

The President also informed the bereaved parents that since Cunanan is a documented worker, she is covered by the Institute of National Insurance of Israel. The family of the Cunanan will be entitled to full insurance benefits from the Israeli institution.

The President was accompanied by his son, Vice Governor Juan Miguel M. Arroyo of Pampanga.

GMA stresses need to ensure democracy in RP

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE, Mabalacat, Pampanga—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed that democracy in the Philippines should be ensured so that investments, that would provide jobs to Filipinos, will keep on coming to the country.

In her remarks at the special meeting of the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) of Region 3 held here, the President said the meeting was very timely in the wake of the call by exiled communist leader Jose Maria Sison for the New People's Army (NPA) to launch attacks against the government.

During the meeting, the President was presented with the insurgency problem in Central Luzon.

After being informed that some new barangay officials in Region 3 are communists, the President ordered concerned government agencies to find out the reasons why they won in the last barangay elections.

The President congratulated the people of Pampanga, her home province, for not electing any communists in the July 15 barangay polls.

Most of the communists who won in the barangay elections are in Tarlac, some in Bataan, Bulacan, and Aurora.

Press statement of Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye

We are commenting on a matter that is still developing.

Mrs. Acsa Ramirez was presented to the President last August 2, as someone under investigation by the NBI in connection with money laundering case at LBP branch at Binangonan.

As of this time, Mrs. Ramirez has not yet been charged nor has she been cleared by the NBI.

The President has ordered the NBI to expedite its investigation and let the evidence settle this controversy.

Mrs. Ramirez should be cleared or charged, as soon as possible, as the evidence warrants.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 7, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033434/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug07.htm>

The President's Day: August 8, 2002

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- **Kimberly-Clark not moving out, Malacañang assured**
- **GMA cites Land Bank's role in gov't land reform program**
- **GMA presents awards to top cooperatives**
- **GMA thanks volunteer lawyers for offering free legal services to government**
- **Boncodin says revenue goals can be met**
- **GMA congratulates Land Bank for achievements**
- **Justice, fair play assured in Land Bank cases**
- **Palace adopts non-exclusive policy for media**
- **Gov't scores anew; GMA presents ex-cop leader of KFR gang, 7 kidnap suspects**

Kimberly-Clark not moving out, Malacañang assured

Malacañang was assured today by Kimberly-Clark Corporation that it is not pulling out of the country, contrary to some media reports that claim that it has actually moved out or decided not to move its regional headquarters to the Philippines.

Kimberly-Clark (K-C) Corp. vice president and legal counsel Thomas D. Brown Jr., assured Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye during a courtesy call at Malacañang of continued interest in the country.

"Media reports have recently suggested that Kimberly-Clark Corp. was moving or had actually moved out of the Philippines, or has decided not to move its regional headquarters to the Philippines. These reports are inaccurate," Brown said.

Brown stressed that Kimberly-Clark has no plans to stop servicing such a large and important market as the Philippines, where its brands have been consumer favorites for decades.

"As well, Kimberly-Clark's Asia-Pacific regional headquarters had been located in Thailand for nearly ten years and there are no plans to relocate it," he added.

Brown noted that Kimberly-Clark Corporation's regional investment decisions, including the company's acquisition last year of locally-owned shares in K-C Philippines, Inc., are always made based on objective business factors.

These objective business factors, Brown said, have "form the basis for Kimberly-Clark's well-known investment initiatives over the past ten years to acquire 100 percent ownership of its operations in Asia-Pacific, as most recently demonstrated by the Corporation acquiring the locally-owned shares of its affiliated companies in Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines and, in June of this year, Australia and New Zealand."

He also noted that Kimberly-Clark "has always adhered to a strong code of ethics in business dealings."

He said K-C strongly supports President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's work and actions to develop and enhance a stable, ethical and transparent business and governmental community in the Philippines.

Bunye thanked Brown for the clarification.

He assured Brown of unceasing efforts from the President and the administration to make the Philippines a competitive market.

Settling in the Philippines nearly 40 years ago, Kimberly Clark has been providing Filipinos with personal care, tissue and health care brands such as Kleenex, Scott, Joy, Huggies, Kimbies, Kotex and Newtex. It is also a major producer of premium business, correspondence and technical papers.

The company has manufacturing operations in 42 countries and its products are sold in more than 150 countries. It employs more than 64, 000 workers world-wide and registers \$14-billion sales annually.

GMA cites Land Bank's role in gov't land reform program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the Land Bank of the Philippines for making it possible for the government to surpass its target on land distribution even if the national budget for land reform was a pittance.

In her message at the 39th anniversary celebration and awarding ceremony of Land Bank held in Malacañang this morning, the President also congratulated the Land Bank for beginning to return to its original mandate to finance land reform as provided in the Land Reform Code of 1963.

During her speech, the President cited two essential features that marks a strong Republic – independence from class and sectoral interest and the capacity represented through strong institutions and a strong bureaucracy to execute good policy and deliver essential services that only governments can do.

“The Land Bank contributes to both essentials of a strong Philippine Republic. By financing land reform, the Land Bank stands for the interest of the people, especially the masses of the small farmers, rather than of a powerful minority in the landlord class,” the President said.

She recalled that her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, once said that the date August 8 was the happiest day in his life because it was during that day in 1963 when he signed the Land Reform Code that eventually created the Land Bank.

“It was the happiest day in his life because one of his main purpose as President was to have land reform in the country,” the President said.

The President recalled that in signing the law, her father had said: “Let the signing be recorded in our annals as an act of emancipation of the toiling farmer from slavery to death, poverty and misery and of his dignification of a human being and as citizen.”

After 39 years, however, the President said land reform remains to be accomplished.

“I feel privileged and blessed that I can pick up from where he (President Macapagal) left and carry on his battles,” the President said.

The President pointed out that the more than 100,000 hectares distributed by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the more than 150,000 hectares distributed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) were higher than the targets that were set in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July last year.

This, she said, was achieved under a budget inherited by the previous administration which could only cover 70,000 hectares of compensable land.

The President said it was accomplished by the DAR through the help of the Land Bank of the Philippines.

The Chief Executive narrated that her father believed from his own sad childhood experience that to achieve prosperity that could be shared by all, it was imperative to release the impoverished tenant from his bondage to the soil.

Her father, the President added, considered it an irony that the Philippines had the best agricultural school in Los Baños – the International Rice Research Institute, which was created during his watch.

At that time, other countries were producing 100 cavans per hectare of rice while the Philippines was only producing 27 cavans, the President noted.

She said that in the mind of her father, the main reason was the lack of interest on the part of the tenants in acquiring advanced rice technology “simply because they did not benefit from any increase in productivity.”

On the same occasion, the President outlined her father’s program of government which, she said, is still relevant in this new millennium as it was 40 years ago, adding that this is now being reflected in her own platform of government.

“According to my father, the task of the nation is to fight poverty. We must be concerned with the plight of the common man as an imperative of justice,” she stressed.

The President saw the need to bridge the wide gap between the poor man and the man of wealth, not by pulling down the rich to the level of the poor but by raising the poor towards the more abundant life.

To achieve the goal of addressing poverty, she said her father’s program, like hers, had four components: the adoption of an economic philosophy of free enterprise by the private sector; a concrete program of economic and social development for the guidance of the nation; land reform by making feasible agro-industrial growth and to make prosperity available to the greater number, and to improve moral standards in government and society.

GMA presents awards to top cooperatives

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presented awards to the 12 winning cooperatives of the country in the annual Gawad sa Pinakatanging Kooperatiba sponsored by the Land Bank of the Philippines.

The President also congratulated Land Bank on its 39th anniversary celebration during the ceremony held at Malacañang’s Ceremonial Hall this morning.

During the program, President confessed to Land Bank officials and employees, including the delegation of participating cooperatives, that the reason why she decided to celebrate today the Annual Gawad sa Pinakatanging Kooperatiba.

The President admitted that August 8 is the day when her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, signed the Land Reform Code which also created the Land Bank. The Land Reform Code was signed by President Macapagal on August 8, 1963.

“Pinakamasayang araw ito sa kanyang buhay dahil para sa kanya ang pinakapakay niya sa pagiging Presidente ay magkaroon ng reporma sa lupa sa ating bansa (This was the happiest moment in his life because his objective as President was to have land reform in our country),” the President said.

The President also recalled that when her father assumed the presidency, he took inspiration from the revolution of a plebeian, Andres Bonifacio, and said he regarded the task of the presidency as an unfinished and peaceful revolution.

“Since the revolution was launched by Bonifacio, a man of the masses, it can be assumed that he would have freed the people not only from foreign rule but also from exploitation by their own countrymen,” she said.

The President, together with Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Land Bank president and chief executive officer Gary Teves and Senator Rodolfo Biazon, chairman of the board of judges, conferred the awards to the winning cooperatives under the agri-based and non agri-based categories.

Winners under the agri-based category are:

1st place – Tayabas Community Multi-Purpose Cooperative of Tayabas, Quezon which won P500,000 worth of fixed assets and a study tour to the Bavarian Cooperative sector in Bavaria, Germany courtesy of the Hans Seidell Foundation.

2nd place – Diffun Credit and Development Cooperative of Diffun, Quirino which received P400,000 in the form of fixed assets;

3rd place – Philippine Army Finance Center Producers Integrated Cooperative of Fort Bonifacio, Makati City which got P100,000 in the form of fixed assets;

4th place – Five Star Savings Credit Cooperative of Gamu, Isabela which was awarded P75,000 in the form of fixed assets;

5th place – Gubat St. Anthony Credit Cooperative of Gubat, Sorsogon which was awarded P50,000 in the form of fixed assets;

The awardees under the non agri-based category were:

1st place – Barangka Credit Cooperative of Barangka, Marikina City which got P300,000 worth of fixed assets;

2nd place – NV Alay Kapwa Multi-Purpose Cooperative of Solano, Nueva Vizcaya which got P200,000 worth of fixed assets;

3rd place – Philippine Army Finance Center Producers Integrated Cooperative of Fort Bonifacio, Makati City which awarded P100,000 fixed assets;

4th place – Five Star Savings Credit Cooperative of Gamu, Isabela which got P75,000 fixed assets;

5th place – Gubat St. Anthony Credit Cooperative of Gubat, Sorsogon which won P50,000 in the form of fixed assets.

For the Cooperative Rural Bank category, the Co-op Bank of Bohol was adjudged as the most outstanding, bringing home the P200,000 cash prize while the second place went to the First Isabela Co-op Bank which received P100,000 in cash prize.

The Gawad Pitak is Land Bank's annual search for the country's most outstanding cooperatives. It aims to recognize the exemplary performance of bank-assisted cooperatives, honor their achievements and inspire other fledging cooperatives.

GMA thanks volunteer lawyers for offering free legal services to government

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked some 70 topnotch volunteer lawyers, who are graduates of reputable law schools, for offering their free legal services in the prosecution of some 300 tax cases and in helping fight corruption in the government.

In her extemporaneous remarks during a meeting with the volunteer lawyers in Malacañang, the President said the free legal services would contribute to the building of a strong Republic, which she had pledged in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA).

The President said that the services of the volunteer lawyers would be of great help in going after corrupt officials in such agencies as the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), the Bureau of Customs (BoC), and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

“Sa tatlo na yan, BIR, Customs at DPWH, pinakamabibigat na mga ahensiya sa ating paglaban kontra sa katiwalian (Our fight against corruption is centered in these three agencies),” the President said.

The President said that the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC) would supervise the work of the volunteer lawyers.

She said that on Wednesday, she had ordered the OGCC to file appropriate charges against three bureau directors and 38 employees of the DPWH for their alleged involvement in the P139- million vehicle repair anomaly in the department.

The President said that because of the lack of government lawyers, the OGCC could not possibly prosecute the 300 cases of under-declaration of the value-added tax (VAT) filed by the BIR against certain individuals and firms.

Aside from the tax cases, the government is now also stepping up its fight against smuggling in different parts of the country.

She said that one problem encountered by government prosecutors in the fight against smuggling is the penchant of some judges to issue a temporary restraining order (TRO).

“Kaya pag ganoon ang kalaban, talagang kailangan ng mahigpit ang ating mga abogado, matitino at magagaling (So, with this adversary, we need lawyers who are upright, talented and willing to sacrifice),” the President said.

Boncodin says revenue goals can be met

Government projections on revenues that can be raised are not that really hard to meet.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin today stressed this, as she explained that an inter-agency committee made the revenue collection targets with due bases.

In a radio interview, Boncodin said *“kung titingnan mo ‘yang mga indicators ... hindi naman suntok sa buwan ang targeting (if we look at indicators, our targets are achievable).”*

She said the inter-agency group preparing the revenue targets is led by the Department of Finance (DOF). The group’s output is then studied for approval by the Development Budget Coordination Committee among whose members are the DOF, Department of the Budget and Management, National Economic and Development Authority, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Office of the President.

She added that the country’s tax structure and the experiences of other countries are two of the bases for setting revenue targets. She called next year’s revenue targets as “overly optimistic.”

“We have not changed procedures in determining revenue goals. Yet, there were many times when revenue collection agencies met and even exceeded targets,” she noted.

But Boncodin said collection shortfalls could also be attributed to problems haunting collection agencies like the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Bureau of Customs (BoC).

She pointed to tax evasion and under declaration, among other things, as major causes of income shortfalls.

“This is why Commissioner Rene Bañez is working doubly hard, seeking to correct the anomaly,” she said.

The BIR and BoC are implementing steps to achieve revenue targets. Admitting low collections in the first semester of 2002, she said the government is working on how to do away with shortfalls from this time until the end of the year.

Looking into tax under declarations was one of the measures the agencies has been carrying out, she added.

Bañez, for one, has a BIR transformation program that “we fully support,” Boncodin said. The agency has focused on areas where it could get bigger revenues.

The BIR has asked the DBM’s help in hiring lawyers, through the Department of Justice, to prosecute erring members of the private sector that could afford top-notch legal counsels.

With sustained legal help, there are assurances that the BIR would reach their collection targets.

GMA congratulates Land Bank for achievements

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today personally thanked the Land Bank of the Philippines for its continued support in financing the Land Reform Code of 1963.

She also congratulated the Land Bank for making it possible to surpass the government’s target for land distribution even if the national budget for land reform was a pittance.

The President also extended her gratitude to LBP president and chief executive officer Gary Teves for the turnover of the P250-million cash dividend and P500-million stock certificates.

President Arroyo handed over the check and stock certificates to National Treasurer Sergio Edeza.

The Land Bank declared to the national government a total of P780 million in cash and stock dividends for its 2001 net income.

Cash dividends declared for last year’s net income amounted to P280 million where P54 million was remitted to the government in August last year as advance remittance.

The check of the remaining P226-million cash dividend and P500-million stock certificate were handed over to the President by Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho and Teves.

For the eight-year period from 1994 to 2001, Land Bank has declared total dividends of P10.1 billion to the national government.

Land Bank does not receive budget allocations to finance its countryside development activities. Instead, it uses the profits generated from its commercial banking operations to sustain its developmental initiatives in the rural areas such as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), credit assistance to farmers and fisher folk cooperatives and institutional-building support for the cooperatives.

The P780-million dividends are in addition to the P300 million in CARP operating expenses which were absorbed by the bank in 2001.

Justice, fair play assured in Land Bank cases

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured that justice and fair play would prevail in the ongoing investigation of the money laundering case at the Land Bank of the Philippines branch in Binagonan, Rizal.

“Let us not have an extended run on this issue. We must move on with speedy and impartial justice,” the President said in her speech during the 39th anniversary celebration of the Land Bank of the Philippines in Malacañang.

The President said she has ordered the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to determine once and for all, whether Land Bank cashier Acza Ramirez is culpable for violation of the anti-money laundering law.

“If she is culpable, I ordered the NBI to file charges immediately. And if she is innocent, I ordered the NBI to immediately clear her as well,” she said.

Ramirez was one of the two cashiers in the Land Bank branch in Binagonan during whose term 17 questionable transactions had been uncovered.

At the same time, the President expressed determination to get at the root of the tax diversion case which, she said, involved three related felonies – plunder due to the tax diversion of P200 million, conspiracy for tax evasion and money laundering.

By getting to the root of the cases as soon as possible, the Chief Executive expressed her trust that the good name of Land Bank as an institution can be cleared and name of the majority of professionals in the said agency can be unburdened of the weight caused by the discovery of the anomaly.

The President said she felt sad that the anomaly came at a time when Land Bank was riding high on its sterling achievements.

“It is unfortunate mainly because such hopefully rare and isolated case of misconduct and criminality tend to smear the name and majority of the upright, professional and dedicated workers of the bank as well as the good name and prestige of the institution as a whole,” she said.

Palace adopts non-exclusive policy for media

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today announced he would adopt of the policy of non-exclusivity in giving relevant information.

“All information will be freely given to everybody,” Bunye said, stressing that he would not give any special preference to any particular media group or reporter.

In his regular press briefing in Malacañang, Bunye said all questions would only be answered at the Briefing Room or during a tele-conference on Saturdays and Sundays.

He, however, said that he would only entertain interviews in his office if there are at least two media representatives representing other members of the Malacañang Press Corps. “So it’s not exclusive,” he said.

“We do not want to be perceived as playing favorite to one particular group,” he said.

Bunye added he did not consider radio interviews as exclusive, saying that once the information is aired, it becomes available to the public.

He expressed the hope that the policy of non-exclusivity would be fair to everybody.

“Our policy is to give timely, accurate and relevant information, and we would like to preserve the arrangement in Malacañang,” Bunye said.

Gov’t scores anew; GMA presents ex-cop leader of KFR gang, 7 kidnap suspects

The government scored another victory against kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gangs as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presented at the Philippine National Police headquarters in Quezon City seven members of the Bucala KFR group and a former policeman suspected of leading the Durano KFR group.

At the same time, the President said she would continue to make the rounds of law-enforcement agencies and present criminals before the public.

“As for the controversy about showing criminals before the public, well, debate is free in a democratic society but let me declare that I will continue to make the rounds of law-enforcement agencies and present criminals before the public,” she said.

The President said she would “teach the lesson by humiliation if necessary” and follow it up with speedy prosecution.

“This will not abate until we have shown a clear manifestation in our seriousness and sincerity in this campaign,” she added.

She also said that she would not relent in her crusade for a morally upright and lawful society. “On the ground, I am happy to hear that a lot of feedback, that results of police action, are being talked about, being noticed by our citizenry. More and more information against criminals is being given to the police, and that is why more arrests are being done every day,” she said.

The seven members of the sub-group Lucido-Espillore gang under the Bucala KFR group were arrested last August 6 near the Manila Memorial Park Garden in Dasmarinas, Cavite by joint elements of the Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (PACER), Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Cavite Provincial Police Office (PPO).

The suspects— namely Eufemio Lucido, Pedro Motas, Primitivo Panganiban, Agapito Motas, Alberto Olfato, Reynaldo Maligalig, Pio Purificacion— were caught by PACER operatives on board two vehicles, a jeep with and a Mitsubishi Lancer.

Monitoring of their activities indicated that the suspects were on their way to conduct another kidnap attempt.

Confiscated from the group were several high-powered firearms, cell phones and handcuffs.

Meanwhile, joint operations of PACER, Aviation Security Group and Police Region Office 7 led to the arrest today of former PO3 Engelberto Durano alias Kevin Durano alias Kevin Lopez at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport while he was about to board an aircraft bound for Bacolod.

The President congratulated Police Director Avelino Razon, who until recently was Regional Director for Region 7 and who knows this case very well, for leading the arresting team.

Durano, one of those listed in the PNP Order of Battle Watchlist, is the leader of the Durano KFR group.

The President said that in both cases, close coordination and good interoperability between units brought about these major accomplishments.

“These events are not happening by accident. These are the results of coordination, teamwork and concerted action by our law enforcement agencies and the military under the unified command concept.

The President said the two sets of arrests show that “we are moving forward both in our interdiction as well as prevention mode.”

“This means our intelligent resources are paying off and that we are on the right track. We will not this let the gangs get away. In fact, we are trying to get them while they are still planning out their moves. We know who they are and we will get them. I would like to assure the people that their faith in law and justice shall be redeemed,” she said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: August 8, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033451/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug08.htm>

The President's Day: August 9, 2002

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- **GMA orders Napocor to solve power problem of Catanduanes town**
- **GMA orders P3-M allocation for Catanduanes farm-to-market roads**
- **GMA orders police to protect poor, not just rich and influential, from crime**
- **Palace clarified Kimberly Clark issue**
- **Gov't can handle emergency evacuation of OFWs from Iraq if situation requires — Palace**
- **Gov't to appeal Canadian court's ruling on Pacificador extradition case — Palace**

GMA orders Napocor to solve power problem of Catanduanes town

BARAS, Catanduanes—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assured local residents of this remote town that she would do whatever is possible and within her power to help them solve their problems, particularly in their power needs.

In her remarks during a visit to this town, which is celebrating its annual town fiesta, the President said because of the frequent power failure in the town, she has ordered the National Power Corporation (Napocor) to lease two generators to the municipality to solve their power problem.

The President told the town folk that her order for Napocor to bring the generators to this town was made a few days before her actual visit.

The generators, the President said, are now on their way to the town by land and would start operating on Tuesday, August 13.

“Ibabalita ko ang mga ginawa namin nitong mga nakaraang araw para ipaghanda itong ginhawa ninyo sa problema sa koryente (I would like to let you know what we have done during the past few days so that we can bring to you some good news about your power problem),” the President said to the cheers of the town folk.

The President said that she was glad to have visited the town because only by being here that she learned about the problems of the townspeople.

“Salamat nagkaroon ako ng pagkakataon makapunta rito. Salamat na lamang at nalaman ko ang pinakamatinding problema ninyo. Iyan ang ating ginagawa (I am grateful for the opportunity to visit your town. I am grateful that I have learned about your problems. And that is what we are addressing now),” the President said.

Early in her speech, the President recalled that only her late father, President Diosdado Macapagal, has visited the town, which is noted for its abaca fiber and marine products.

The President assured officials of this town that the national government would continue to support for their projects, particularly in agriculture and fishery.

GMA orders P3-M allocation for Catanduanes farm-to-market roads

BARAS, Catanduanes – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the allocation of some P3 million for the construction and improvement of farm-to-market roads in Catanduanes province.

In a speech before Baras officials and thousands of residents at the town plaza here, the President noted that Catanduanes, particularly the town of Baras, should get the necessary attention in so far as agricultural modernization was concerned.

She directed Bicol's agriculture regional director Fe Di Laysa, this year's outstanding agriculturist, to see to it that the farm-to-market roads are fast-tracked to complement other infrastructure supportive of agri-fishery development and trade in the area.

The Chief Executive flew here this morning to join the townsfolk in celebrating the Baras fiesta tomorrow (August 10) and to oversee the government's programs in the area.

In her speech, she recalled that in her recent State of the Nation Address, she exhorted local officials to help the administration build a stronger republic; and Catanduanes, a small province with a small Internal Revenue Allotment, could use only P20 million for infrastructure.

"Kaya kailangan ko sila, hindi lamang sa imprastruktura na kailangan ay tulong-tulong tayo dahil kulang, ngunit para na ring matiyak ang seguridad at kaligtasan ng mga mamamayan laban sa kriminalidad at terorismo (I need the help of local officials, not only to build more infrastructure facilities here, but also to ensure that the people are secured and safe from the threats of criminality and terrorism)," she said.

The President noted local government efforts in boosting crop and fishery production in Baras and Catanduanes.

Baras is also known for its abaca fiber industry that has penetrated high fashion, particularly in sinamay shirt making.

"Ito ay naayon sa ating programa, iyong modernisasyon ng agrikultura at pangangisda (All these correspond to the national government's agri-fishery modernization program)," the President said.

She added that programs on developing the area's cottage industry and tourism potentials should also be undertaken to spur livelihood and more socio-economic opportunities for the people.

"Asahan ninyo na ang inyong mga proyekto na nasa ilalim nito ay bibigyan ko ng lubos na suporta (Be assured that all your projects falling under the agricultural modernization program will get my full support)," she said.

The President also announced the distribution of 100 packages to poor residents of Baras, her gift to them for tomorrow's town fiesta.

She also handed out 1,068 health cards to beneficiaries in Catanduanes, as she congratulated Governor Leandro Verceles Jr. for taking all the effort to pay some P5 million for the health insurance coverage of his poor constituents.

She said she considered Catanduanes as number one per capita on health insurance coverage in the Bicol region and number two or three in the whole Philippines.

The President, accompanied by Energy Secretary Vicente Perez Jr., arrived here at about 10:10 a.m. Upon her arrival, she was met and welcomed by Baras Mayor Jose Tevez and Gov. Verceles.

GMA orders police to protect poor, not just rich and influential, from crime

ANTIPOLO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the Philippine National Police to protect the poor from crimes, not just the rich and the influential, even as she took note of the difficulties law enforcers faced in the performance of their duties.

The President motored directly to the Cogeo Police Sub-station in Antipolo after a visit to Baras, Catanduanes this morning to commend the local police for their good work in protecting the poor communities in their jurisdiction and for their continued active response to the administration's campaign against all forms of criminality.

She commended in particular the policemen who arrested one of three men who held up her manicurist, Anita Valderama, a few weeks ago of \$500 and P3,000 in cash and assorted jewelry.

“I would like to commend the men for their good work, for their sacrifices, because in spite of the difficulties that they are facing, they have continued to arrest notorious holdup suspects and other criminals and prevent serious crimes from happening,” President said in her brief remarks before the policemen and residents of Cogeo at the local police station.

“We should not tolerate pocket of lawlessness in our poorer community. We must make sure that ordinary people have the mantle of law enforcement and law protection just like the more affluent areas. And this is another mandate I have placed upon the shoulders of the PNP leadership,” the President added.

The President said she was aware of the difficulties faced by the police who have to operate and perform their duties under heavy constraints, particularly in terms of mobility and lack of communication facilities.

She said she also learned the problems of the police in the area after her manicurist informed her that she was victimized by holdup men in the area a month ago.

One of the holdup suspects, Tomas Fuller y Santos, 16, a member of the Ipit Taxi Gang and resident of Sto. Domingo, Quezon City, has been arrested. He is now under the custody of the Central Police District while his two other companions are now being hunted by the police.

The police reported to the President that Fuller was arrested three days ago in Quezon City after successful follow-up operations against the Ipit Taxi Gang.

“The plight of my manicurist has reflected the plight of ordinary people victimized by criminals. I sympathize with her just as I am deeply concerned about people losing their hard-earned money to muggers,” the President said.

“We must protect the poor from crimes, not just the rich and the influential,” the President said as she ordered Philippine National Police chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane to improve and provide new facilities to the Cogeo Police Sub-Station.

The President announced that Ebdane would provide radio communications facilities and cellular phones to the Cogeo police while Antipolo City Mayor Angelito Gatlabayan also promised to provide telephone lines for them.

The Chief Executive added that the Office of the President would contribute P250,000 in cash to support the P500,000 already given by Governor Rebecca Ynarez and Mayor Gatlabayan for the construction of a new police sub-station.

Palace clarified Kimberly Clark issue

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, putting the record straight, said today that the media interpretation that Kimberly Clark, a multinational corporation, has moved out of the Philippines, is incorrect.

In his regular press briefing, Bunye clarified that what President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo referred to in her recent State of the Nation Address when she said “*Kaya tuloy ang Kimberly Clark ay dinala ang kanyang Asia operations sa Thailand imbes na sa Pilipinas*” were Kimberly-Clark’s new projects.

The Press Secretary said that instead of setting up new projects in the Philippines, they opted for Thailand, site of the headquarters of Kimberly-Clark’s Asia operations.

“So clearly *walang kuryente na nangyari* (So, clearly there was no blooper),” Bunye said.

Giving the correct interpretation, Bunye said that Kimberly Clark is a huge international organization with operations in 42 countries.

It has operations in the Philippines as well as in various parts of Southeast Asia and of the world, Bunye said.

With regional hub in Bangkok, Bunye said that as a giant corporation Kimberly Clark continues to seek avenues for expansion.

“The President did not say that Kimberly Clark Philippines moved out of the Philippines, what the President meant in her SONA was that in view of recent developments, such as perceived faulty justice system, the regional headquarters decided to divert expansion projects to Thailand,” Bunye explained.

Bunye said the President was not fed any wrong information and she is fully aware of what the real situation is as far as the Philippine plant of Kimberly Clark in San Pedro, Laguna is concerned.

“Because Kimberly Clark is located in San Pedro, Laguna, which is ten minutes from where I live, I know that the company has never left, they never ceased operations in that area and the President knows that Kimberly Clark has not moved out of that area,” Bunye said.

Gov’t can handle emergency evacuation of OFWs from Iraq if situation requires — Palace

Malacañang said today that the government is prepared for any contingency evacuation of overseas Filipino workers from Iraq in case the United States pushes through with its plan to launch a military offensive against the Saddam Hussein regime in Baghdad.

In his regular press briefing, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that at present there are only about 117 OFWs in Baghdad.

Bunye said that in the past, the Philippine government was able to handle the evacuation of even greater number of Filipinos during several international crises in Iraq.

The first time, Bunye said, the government evacuated some 40,000 Filipinos from Iraq and there were no major problems encountered.

During the term of President George Bush, the current US President’s father, some 25,000 Filipinos were also evacuated from Iraq over a period of few weeks and there were also no problems, Bunye said.

“So, I don’t think any major problem would arise if there is going to be an evacuation now,” Bunye said.

He said that if the Philippines was able to handle the previous emergency situation, then we can handle “this smaller group again.”

Gov’t to appeal Canadian court’s ruling on Pacificador extradition case — Palace

Malacañang today said that the Philippine government will file a motion for reconsideration of the decision of the Canadian court denying the government’s request for the extradition to the Philippines of Rodolfo Pacificador, one of the accused in the 1986 assassination of former Antique Governor Evelio Javier.

In his regular press briefing, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the government would have to avail itself of the appeals process in the Canadian justice system.

He said that the Philippine government has 60 days to appeal the decision of the Ontario Court of Appeals on the extradition case.

On the reported side comments of the Canadian court about the so-called slow justice in the Philippines, Bunye said this is now being addressed by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

“The Philippine government under the leadership of President Macapagal-Arroyo is doing something about it. The President’s focus now is on how to streamline operations and also to streamline the bureaucracy,” Bunye said.

The extradition proceedings against the young Pacificador began in August 1991, nine months after the Philippines and Canada signed an extradition treaty on Nov. 12, 1990.

Pacificador, son of former Antique Assemblyman Arturo Pacificador, is among the principal accused in the celebrated Javier assassination case.

Bunye also discounted the need for filing a diplomatic protest over the Canadian court’s ruling on the Pacificador case.

A diplomatic protest, Bunye said, is a mode that is taken only after certain steps. “It is not taken very casually in every adverse remark or development,” he said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: August 9, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033503/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug09.htm>

The President's Day: August 10, 2002

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- **GMA condoles with family of slain Pampanga cop**
- **GMA changes mind, meets remains of two Pinay caregivers at the airport**
- **Palace hoping that peace accord with NDF finalized soon**
- **GMA visits injured construction worker at PGH**

GMA condoles with family of slain Pampanga cop

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo personally condoled Friday night with the family of Police Officer 3 Oliver Benedicto who was killed in a shootout with five bus hold-uppers along the North Luzon Expressway Tuesday night (August 6).

The President made an unscheduled visit to the wake of the slain police officer at 2575 Tejeron St., Sta. Ana, Manila to personally extend her condolences and sympathies to the victim's wife, Virginia. She stayed for about 30 minutes in the slain policeman's residence.

She also handed over to Virginia her cash assistance of P50,000.

Earlier, the President ordered police authorities to conduct a massive manhunt for the killers of Benedicto who are still at large.

Benedicto, 32, who was assigned to the Pampanga police force, was heading home aboard an Aladdin Transport Bus bound for Manila when the robbers announced the holdup.

Benedicto, who was in uniform, announced that he was a police officer and immediately fired his gun, injuring three of the five robbers.

Two of the robbers, who came from behind, ganged up on Benedicto and stabbed him. He later succumbed to 14 stab wounds and a gunshot wound.

Friday was a busy day for the President, who, in the morning, visited the remote town of Baras in Catanduanes where she assured residents of her continued support for their projects, particularly in agriculture and fishery.

In the afternoon, the President motored to the COGEO Police sub-station in Antipolo City where she personally commended policemen who arrested one of the three men who held up her manicurist Anita Valderrama.

GMA changes mind, meets remains of two Pinay caregivers at the airport

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo decided Friday night to motor to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) to be on hand when the remains of the two Filipino caregivers who were killed in a Palestinian bomb attack in Israel arrived from Tel Aviv.

Last Wednesday, August 7, the President motored to Minalin, Pampanga where she personally extended her condolences to the parents of Adelina Cunanan, one of the two Filipina victims in the bomb attack.

During her visit to Minalin, the President informed Cunanan's parents that she might not be able to be at the airport when her body would arrive because she will be visiting Baras, Catanduanes that Friday.

But the President changed her mind and decided to be at the NAIA when the remains of the two Filipina caregivers arrived to show that her administration is really concerned with the welfare of the overseas Filipino workers.

The President, who was accompanied by Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople and Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, talked with the families of Cunanan and Rebecca Ruga, the other Filipina victim in the bomb attack.

The bodies of the two victims arrived at around 7:45 p.m. on board Lufthansa Airlines.

The President handed over to the brothers of Rebecca Ruga her cash assistance of P50,000. In her visit to Minalin earlier, the President also gave P50,000 as her cash assistance to the Cunanan family.

The President has earlier ordered Ople and Sto. Tomas to extend all assistance to the families of the two victims, including transporting the remains to their respective hometowns.

Palace hoping that peace accord with NDF finalized soon

Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye has said that Malacanang is hoping that the announced resumption of the peace negotiations between the government and the communists would result in the forging of a peace accord.

In his press briefing Friday, Bunye said that he shared the expression of hope of Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. that a peace agreement between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) would soon be sealed.

“We want to put a successful conclusion to this peace negotiation,” Bunye said.

Bunye said that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration is hoping that this negotiation “would be terminated to the satisfaction of both sides at the earliest time possible.”

He said that the continued operations of both sides are counter-productive and have distracted us from the real problem of developing our country.

Bunye said that even during the suspension of the formal talks middle of last year, lines of communications between the government and the NDF leadership in the Netherlands have remained open.

“Even when there was fighting on the ground, communication lines were open. This is known as back-channeling,” Bunye said.

Silvestre Bello, III, chief government negotiator, said Friday that talks with the NDF could resume either last week of August or middle of September.

According to Bunye, the inclusion of two officials—Silvestre Afable, head of the Presidential Management Staff, and Presidential Adviser Norberto Conzales—in the back channeling group, could speed up the peace process.

“I believe that the recent assignment of two more negotiators who have had experience in such work indicate that the government wants to speed up the resolution of this problem,” Bunye said.

GMA visits injured construction worker at PGH

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo made an unscheduled visit this morning to the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) to see for herself the condition of a construction worker who has been rescued after being buried alive for five hours during an accident that occurred early dawn at a construction site in San Beda College, along Mendiola Street in Manila.

The President went directly to the X'Ray room of the government hospital where the victim, Gerry Garcia, was being examined.

The President also talked to Gerry's mother, Mrs. Delia Garcia, and handed her the amount of P10,000 as her personal assistance for the medical needs of the patient.

According to reports, rescue workers from the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) had to dig through the concrete rubble to free Garcia who was trapped inside the collapsed concrete beam of the school's gymnasium that is being renovated.

Three workers were killed and two others were hospitalized after the scaffolding that suspended the beams and lumber caved in at 4:00 a.m.

Garcia was provided with an oxygen mask and dextrose to enable him to breath while rescuers worked to free his legs that were covered with cement.

"We have to move fast because the cement was drying quickly. We sprayed water on Garcia's lower body so the cement would not dry on his legs," BFP official Col. Rafael Corveta said.

As the rescue efforts entered the fifth hour, fire fighters pulled Garcia out of the hole and lifted him into a stretcher and then took him to the PGH.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 10, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033514/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug10.htm>

The President's Day: August 11, 2002

11 AUGUST 2002

- **GMA taps village leaders in anti-poverty drive**
- **People happy over reduced electric bills**
- **Palace yet to see U.S. declaration of CPP-NPA as foreign terrorist group**
- **Communication lines to communists to remain open, recruits welcome to return to fold of law – Palace**

GMA taps village leaders in anti-poverty drive

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will tap all the newly-elected barangay officials in the country to take an active role in the fight against poverty and the promotion of good governance in their respective areas.

In pursuit of her State of the Nation Address (SONA) to build a strong Republic, the President has tasked the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) to start this month a series of orientation and enhancement courses for the newly-elected and re-elected barangay officials in the recently concluded synchronized barangay polls.

DILG Secretary Jose Lina said the new set of barangay officials would undergo training under the auspices of the Barangay Governance and Development Program (BGDP) starting August 15.

Expected to join the training program are no less than 335,544 punong barangays (village officials) and kagawad (councilmen) members of the country's 41,943 barangays.

Lina said the Local Government Academy, the training arm of the department, has prepared a number of modules for the training activities of the newly-elected or re-elected barangay officials.

The orientation course, will be divided into five modules namely, Barangay and Its Environment; The Barangay Government; Managing the Administrative Challenges; Charting the Destiny of the Barangay; and Barangay Performance Management.

In the enhancement course, the barangay officials will be taught on Strategic Planning; Building Community Partnership and Networking; Budgeting and Financial Management Analysis; Resource Mobilization, Maintaining Public Safety; Basic Services Delivery; Project Management; Solid Waste Management, Leadership and Livelihood Development.

The courses are designed to address the competency gaps of barangay officials as leaders of local communities and as managers of local development.

"2002 is a critical year for us with the election of thousands of barangay officials who will need training on the various aspects of barangay administration," Lina said.

To ensure the effective conduct of the training activities, the Local Government Academy in coordination with the Philippine-Canada Local Support Program, has conducted a trainers' training for DILG regional and field officers who will serve as trainers for the barangay orientation and enhancement courses.

A DILG report said that some 437 DILG regional and field officers nationwide were trained on the new approaches and methodologies on effective barangay

People happy over reduced electric bills

More people are enjoying financial relief and a lot of savings from plunging power rates in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

“I used to budget P1,700 from my measly income to pay my monthly power bill. Last June and July, I was relieved to find out that my electric bills went down to P1,200 and P1,000, respectively,” says Myrna Rodriguez, a government employee who lives in Kamuning, Quezon City.

“I could use the savings for more important things like more food on our table, small home repairs, new clothes for the children or a first-aid kit,” echoes Francis Apoderado of Sta. Cruz, Manila whose P2,000 electric bill in June went down by over P500 in July.

Like them, newshen Baby Cayaba is glad the government has taken a fearless stand in cutting down the costs of power.

“Thanks to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, everyone’s future is becoming brighter,” Cayaba said, narrating that she and husband Cris could not believe their eyes when they saw their July power bill. “It was all of P1,080. In June, it was P1,800 and in May, P2,500.”

A Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) report shows that the year-on-year inflation in July 2002 has slowed down to 2.6 percent from 3.0 percent in June 2002, mainly due to the 3.9-percent dip in electric bills associated with the cut in purchased power adjustment (PPA) costs.

Homemakers and domestic budget czarinas Virginia Aquino of Taytay, Rizal and Lolita Narcasi of General Mariano Alvarez in Cavite share a common observation. Both are looking forward to increasing their assets, perhaps a washing machine, a small refrigerator or a colored 14-inch television to grace their homes, since they now have power bill “savings.”

Maximo Agustin of Pulilan, Bulacan, with his “extra money,” hopes to buy a few pieces of aluminum roofing and plywood “to make his house more livable.” Agustin’s power bill went down to P700 in July from over P1,000 in May.

Metro Manilans and those in nearby provinces are within reach of President Macapagal-Arroyo’s bid to provide the urban and rural poor more ways to enjoy the benefits of a productive life and a secure environment.

A Department of Energy report shows that an additional 1,513 barangays nationwide have been provided electricity as of mid-July.

Palace yet to see U.S. declaration of CPP-NPA as foreign terrorist group

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today said Malacañang has yet to see a copy of an announcement made by the United States State Department naming the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) as a foreign terrorist group.

In a media teleconference, Bunye said he was told by Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro Baja Jr. that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has not received any official transmittal from American officials on the matter.

“Maybe we should wait a little while until we get the final documents,” he said.

He said he was sure the DFA and other concerned agencies would get together, sit down, discuss, evaluate and come up with an official government position once the American announcement on the CPP-NPA comes in.

Among those he said who compose the review group included the DFA, the National Security Adviser and maybe, the defense establishment.

Since the documents have not yet arrived, "I do not think we should pre-empt the decision or whatever type of response the group would have," he added, stressing that any response would be based on existing Philippine laws.

Bunye also clarified that as per practice, a US State Department declaration of an organization as a foreign terrorist group "is limited to restricting financial contributions to the identified organizations."

"They are just prohibiting (US citizens) from contributing and otherwise extending aid to (terrorist) organizations and they will restrict entry or travel of members of the organizations in the US," he said.

He termed this as the US "exclusion phase" for terrorists.

Communication lines to communists to remain open, recruits welcome to return to fold of law – Palace

Malacañang said today the government has kept its communication lines open to the communists and is ever ready to welcome them back into the fold of the law.

In a telephone interview with Palace reporters, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that two days ago, the government even designated two additional negotiators to show its sincerity in pursuing the peace process with the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front and the New People's Army (CPP-NPA-NDF).

He also said a withdrawal of the CPP-NDF-NPA from the peace talks would be an unfortunate turn of events, stressing that President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's "guideline is to keep the communication lines open."

Bunye also said "it's a pity" that many of the people who have been recruited into the communist organization "are not real ideologues."

These are people you always have to be ready to welcome back, he added.

Bunye also said the redeployment of military troops from Mindanao to other parts of the country is aimed to take defensive positions in areas which are perceived to be threatened.

He explained that those troops that were previously pulled out from Luzon and the Visayas were actually assigned to Mindanao at the height of the problem on Abu Sayyaf Group in the area.

Since the Armed Forces of the Philippine (AFP) has already effectively reduced the threat level posed by the Abu Sayyaf, he said it is now felt that the government troops can be redeployed to their original assignments.

Bunye sought to clarify anew reports on the alleged "all-out war" against the communist armed groups.

"The redeployment (of troops) now will be done to areas which are so-called threatened areas," he said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 11, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033527/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug11.htm>

The President's Day: August 12, 2002

12 AUGUST 2002

- **GMA cites terroristic acts of NPA, CPP's armed component**
- **GMA prods police to push harder, work better, do more in war against criminals, lauds citizen support**
- **Gov't will continue to pursue peace process with communists, says Malacañang**
- **Palace hopes if price of crude oil goes down, oil firms would also lower their prices**

GMA cites terroristic acts of NPA, CPP's armed component

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that for as long as the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) has an armed component that engages in terroristic activities, the CPP will still be considered as among the groups that violate the country's laws.

In her extemporaneous remarks during the presentation of suspected carnappers at Camp Crame in Quezon City this morning, the President said the New People's Army (NPA), the CPP's armed component, has been engaged in atrocities and other terroristic activities, like ambushes and extortion, especially in the countryside.

But the President clarified that communism itself is not illegal per se. She said that as a senator, she was among those who pushed for the passage of Republic Act 7636, repealing the anti-subversion law (RA 1700), thus making communism legal in the Philippines.

"Ang labag sa batas ay ang armed struggle to overthrow the government, lalo na kapag gumagawa sila ng terrositic acts (What is against the law is the armed struggle whose purpose is to overthrow the government, especially if it is engaged in terroristic acts)," the President said.

The President said that there are several groups that have been identified as communist or communist-oriented, specifically citing Akbayan and Sanlakas, but these groups, according to the President, do not have armed components.

"Basta hindi sila manggulo, basta hindi sila mag-instigate ng violence sa mga rally, wala rin silang problema sa batas (For as long as they do not create trouble, for as long as they do not instigate violence in their rallies, they will not have any problem with the law)," the President said.

The President said while there is an ongoing peace negotiation between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF), the political arm of the CPP, she hopes that the NPA would stop its terroristic operations.

"Sana yong ginagawa nilang labag sa batas, yong mga atrocities ng NPA, yong mga ambush, yong mga terrositic acts, ay inaasahan natin na mapigil (We hope that their violations of our laws, the atrocities of the NPA, their ambushes, their terroristic acts, would be stopped)," the President said.

GMA prods police to push harder, work better, do more in war against criminals, lauds citizen support

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today challenged the Philippine National Police to "push harder, work better, do more" even as she praised the PNP for the significant strikes against criminals and the citizenry for taking a more active role in the administration's all-out campaign against criminality.

"There is no rest until our streets are safe," the President said in Camp Crame where she revealed four successful strikes against carnappers in four days and the neutralization of three car theft gangs operating in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

She also lauded the people for their support in the fight against criminality, noting that more and more citizens are now doing their duty and helping the PNP by providing vital information against criminals and suspects.

“Over the last month, the PNP has arrested kidnapers, holdup men, carnappers, drug pushers – criminals who endanger our streets and our families,” the President said.

“Our uncompromising drive against carnappers has resulted in four strikes against carnappers in as many days,” she added.

Strike No. 1: August 7 in Bulacan, a residence used as a repair and repainting center was raided. Four vehicles, chop-chop (cannibalized) car parts and carnapping paraphernalia were recovered.

Strike No. 2: August 8 in Apalit, Pampanga, the leader of the Mayor Group, Andres Palabasan, Jr., and cohort Romy Arago were arrested. Citizen information was instrumental in the operation, the President said.

Strike No. 3: August 10 in Quezon City, a stolen Isuzu Crosswind was recovered two days after it was forcibly taken from its driver, Jefferson Espino, who was murdered during the carnapping incident. The possessor of the vehicle, Jose R. Samson, is now in custody.

Strike No. 4: August 11 in Pasay City, a stolen Mitsubishi Pajero was recovered less than five hours after the carnapping was reported to the police. Two members of the notorious carnapping syndicate Mechure Group – Alvin Magpayo and Philip Andre Navarro – were arrested.

“The full force of the PNP, particularly the Traffic Management Group, is conducting operations to hunt down identified members, and provide even more efficient solutions to carnapping incidents,” the President said.

The President also said the citizens’ active participation strengthened the administration’s campaign against crime.

She said she was “happy to note that citizens who have been victimized by the suspects we have arrested and presented to the public over the last few weeks are calling up to report that they, too, have been victimized and that they want to file charges.”

These victims who come forward only strengthen our cases against these suspects who have been caught in the act, the President said.

The President said she was at first hesitant to be photographed with the crime suspects at Camp Crame “*kaya lamang, sa dalawang dahilan, kailangang gawin ko ito, lalo na sa araw na ito* (but for two reasons I have to agree to do so, particularly on this day).”

First of all, the PNP has good news for the people, particularly for the victims of carnapping, about the four strikes against car thieves, the President said.

Secondly, the people, particularly victims, will get a chance to see the face of the suspects and encourage them to come forward and file their own complaints against the suspects.

Gov’t will continue to pursue peace process with communists, says Malacanang

Malacañang today said the government would pursue peace and development, especially in the countryside, by keeping its doors open for negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF).

In a press briefing, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio “Toting” Bunye said it is the policy of the government to keep the communication lines with the CPP-NPA-NDF open while it abhors the use of “armed struggle” as a means to attain political ends.

Bunye stressed that mere membership in the CPP or any organizations espousing communism as an ideology, is not a crime.

Even membership in other leftist groups such as Sanlakas, Akbayan and the Partidong Komunista sa Pilipinas (PKP) of former rebel Luis Taruc are likewise not prohibited under the existing laws.

The legalization of membership in communist groups, he said, came after the passage of Republic Act No. 7636, which repealed R.A. 1700 or the anti-subversion law.

R.A. 7636, which was signed by former President Fidel V. Ramos on Sept. 23, 1992, legalizes the CPP, giving it political space and allowing it to compete in the free market of ideas under a democratic society.

“What is abhorred and proscribed is the use of armed struggle to attain political ends,” Bunye said.

He pointed out that there is no distinction whether such armed struggle was being done by communists or other ideologically oriented groups.

Earlier, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, in her extemporaneous remarks during the presentation of arrested carnappers at Camp Crame in Quezon City, said that for as long as the NPA, the armed component of the CPP, continues with its terroristic activities in its aim to overthrow the government, the CPP would still be considered as among the groups that violate the country’s laws.

Bunye said that based on experience and past instances, the NPA has participated in criminal acts such as assassinations, ambushes, kidnapping, extortion, arson and destruction of public or private properties.

“What I have enumerated are punishable under existing laws, specifically under the Revised Penal Code,” he said.

“Our law enforcers are under instructions to protect our citizens against such criminal acts and activities and are urged to take the appropriate action whenever and wherever required,” Bunye said.

At present, Bunye said the proposed anti-terrorism law, which is one of the pet bills of the administration now pending in Congress, would specifically address the problem of terrorism.

He said the President cited the urgency of the said bill during her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 22.

Palace hopes if price of crude oil goes down, oil firms would also lower their prices

Malacañang today said that the minimal increase in the price of oil products is dictated by world conditions but at the same time the hope that when the price of crude oil in the world market goes down, the oil companies would also adjust their prices correspondingly.

In his regular press briefing, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that the price of fuel is principally dictated by two factors.

First, Bunye said, the price of Dubai crude has gone up by some 70 centavos over the last 30 days.

Secondly, there has been a slight movement of the peso vis a vis the US dollar, with the Philippine currency losing by something like 13 centavos during the last 60 days, Bunye said.

“So, expectedly, there will be an effect on the price of oil products in the Philippines,” Bunye said.

But Bunye said the price increase is limited to certain products and does not include liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), which is being used by many households.

He reiterated that since the oil industry has been deregulated, the price of oil is really dictated by market forces.

“At siguro kung magkaroon naman ng reverse trend, kung gumanda iyong price of crude oil, dapat mabilis din ang response ng mga oil companies in adjusting the prices downward (And maybe when there is a reverse trend, if the price of crude oil decrease, then the oil companies should also lower their prices with the same speed),” Bunye said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 12, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033538/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug12.htm>

The President's Day: August 13, 2002

13 AUGUST 2002

- **GMA okays increase of 2003 budget to P804 billion**
- **Resignation put on hold, GMA to meet with Roco, Palace says**
- **RP welcomes U.S. declaration that CPP-NPA is a terrorist organization**

GMA okays increase of 2003 budget to P804 billion

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today approved the increase of the national budget for the next fiscal year from P800.7 billion to P804 billion, or an additional of P3.3 billion of the amount earlier proposed by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

In today's Cabinet Meeting in Malacañang, the President stressed that next year's budget should be able to lay the foundation of a strong Republic that she vowed to build in the coming year.

According to the President, the twin goals of the 2003 national budget will be to restore the country's macro-economic stability and to win back investor confidence in the economy.

She also said that next year's budget conforms to the priorities of her administration, namely to eliminate graft and corruption; ensure peace and order in the entire country; and provide basic services to the people, especially the poor.

The President said that the proposed general appropriations bill for FY 2003 would be submitted to the House of Representatives on August 21, or exactly one month after she delivered her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) at the Batasang Pambansa.

The proposed 2003 national budget has a 3.3 deficit ratio to the gross domestic product (GDP). It is P23.2 billion more than the budget for this year, which is P780.8 billion.

With the increase in next year's budget, the government has also increased its deficit target for 2003, from P138 billion to P142.1 billion. This year's deficit target still stands at P130 billion.

For the year 2003, the government projects total revenues of P640.7 billion while total expenditures are expected to reach P782.8 billion.

Revenues for next year, aimed at shoring up resources to bankroll a strong Republic, would come from the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), P465.6 billion; Bureau of Customs, P106.8 billion; other agencies, P7.6 billion; and from non-tax sources, P60.7 billion.

Also for next year, the country's economic managers have forecast a 5.1 percent to 5.7 percent growth in the gross national product (GNP), and a 5.0 percent to 5.5 percent GDP growth.

The inflation rate for next year would average from 4.0 to 5.0, still the lowest in the region.

Resignation put on hold, GMA to meet with Roco, Palace says

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will meet with Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Raul Roco "at the soonest possible time" in the hope of threshing out the issues involving the latter's resignation from his Cabinet post.

In a statement read before Malacañang reporters this afternoon, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said it was unfortunate that the ministerial act of referring charges filed against Roco by the DepEd employees union to the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) has been “blown out of proportion as to create the false impression that Roco is being eased out.”

“The impression has no basis in truth and in fact,” Bunye said.

In the same statement, Bunye stressed that the charges against the DepEd secretary had to be referred “as a matter of routine” to the PAGC in the same manner that charges against Justice Secretary Hernando Perez and Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit were earlier referred to the anti-graft body.

According to Bunye, the President and the members of the Cabinet recognize Roco’s dedication and exemplary service.

Bunye said the President has not yet accepted Roco’s resignation.

Early this morning, Roco tendered his letter of resignation to the President through Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo where he expressed his surprise over the report that PAGC would investigate him on the basis of the graft complaint filed by the DepEd employees union.

In his letter, Roco noted that since February 14, 2001, “I have served in the Cabinet with dedication and without fanfare.”

As a result of his performance, Roco said the teacher’s welfare was enhanced and free public education for more than 17-million children guaranteed.

RP welcomes U.S. declaration that CPP-NPA is a terrorist organization

The Philippine government has formally welcomed the declaration of the United States that the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) is a foreign terrorist organization (FTO).

“The action of the US is not an interference in the internal affairs of the Philippines,” Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye said that by using the term “communist,” President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and other government officials were simply trying to identify, in clear and candid terms, the ideological orientation of a given group or persons.

“The government proscribes and abhors the use of violence and terrorism, whether to attain political or plain criminal ends, whether done by communists or other ideologically-oriented groups,” Bunye said.

According to Bunye, the CPP-NPA has engaged in terrorist acts against civilian targets such as extortion and arson; and destruction of public utilities and infrastructure, communications and power lines and transport facilities.

The CPP-NPA has also been engaged in the assassination of political leaders and innocent individuals as part of its overall objective of overthrowing the duly constituted government and the democratic system, Bunye said.

Bunye said that since there is no ceasefire between the government and the CPP-NPA, military and police operations against those who violate the laws of the land will continue.

But the government, Bunye said, will maintain open lines of communication with the leadership of the CPP-NPA “in the hope of ending their employment of violence and terrorism as a means to attain political ends, and to achieve national unity and reconciliation under the Constitution.”

He also called on other communist organizations that are not engaged in unlawful acts to condemn the violence and terrorism being perpetrated by the CPP-NPA.

The government, Bunye said, is also calling on the entire citizenry to get involved in the fight against the CPP-NPA and in upholding all government programs of free enterprise, social equity, good governance and poverty alleviation that strike at the roots of the armed conflict.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 13, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033552/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug13.htm>

The President's Day: August 14, 2002

14 AUGUST 2002

- **GMA scraps PAGCOR's slot machine project**
- **Romulo urges efficient, smooth flow of Palace papers**
- **Raise funds but don't tinker with moral fabric of Filipino people, GMA tells PAGCOR**
- **GMA calls on friends, followers, foes to unite, help build strong Republic**
- **GMA orders DENR to take over Diwalwal mining operations**
- **GMA welcomes Dutch gov't moves to freeze CPP-NPA funds**
- **Latest SWS survey gives GMA highest satisfaction rating of 55 percent**

GMA scraps PAGCOR's slot machine project

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) to scrap its plan to put up slot machine arcades in public places in the entire country.

"In the light of strengthening the moral foundation of leadership, I am announcing that I am instructing the PAGCOR to abort the slot machine arcade project," the President said in her keynote speech at the launching of the Arsenio H. Lacson Foundation for Public Service held this morning at Manila Hotel.

The President said that she aborted the project despite its passage by the PAGCOR Board as part of its corporate powers.

She further recalled that she also aborted PAGCOR's plan to put up the jai alai project following its victory in the Supreme Court.

"PAGCOR says that they passed the slot machine project as part of their corporate powers, that it is well within the law. PAGCOR also won in the Supreme Court the right to up a jai alai project. But after PAGCOR won at the Supreme Court the jai alai project that was when I aborted the project," the President said.

"Therefore it is not the question of what is legal, it is a question of what is morally upright and morally sound," the President stressed.

"I think this is already two strikes of PAGCOR that I have overruled their decision. I am not saying that their decision is illegal. I am just saying that in these two times, the jai alai and the slot machine (projects), it does not quite measure up to the moral standards that we have set for governance in our administration," the President said.

PAGCOR is a government-owned and controlled corporation whose operation is governed by a franchise duly approved by Congress.

Romulo urges efficient, smooth flow of Palace papers

We want to avoid all delays. We want to cut the red tape.

These were the reasons of Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo in issuing a circular requiring well-researched and well-documented requests and issuances for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's signature.

In a radio interview, Romulo said documents intended for presidential action should have gone through complete staff work, so its flow would be smooth and efficient.

The documents included in Romulo's circular are presidential issuances and/or approval, such as executive orders, proclamations, administrative orders, memorandum orders, memorandum circulars and similar directives.

It was noted that some of these have been passed on straight to the President for her signature by some Cabinet members and heads of government agencies.

In the same interview, Romulo said the complaint against Education Secretary Raul Roco was passed on to his office and "as a matter of course, it was referred to the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC)," being the office handling and responsible for such matters.

"After the ministerial act, it's up to the PAGC to listen and read and to inquire into the complaint," he said.

The PAGC would have to go through the process of calling the complainants and listening to them and seeing whether there was basis for the complaint, he added.

Romulo said the President and other members of the Cabinet "recognize the dedicated service of Secretary Roco."

"It's unfortunate that the ministerial act of referring the charges (against Roco) to the PAGC has been misinterpreted. It's just a ministerial routine act," he pointed out.

Raise funds but don't tinker with moral fabric of Filipino people, GMA tells PAGCOR

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today told the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) to initiate fund-raising projects that would not compromise one of the hallmarks of her administration, which is to strengthen the moral fabric of the Filipino people.

"The PAGCOR must have to find other ways more acceptable to our moral standards, to the moral standards we are trying to improve," the President said during a luncheon meeting with the Malacañang Press Corps.

Earlier in her remarks at the launching of the Arsenio H. Lacson Foundation for Public Service at the Manila Hotel, the President ordered the scrapping of PAGCOR's slot machine arcades project.

When told during the luncheon that PAGCOR has already signed contracts for the slot machine project, the President said that PAGCOR should "work out the legalities there," adding that her decision to scrap the project is final.

"The slot machine project is scrapped, not modified," the President stressed.

The problem with the slot machine project, the President said, is that it will cater to the middle class, the lower middle class and the students.

The President said PAGCOR should think of high-end projects that would cater to tourists or people with money, and not to ordinary Filipinos.

"If they have to raise money, they should engage in high-end projects that cater to the rich and the famous," the President said.

The President also explained that the casino project at the reclaimed portion of the Manila Bay is only a small portion of the proposed tourism and entertainment center.

The estate, which is a property of the Public Estates Authority (PEA), will have the Nayong Pilipino, which will occupy a bigger portion, and hotels and restaurants, the President said.

She said the casino would only be a small component of proposed tourism estate.

The President also stressed that in that casino, as in other existing PAGCOR-operated casinos, rules will be strictly implemented so that they will cater only to tourists and the moneyed people.

GMA calls on friends, followers, foes to unite, help build strong Republic

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on friends, followers and foes alike to contribute in the efforts to build a strong Philippine Republic, saying she does not expect all to agree with her as president but continues to hope that everyone can unite behind commonalities.

In her keynote speech at the launching of the Arsenio H. Lacson Foundation for Public Service at the Manila Hotel, the President said once again, she is inviting everyone to unite by focusing on the vital ends — to fight poverty and terrorism, to uphold good governance and to build a strong Philippine Republic.

The President recalled that during the time of Manila Mayor Arsenio H. Lacson and his father, President Diosdado Macapagal, the Philippines was second only to Japan as an economic force in Asia.

The President said today, in recovering from last year's global slowdown, the Philippines is performing best among our Southeast Asian neighbors and third among Asian countries.

“That is why we must not lose hope but rather maintain this momentum and let us not forget, that we remain the oldest democracy in Asia, that we must demonstrate that democracy works in the Philippines in the 21st century, that a democratic state can be a strong republic and not be the stereotype of a soft state,” the President said.

“These are not just sentimental longings but inspiring challenges for us to come together and act together for the common cause. Like the great medieval cathedrals, we must patiently place one stone firmly over the other but we must also be aware that the challenge is more complex than ever,” the President said.

“All we need is to patiently rebuild together. We must also do so swiftly, consistently purposefully. Leadership must not deceive our people by false promises of an idealized life. Better lives, we can promise and work for, but it must be done with integrity and truth. We must accept the difficulties of the task and make clear the role each one of us has to play,” she added.

The President said that through the years, the Republic has unfortunately become a house divided, has not delivered enough basic services to help its poorest, has not given the promise of a bright future to its youth, has lacked the will to enforce the rule of law without fear or favor, has allowed the moral and civic values of its citizenry to wither, has fallen prey to those whose selfish ambition, vested interest or inimical ideology would tear the Republic asunder.

“This is a collective guilt that we must share, for with few exceptions, we are all part of this system,” the President said.

The Chief Executive said there are those among us who would argue that they are already working to change the system but oftentimes, their ways have been “patronizing, self-righteous, strident and self-centered.”

“On the contrary, the true journey to strengthen the Republic must be a national one, where the individual gives way to the whole,” the President said.

She said a strong republic has two essential attributes. First, that it must be autonomous of dominant classes and sectors “so that it represents the people's interest and not only a powerful minority group or some of them.”

Second, the republic must have the capacity represented through strong institutions and a strong democracy to implement its policies and deliver its service, she said.

The President said strong institutions and strong democracy build a strong Philippine Republic and provide an effective government characterized by professional and dedicated civil servants.

“Strong institutions also include a vigorous free enterprise economy where the Filipinos’ full talents are unleashed while government must remove the forces and factors that obstruct free markets,” she said.

A strong republic, she noted, must recognize that at the starting gate of competitive field, not all players have equal opportunities such as farmers with no land of their own and the youth with no access to education.

“Thus, it is government’s task to provide these tools that would help level the playing field. And that is how we can make free enterprise a strong institution,” she said.

The President also said that in a strong republic, the government cannot rely solely on the invisible hand of the market.

“At the macro level, government must at times intervene to stabilize the economy, or to steer it towards long-term growth. It must also protect its environment and natural resources from blind market forces,” she said.

She also noted that a strong republic can be autonomous of dominant classes and sectors through true democratic representations built on new politics, which requires rational electoral processes, where citizens are given the tools for informed choices and their votes are counted properly.

Another strong institution needed in a strong Philippine Republic, the President said, is a vibrant civil society. “We must find a way to finally dismantle a subculture of divisiveness and individualism and transform our families, communities and other civil societies organizations into constructive engines for national prosperity,” she said.

GMA orders DENR to take over Diwalwal mining operations

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to take over the Diwalwal mining operations in Mount Diwata, Monkayo, Compostela Valley province and to formulate a scheme that would “equitably” allocate the mineral resources to all the stakeholders operating in the area.

In a luncheon meeting with some members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said that her order was specifically addressed to the National Resource Development Corporation (NRDC), the DENR’s corporate arm.

The President said that since 1983, Diwalwal has been the site of subsistence small-scale mining operators without permits to labor intensive medium-scale mining operations involving thousands of miners, local entrepreneurs and service providers.

On August 12, DENR Secretary Heherson Alvarez issued an order for the stoppage of all mining and processing operations in the Diwalwal mining areas.

The order of Alvarez also called for the creation of a technical working group that would formulate a mine management plan for the sustainable utilization of mineral resources in the area.

The President also disclosed that Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, who has just been designated as Special Consultant on Public Order and Security, along with Presidential Consultant on Regional Development Paul Dominguez and Presidential Adviser on Jobs Creation Luis Lorenzo were meeting to discuss the Diwalwal problem.

The President also said that the government will construct a “tailing dam” or a tailing disposal system to control the pollution and siltation resulting from the Diwalwal mining operations.

The President said she has instructed Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin to get a “bridge financing” from the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), which has earlier committed to help finance the government regional priority projects, to fund the construction of the tailing dam.

During the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, Alvarez said the DENR based its orders to temporarily stop the Diwalwal mining operations because of the deteriorating peace and order in the area where shooting incidents and ambushes have resulted in more than 80 deaths.

The DENR said there were also frequent incidence of violence among rival miners groups, as well as rallies, protests and critical roads and bridges blockades and other public disturbances.

Severe siltation of the Naboc River and rice lands by mine tailings was also one of the bases of the order of stoppage, while validated mercury and cyanide contamination of the Naboc and upstream portion of Agusan River were found to be above threshold limits, the DENR said.

According to the DENR, some 18,000 residents, including some 7,000 miners were principally dependent on unsafe and illegal mining operations for livelihood.

The annual gross sales of gold estimated at P3 billion without collection of taxes by local and national governments, estimated at P100 million per year, for the last 18 years, was also cited by the DENR as one of the reasons for its order of stoppage of mining operations of Mount Diwalwal.

GMA welcomes Dutch gov’t moves to freeze CPP-NPA funds

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today welcomed moves of the government of the Netherlands to freeze the financial assets of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA).

The President hoped “that it could hasten the peace talks so that the other side can think of parliamentary struggle ... using the democratic space rather than engaging in violence and terrorism.”

“That’s what communicating with them is all about; trying to make the move from a violent and terroristic mode to parliamentary,” she said.

She was referring to government efforts to resume peace negotiations with the CPP-NPA’s political arm, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Earlier, chief government negotiator Silvestre Bello III said the peace talks might resume either in end-August or mid-September.

Bello said he had talked with NDF spokesman Luis Jalandoni about possibilities of having the talks in either Oslo, Norway or the Netherlands.

Over lunch with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said there was nothing definite yet on the date for the formal government-NDF peace negotiations.

“(The talks are) in limbo, because I have put it in a back-channeling mode,” she said, adding that among those involved in back-channeling efforts was Presidential Management Staff chief Silvestre Afable Jr.

Meanwhile, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said the move of the Dutch government to freeze CPP-NPA funds would tighten the valves of the group “insofar as their terrorist capability is concerned.”

Golez, in a press briefing in Malacañang, said “we are happy that one of the first to respond to (the call of the United States government to freeze the funds of the CPP-NPA as a foreign terrorist group) is the Netherlands government.

He said the Dutch government has also frozen funds belonging to CPP-NPA leaders, among whom are founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison and spokesman Luis Jalandoni.

“We are talking of funds that were very likely fruits of their extortion activities here in the Philippines” and from remnants of communist parties in Europe, he said.

He disclosed that the CPP-NPA had been able to collect large sums of money in the recent past.

Government estimates showed the CPP-NPA collected as much as P108 million in 1999; P93 million in 2000; and P98 million in 2001. For this year, collections could have reached P50 million, he added.

Golez said one of the communist group’s fund-raising activity was the so-called “permit to campaign” fees they asked from politicians.

The fees ranged from P500,000 to P1 million for a senator; P600,000 to P900,000 or 12 M16 Armalite rifles for a governor; P300,000 to P500,000 or eight M16 rifles for a congressman; P50,000 to P300,000 or four M16 rifles for a city mayor; P50,000 to P125,000 for a town mayor; P10,000 to P20,000 for a vice mayor; P10,000 for a board member; and P1,000 to P5,000 from a councilor.

Besides this, the CPP-NPA was noted for committing a lot of atrocities.

Golez said that this year alone, the communist group “initiated 116 liquidation (missions)” leading to the killing of 92 civilians and the wounding of 21 others.

Last year, they killed 164 people by liquidation or by summary executions.

He called the attention of cause-oriented group Bayan Muna leader Rep. Satur Ocampo who “I understand is opposed to the death penalty.”

While Ocampo showed opposition to the death penalty, “he is not opposing the death penalty policy of the CPP-NPA,” Golez stressed. “We think he is applying the double standard here.”

The National Security Adviser also lashed at the CPP-NPA for targeting vital public and private installations in their terroristic activities.

He recited a litany of communist misdeeds committed nationwide, including the burning and destruction of homes of non-supporters and of utilities and transport vehicles of those who refused to pay revolutionary taxes.

Latest SWS survey gives GMA highest satisfaction rating of 55 percent

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has obtained her highest Gross Satisfaction Rating of 55 percent and +28 Net Satisfaction in the latest survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) covering the period August 6-9, 2002.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President’s latest rating in the survey conducted by the SWS was the “highest so far in presidency.”

Bunye said the previous highest since she became president was +27 percent, a survey result reflected on Nov. 3-21, 2001.

According to Bunye, the President attributed the improvement in her net satisfaction rating to the partial solution of the Purchased Power Cost Adjustment (PPCA) problem, the defeat of the Abu Sayyaf group, and the government's continuing drive against criminality.

The SWS survey, commissioned by the Crusade for Better Philippines, also found that 60.4 percent of those polled approve of the President's leadership, and that 46 percent trust her as a person.

On the leadership issue, the SWS survey revealed that 60.4 percent of the respondents approve and 19.8 percent disapprove of President Macapagal-Arroyo's leadership, giving a net leadership approval rating of +41 percent.

The President's leadership approval, according to the survey result, is relatively high in Luzon (+48), Visayas (+49) and the ABC classes (+51).

The SWS survey also showed that in 10 out of 16 problems tested, most people had favorable views of efforts being made by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to solve the problem.

In a footnote, the SWS noted that leadership approval should not be confused with "job approval," adding that their surveys on governance over the past 17 years have consistently focused on job satisfaction rather than on job approval.

On the plurality trust in the President as a person, the SWS survey found that 46.4 percent have much trust and 23.8 percent have little trust in her as a person, implying a net trust rating of +23 percent.

It added that trust in the President is the same across socio-economic classes, which is relatively high in Balance Luzon (net +33) and Visayas (net +28).

When the survey respondents were asked what they liked about the President's second State of the Nation Address (SONA), the top 10 answers were: housing for the poor (12%), war against criminality (11%), help for the poor (11%), lower cost of electricity (8.1%), more jobs (6.5%), lower prices of goods, war against terrorism (5.4%), war against illegal drugs (4.0%), help for agriculture (3.4%), and strong Republic (3.3%).

Twenty five percent of the respondents could not recall what they liked while 15 percent said they did not like anything in the SONA.

Some 56 percent surveyed were aware of the President's second SONA. Twenty six percent of them had seen it on live in television, 17 percent had gotten news about it on TV/radio, 7 percent had heard of it from other people, 6 percent had listened to it on live radio, and 3 percent had read about it in the newspapers.

The SWS said those patterns are similar to those after the President first SONA in July 2001.

On the other hand, mixed opinions were raised with regards to the administration's claim of delivering the 2001 SONA promises: 38 percent agreed, 30 percent disagreed, and 32 percent were undecided. It added that the +8 net agreement is relatively small.

The SWS also noted that opinions were also mixed about the opposition claim that the administration did not deliver the 2001 SONA promises: 32 percent agreed, 36 percent disagreed, and 32 percent were undecided, for a relatively small net of -5 percent.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 14, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033600/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug14.htm>

The President's Day: August 15, 2002

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- **DFA welcomes creation of RP-U.S. Defense Policy Board**
- **Gov't after both 'big fish,' 'small fish' in anti-graft campaign, says GMA**
- **Don't interfere in gov't campaign against criminality, GMA warns judges**
- **Ramirez not whistle-blower on tax scam, says GMA**
- **GMA orders assistance to Filipinos in Malaysia**
- **Gov't to continue contacts with NDF despite Joma's threat to withdraw from peace gab**

DFA welcomes creation of RP-U.S. Defense Policy Board

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) welcomed the establishment of the Philippines-United States Defense Policy Board, as agreed upon by Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and his counterpart, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld during their meeting in Washington last August 13.

In a statement, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople said this new bilateral policy body will complement existing defense consultative mechanisms, namely the Council of Foreign Ministers and the Mutual Defense Board, both of which are under the framework of the 1951 RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty.

Ople said both the DFA and the Department of National Defense have always believed that there is a need to establish a mechanism that could conduct a broader review of our defense and security relations, particularly in the context of the new security challenges that face both our nations and the world.

He said that it is precisely with this in mind that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and President George W. Bush agreed last November in Washington to establish "a new bilateral defense consultative mechanism" as contained in paragraph 7 of the Joint Statement between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines issued during the President's visit to Washington DC, on Nov. 20, 2001.

"When we were negotiating the joint statement, it was our understanding that the DFA as well as other relevant government agencies, would be an active participant in this bilateral defense consultative mechanism," Ople said.

Ople said he looks forward to the activation of the Philippines-United States Defense Policy Board, adding that he was confident that this Board will serve "to enhance our military and security cooperation with the United States, with the view towards building our own defense and security capabilities."

Gov't after both 'big fish,' 'small fish' in anti-graft campaign, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reiterated her administration's determination to curb graft and corruption in government by going after both the "big fish" and "small fish" who are involved in graft and corruption activities.

In an interview with reporters at the Department of Justice (DOJ) office on Taft Avenue, Manila, the President said it is only appropriate to catch the small fish first because they are the ones doing the act for the big fish.

"The big fish are not the ones who do the act; it's the small fish," the President said.

She explained that after catching the small fish, it is the job of the government to investigate further and find out who their bosses are.

"How can you catch the big fish unless you catch the small fish first and hope to persuade them to testify who are their bosses," the President stressed.

Since the start of her administration's all-out campaign against rice smugglers about three weeks ago, the President said the government has already filed charges against two "big fish" who are suspected of being involved in rice smuggling, namely Nieves Uy and Antonio Chua.

The President noted that in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 22, she directed Justice Secretary Hernando Perez to take legal actions against Albay Regional Trial Court (RTC) Judge Arnulfo Cabredo for obstructing the government's efforts to crack down on the smuggling of rice in the country.

"No one is above the law, more so among those who sit in judgment for violation of law," the Chief Executive said.

She added that the Executive branch shall not stand by or wash its hands of cases where members of the bench are involved.

Aside from the judge, the President said the government is also filing a case against lawyer Marcial Lopez, former district collector of Legaspi, Albay for alleged failure to attend the hearing on a motion he filed to lift the temporary restraining order that paved the way for the denial of the said motion.

Initial findings of the Bureau of Customs showed that the documents covering the rice shipment were spurious, apparently aimed at misleading officials that the cargo was locally sourced.

Don't interfere in gov't campaign against criminality, GMA warns judges

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today warned all the judges in the country not to interfere in the government's campaign to stop the smuggling of rice to avoid being criminally charged themselves in the future.

The President issued this warning when she personally witnessed the filing of criminal charges against Albay Regional Trial Court Judge Arnulfo Cabredo and a retired Customs official at the Department of Justice Prosecutors Office for allegedly obstructing the efforts of the government to crack down on the activities of rice smuggling syndicates.

"For the other judges who are still out there, let this case be a reminder to all the other RTC judges that the Collector of Customs, by law and by jurisprudence, has exclusive jurisdiction over seizure proceedings and regular courts cannot interfere with the exercise of that jurisdiction," the President said.

The President directed Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo to present all pieces of evidence against Judge Cabredo at the DOJ.

She also instructed Justice Secretary Hernando Perez to "exhaust all means within his authority to bring Judge Cabredo before the very bar of justice he has foresworn to uphold."

Also charged with Judge Cabredo was Atty. Marcial Lopez, former District Collector of the Port of Legaspi, Albay.

The President explained that Lopez was the Customs official who tipped her off about the illegal rice shipment but did not do anything to take physical custody of the rice shipment despite the fact that as early Sept. 23, 2001, a warrant of seizure and detention had already been issued on the said shipment.

The incident happened when the President made a surprise visit to Legaspi, where she landed from her official visit in Japan.

"Atty. Lopez for obvious reasons failed to attend the hearing on a motion he filed to lift the temporary restraining order (TRO), thus paving the way for a denial of the said motion," the President explained.

“On the findings of Customs, a warrant of seizure and detention was issued against the vessel and its cargo. However, Judge Arnulfo Cabredo of the Regional Trial Court of Tabaco issued a TRO upon petition of the consignees against the warrant of the Bureau of Customs,” she added.

Because of this, the President said the rice was released to the consignees.

It may be recalled that the BOC had already filed smuggling and falsification charges against the consignees and shipmaster and the operator of the M/V Criston.

The case against the two were filed by Atty. Clemente P. Heraldo and Leonito A. Santiago, chief and special investigator, respectively, of the Bureau of Customs Internal Inquiry and Prosecution Division – Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (IIPD-CIIS).

“I respect the separation of powers of the executive and the judiciary but as I said in the SONA, I must stand by the interest of the people in seeking legal relief against the abuses of judicial authorities,” President said.

“No one should be above the law. More so among those who sit in judgment of violations of law. The executive shall not stand by or wash its hands off cases where members of the bench are involved. I direct the DOJ to seek the proper venue and identify the proper charges by which this case can be resolved fairly and speedily,” the President said.

The President said that aside from Cabredo, the government has already filed a separate case of violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act against Judges Pedro de Leon Gutierrez of Pasay City RTC Branch 119 and Rodrigo B. Lorenzo of Pasig City RTC Branch 166.

She added that aside from the three judges, the DOJ also filed an administrative and criminal cases against five prosecutors namely: Constancia Velasco of Manila Prosecutors Office for extorting P5,000 and entrapped last Nov. 8, 2001; Apolinarque Tulio of Paranaque City Prosecutors Office, who demanded P60,000 and entrapped last April 16, 2002; Romulo Gotico, assistant provincial prosecutor of Capiz for extorting P50,000 and entrapped on July 17, 2001; Victor de la Cruz, third assistant City Prosecutor of Naga City, for sexual harassment; and Oscar Corpuz of San Fernando City, La Union Prosecutors Office for gross negligence.

The President said that Corpuz was charged last August 5 for gross negligence, inefficiency and incompetence in the performance of official duties related to the kidnapping-for-ransom of Grace Rowena Tiu.

Ramirez not whistle-blower on tax scam, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today clarified that Acsa Ramirez is not the whistle-blower in the P203-million tax diversion case, for which Land Bank Binangonan branch manager Artemio San Juan was charged.

“She did not blow the whistle on the tax scam. She reported a totally separate ‘crank’ account. Some crank tried to open a P26-billion account, totally unrelated to the tax scam,” President said.

In her statement at the Department of Justice (DOJ) after witnessing the filing of criminal charges against a Regional Trial Court judge in Albay and a former District Collector of the Bureau of Customs based in Legaspi, the President said Ramirez misinterpreted the turn of events and later on claimed to media that she was the whistle-blower in the tax scam.

“So even today, I read that Acsa Ramirez blew the whistle on the tax scam. No, she blew the whistle on a totally separate crank guy who tried to open a P26-billion account,” the President said.

The President explained that she needed to clarify the issue on Ramirez because everybody was asking her on the participation of the cashier with regards to the case of San Juan.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said that based on the bank documents the Anti-Money Laundering Council gave the NBI, Ramirez failed to report 11 transactions, each worth P4 million and above, intended for three of the four fraudulent accounts that a syndicate used to divert P203 million in tax money.

The President also informed the media that the DOJ is now ready and scheduled to file a criminal case against San Juan at the proper court.

GMA orders assistance to Filipinos in Malaysia

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur to extend all possible assistance to the Filipino overseas workers who are facing deportation from Malaysia, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said today.

Bunye, in his regular press briefing in Malacañang, said the primary concern of the President is the alleged inhumane treatment on Filipino workers although he said the government learned later that this is not true.

“The first concern of the President is the alleged inhumane treatment of the overseas workers, which we found not to be true,” Bunye said.

“The instruction is to assist, extend all possible assistance to them so that they could be repatriated at the earliest time,” he added.

Reports said close to 80,000 Filipino illegal aliens in Malaysia face arrest unless they go back to the Philippines by August 24.

Meanwhile, the Office of Migrant Affairs of the Department of Foreign Affairs has sent a team to Kuala Lumpur to help facilitate the documentation and deportation of the Filipinos in Sabah, where close to 5,000 Filipinos are awaiting deportation.

Gov't to continue contacts with NDF despite Joma's threat to withdraw from peace gab

Malacañang today said it will continue its contact with the National Democratic Front (NDF) through Luis Jalandoni notwithstanding the threat of Jose Ma. Sison to withdraw from the peace negotiations with the government.

In a press briefing, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the peace talks between the government and the NDF panels are currently on the “back-channelling mode” and the contacts can continue with Jalandoni.

“Our position is that Joma (Sison) is not the chairman of the NDF panel, he is only an adviser and the real chairman is Mr. Luis Jalandoni,” Bunye said.

Bunye said that it is up to the Dutch government to implement its freeze order on the assets of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)

Yesterday, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo welcomed the Dutch government's freeze order, expressing the hope that it could hasten the peace process.

“We welcome it. I'd hope it could hasten the peace talks so that the other side can think of parliamentary struggle and use the democratic space rather than engaging in violence and terrorism because that is what communicating with them is all about,” the President told reporters during a luncheon in Malacañang.

The Dutch government decided to freeze the assets of the CPP and to request member-countries of the European Union to follow suit.

The Netherlands is playing host to Sison, founding chairman of the CPP, and to 29 other Filipino exiles who belong to the local communist group.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 15, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033613/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug15.htm>

The President's Day: August 16, 2002

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- **President gives moral support to kidnap victim**
- **Call hot line 117 and report crime, GMA tells citizens asking how they can help government fight criminality**
- **Administration against legalizing jueteng**
- **GMA stresses importance of peace and order to RP's growth, gov't vision to wipe out poverty**
- **Statement of Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye on Secretary Raul Roco's resignation**
- **Hope you enjoy retirement, Palace tells Joma**
- **Roco's resignation a big 'loss of a good public servant'**

President gives moral support to kidnap victim

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo motored to La Union early this morning to give moral support to kidnap victim Rowena “Jackie” Tiu who was scheduled to testify today during the first day of her trial at Branch 27 of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) presided over by Judge Antonio Carbonell.

“I must lend my voice to the multitude of Filipinos who cry out for justice – speedy, impartial justice,” the President said during a press briefing after having breakfast with the family of Jackie at the Capital Hardware store of the Tius on P. Burgos street here.

The President stressed that she refrained from entering the court because she does not wish to be misunderstood as interfering with the judicial process.

Jackie, who takes the witness stand today, is an example of courage, the President said.

“Others would fear doing this for fear of their lives and of their loved ones. I admire her courage and her sense of righteous indignation which will not be in vain,” the President said.

“She will be protected and so will all those who choose to stand against crime and terrorism,” the President added.

“I said we will wage this war against terrorism and crime on behalf and with the rage, of all the victims: those whose businesses were ruined by extortion, those held down in poverty by fear, those whose lives were snuffed out by addiction, and those taken hostage or killed,” the President emphasized.

“We shall redeem your pain, we shall redeem your loss. Rowena and her family are no exception,” she added.

The President reiterated what she said in her State of the Nation address last month that the ideal response to kidnapping by the law enforcers is exemplified in the case of Jackie.

The Chinese-Filipina kidnap victim was rescued in eight days, the ransom money was recovered, and her kidnappers arrested and are now in facing trial.

“Hers was the first and last kidnapping to take place in Region I (Ilocos) in my administration,” the President said.

Noting that there are other residual matters to take care of in connection with Tiu kidnapping, the President directed Justice Secretary Hernando Perez to investigate the prosecutors who were responsible for the downgrading of the charges against two of the original suspects who were named as mere accessories to the crime and who were allowed to post bail. “One was able to abscond without even being arraigned,” the President said.

“I want this issue resolved forthwith,” the President ordered Perez.

Aside from Perez, those who joined the President during the press briefing were Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., Agrarian Reform Secretary and Cabinet Officer for Regional Development for Region 2 Hernani Braganza, State Chief Prosecutor Jovencio Zuño and Teresita Ang See.

Courts records identified the suspects, all Chinese nationals, as Shi Chun, alias Jacky Sy Ocampo; Zhang Ximang, alias Michael Zang; Xu You Kwang, alias Johnny Chua Co; Shi Jian Hui, alias Jack King Sy; Lim Jiang Fem, alias Jason Lim; and Wu Lim Chang, and Zhan Du, alias Wilson Zang, who is out on bail.

The suspects were detained for about seven months at the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force in Camp Crame and later turned over to the La Union Provincial Jail to facilitate their attendance at the hearing of their case here.

The suspects, however, are now under the custody of the district jail of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) in Bauang, La Union, Lina informed the President.

“I have instructed the BJMP to make sure that the suspects will not be able to escape,” Lina said.

During the past weeks, the President has been making the rounds of law enforcement agencies to expose kidnappers, drug lords, tax evaders, smugglers and grafters.

“This has paid off not only in terms of a solid outpouring of public support. This has paid off in more crimes being reported and more arrests being made,” the President said.

She said that public vigilance is being heightened and the crusade for law and order gaining grounds.

Administration against legalizing jueteng

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union—The administration is against the legalization of the numbers game jueteng, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. said here today.

In a press conference at the Capital Hardware at P. Burgos Street here, the President and Lina said, however, that to legalize jueteng is a congressional prerogative.

“We are against the legalization of jueteng. That’s a congressional prerogative, to file bills and tackle them. On the part of the administration, certainly it is not an administration measure,” the President said.

Lina, along with Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, accompanied President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during her visit to this city to extend moral support to kidnap victim Rowena Tiu during the first day of her trial here.

According to Lina, the feeling in the Senate is that majority of the senators are also not in favor of legalizing the numbers game.

He said that there is now a snowballing move in the Senate and the House of Representatives to increase the penalties for jueteng operators because the penalties at present “are very light.”

“Even if you arrest and arrest everyday, the gambling lords can easily bail out their collectors because the fine is only P400 to P2,000,” Lina said.

Lina narrated that in San Fernando City, a jueteng operator was arrested about three weeks ago by operatives of Philippine National Police of Region 3.

But the operator, a certain Melchor Caluaug, was able to post bail of P10,000, and in all likelihood, Lina said, he is now back in business.

“We need to ask Congress to speed up the proposal to increase the penalties for illegal gambling activities,” Lina said.

Call hot line 117 and report crime, GMA tells citizens asking how they can help government fight criminality

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union – If you witness a crime happening, call 117 immediately. If you hear something and have good reason to believe a crime is being committed or about to be committed, call 117.

This was the reply given by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to private citizens who have been asking how they can help the government in its drive against criminality.

“Call up 117 because many cases have been solved very quickly because of 117,” the President said, referring to the telephone hot line that enables law-enforcement agencies and public assistance groups to respond to emergency calls for any in any part of the country.

During a press briefing at the Capital Hardware store here where she had a breakfast with the family of kidnap victim Rowena “Jackie” Tiu, the President said her administration’s all-out campaign against criminality has heightened public vigilance against criminals.

She said the anti-crime campaign has paid off “in terms of solid outpouring of public support...in more crimes being reported and more arrests being made.”

Hotline 117 is a centrally managed and secured telephone central monitoring station provided by the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company and operated by qualified well-trained personnel from the Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and PLDT.

Telephones used by EMERGENCY HOTLINE 117 are equipped with the caller ID system to prevent prank calls and ensure quick confirmation and response to emergency calls.

During her press briefing, the President directed Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. to have “infomercials” on a series of cases that were solved because of 117.

She said that people would be made aware that they could really help by calling 117 when they see a crime or have good reasons to believe a crime is being committed or about to be committed.

The President also disclosed a report from Philippine National Police chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. that the PNP-National Capital Region arrested this morning four suspected “Kotong Cops,” policemen who are believed involved in extortion activities.

“As I said in my State of the Nation Address, we have to cleanse the PNP of the rascals that are inside and they are doing just that,” the President said.

The President also said the administration is against the legalization of “jueteng,” or illegal numbers game, as some legislators are suggesting.

GMA stresses importance of peace and order to RP’s growth, gov’t vision to wipe out poverty

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the importance of peace and order for the country to really speed up its economic development and for the government to achieve its vision of eradicating poverty within the decade.

In a press conference held at the Capital Hardware at P. Burgos Street here, the President said based on most economic indicators—like the inflation rate, interest rates and the unemployment rate—the government is doing well.

“If you look at these indicators, it means that we are on the right track,” the President said.

She said even the business community has acknowledged that the government is “doing everything right macro-economically.”

But the President said it is not only macro-economic management that would determine the investment climate but more importantly the peace and order situation.

“That is why we are now concentrating on the peace and order campaign,” the President said.

The President, along with Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. and Philippine National Police Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, were in this city to lend moral support to kidnap victim Rowena Tiu during the first day of her trial here.

She said that she was happy that there are still good citizens like Ms. Tiu who are willing to recount their ordeals in order to bring the criminals to justice.

Statement of Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye on Secretary Raul Roco’s resignation

The President expressed her deep sadness in the loss of a good public servant.

Secretary Roco’s resignation is an unfortunate reaction to what is after all the common situation of all public servants, which is to be open to all types of public complaints and to defend one’s self in a fair investigation. His resignation is even more unfortunate as the investigation that has just been started is also an opportunity to show these charges as unfounded. We are all bound by duty to resolve complaints from the people we serve.

The President regards this as merely the end of one chapter in Secretary Roco’s service to the people. She looks forward to working with him in some other capacity in

Hope you enjoy retirement, Palace tells Joma

Malacañang shrugged its shoulders today on the reported plan of Jose Ma. Sison to retire in the Netherlands.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, in his regular briefing at Malacañang, said he expects Sison to use the funds that he solicited from various organizations in Europe for his planned retirement.

“If Joma Sison is thinking of retirement, I hope he enjoys it and I hope he has set aside enough funds from contributions he got from organizations that he has duped,” he said.

Reports quoted Sison as planning to retire from the NDF as he said he has done too much already.

Sison, who has been out of the Philippines since 1987 along with a number of NDF members, enjoys continuous stipend from the Dutch government and receives funding from several non-government organizations in Europe.

The United States last week placed the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military arm, the New People's Army, on its list of foreign terrorist organizations, making it illegal for US citizens and entities to give funding support to them.

The US government likewise ordered American banks to block assets held by Sison and his rebel groups.

Roco's resignation a big 'loss of a good public servant'

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has expressed deep sadness over the resignation of Education Secretary Raul Roco, calling it the "loss of a good public servant."

In his press briefing, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the President had an hour-long meeting with Secretary Roco at the Palace.

In a statement, Bunye said "Roco's resignation is an unfortunate reaction to what is after all the common situation of all public servants, which is to be open to all types of public complaints and to defend one's self in a fair investigation."

"His resignation is even more unfortunate as the investigation has just been started is also an opportunity to show these charges as unfounded. We are all bound by duty to resolve complaints from the people we serve," he said.

He added that the President looked forward to working with Roco again. "The President expressed her hope that the secretary would be able to work with her in some other capacity."

The Press Secretary quoted Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo as having described that the meeting between the President and Roco was very cordial.

Roco's brother Rep. Ciriaco Roco, Secretary Marita Jimenez, Presidential Adviser on Overseas Development Assistance Absorption, and former Presidential Management Staff head Secretary Vicky Garchitorena were present during the meeting.

Bunye also said "there is no word yet" on who possibly would be appointed by the President to replace Roco in the Department of Education.

He also shrugged off claims from detractors that the administration dipped its hand to ease out Roco as a likely bet in the 2004 presidential election.

"Well, that's very unfortunate because everybody seems to be thinking about 2004 when it's still far away. And the stand of the President has always been to concentrate on the work at hand. And she doesn't want to be distracted by any other activities other than to deliver on what she has promised in her SONA," he said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 16, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033625/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug16.htm>

The President's Day: August 17, 2002

17 AUGUST 2002

- **Gov't, private sector ready to help sidewalk vendors**
- **DOLE report: 40,905 land jobs in Nat'l Capital Region**
- **GMA lauds citizens' help in anti-crime, anti-terrorist drive**
- **GMA orders guns, explosives in Mt. Diwalwal seized**
- **GMA cites moves of RP allies to freeze CPP-NPA assets**
- **GMA glad over better lives of Baseco residents**
- **GMA urges empowerment for barangay, youth leaders**

Gov't, private sector ready to help sidewalk vendors

Sidewalk vendors and other small livelihood operators, classified as members of the informal sector (IS), will soon benefit from a support package government and non-government

The inter-agency Social Development Committee (SDC) of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board has approved the creation of a sub-committee that would oversee policy matters affecting the IS.

The IS composed of about 45 percent of the country's 80-million population. It contributes 45 to 50 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

In a report to Malacañang, NEDA said this would assure that the welfare and rights of sidewalk vendors and other IS members are protected and promoted.

The sub-committee is tasked to ensure the formulation and implementation of policies and programs for the IS through the institutionalization of support from various state agencies, the civil society and social partners.

It will also recommend policies, programs and projects to the SDC; provide venues for discussion on policy and program issues and concerns; advise the SDC on strategies and other imperatives for action; and coordinate, monitor and act as oversight body in carrying out programs and policies for the sector.

NEDA said the government is undertaking programs to enable the sector to have access to social and legal protection as well as productive resources.

These include the protection of street vendors' interest thru lobbying and advocacy with relevant institutions like the Metro Manila Development Authority, the tapping of the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and the Philippine Savings Bank to put up insurance plans linked with the Social Security System (SSS); inclusion of the IS in livelihood and skills training; and the setting up of one-stop-shop windows of information services at the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Other programs being undertaken are the extension of occupational health and safety services; the empowerment of IS micro-enterprises and livelihood projects; and the institutionalization of data collection on IS in national and local surveys.

Policy matters affecting the IS in the regions would be handled by the Regional Development Councils, NEDA said.

The IS sub-committee will include the Department of Labor and Employment as chairman, NEDA as co-chairman, and the Department of the Interior and Local Government providing secretariat services.

Among its members are the National Anti-Poverty Commission, National Statistics Office, SSS, TESDA, DBP, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines and the Employees Confederation of the Philippines.

DOLE report: 40,905 land jobs in Nat'l Capital Region

The Department of Labor and Employment's (DOLE) placement efforts have helped 40,905 people get jobs in the National Capital Region (NCR) from January to June this year.

More than half of the number or 28,344 were placed through the employment assistance services of the DOLE-NCR and the DOLE-supervised public employment service offices (PESO) in the region.

A DOLE report reaching Malacañang said the other 12,561 persons who landed jobs were either hired on the spot (3,611) or placed in local jobs (8,950) through various job fairs conducted during the period in review.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, in most of her visits and speaking engagements in the metropolis and in different parts of the Philippines, acknowledged the conduct of job fairs as an effective way to promote employment and open windows for economic improvement.

DOLE-NCR Director Alex E. Maraan cited the cooperation of the private sector and the PESOs in opening up and increasing job opportunities in the region.

Maranan said 17 PESOs based in local government units (LGU) and non-government organizations in Metro Manila helped potential workers and the disadvantaged to get jobs suited to their skills or in acquiring needed training through counseling sessions.

Metro Manila is composed of the cities and towns of Caloocan, Las Piñas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Manila, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasay, Pasig, Pateros, Quezon City, San Juan, Taguig, and Valenzuela.

Maraan said the latest NGO-based PESO, facilitated by Rep. Allan Peter Cayetano, was set up in Taguig to complement efforts of an existing LGU PESO.

Another NGO PESO in the NCR was set up by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints in the 1990s.

GMA lauds citizens' help in anti-crime, anti-terrorist drive

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today acknowledged the growing enthusiasm and cooperation communities nationwide have shown to weed out criminal and terrorist groups and other threats to national socio-economic growth.

In a radio message aired nationwide, the President said "Ito naman talaga ang gusto nating mangyari sa ating kampanya: Ang makipagtulungan ang buong komunidad sa pagsugpo sa mga salot sa lipunan. (This was what we have always wanted to happen in our anti-crime, anti-terrorist and anti-graft campaign: That communities will help in eliminating society's menaces)."

She said many citizens have been calling up the police and telling on criminal activities in their areas, as she urged peace-loving persons to continue dialing Hotline 117 to report on crimes.

An invigorated police-community relations program, she added, has strengthened the anti-crime drive as the people have started looking at the military and police forces as their partners in law and order enforcement.

“We are restoring the faith of our people in our law enforcers, which is the most important driving force of our campaign against crime and terrorism,” the President said.

She said anti-crime advocate Tessie Ang-Sy had informed her that many big-time kidnapers wanted to give up to authorities, through Ang-Sy, because they feared that lawmen would eventually catch them.

“Maganda na ang ating set-up kontra sa mga (We have put up an effective set-up against) kidnapping syndicates,” she noted, as she lauded the police force for recovering, in a matter of hours, victims of a recent kidnapping case perpetrated by the Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom gang.

The President vowed to continue leading the drive to bring about a safer and more secured environment for the people.

She reiterated her appeal to newly-elected barangay officials to help government speedily deliver social services to their constituencies and to immediately execute anti-poverty programs.

“*Kailangan ko ang inyong tulong upang ipaliwanag sa ating mga kababayan ang mga patakaran ng pamahalaan at maglinaw ng mga isyu* (I need your help in explaining government policies and to clarify issues),” she said.

She added that unity and cooperation would go a long way in bringing to reality every Filipino’s dream for a better life and in building a strong republic.

GMA orders guns, explosives in Mt. Diwalwal seized

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that she had ordered the confiscation of all firearms and explosives in Mt. Diwalwal in Monkayo, Compostela Valley following recent violent incidents at the gold-rush site.

“*Ipinag-utos ko na rin na kumpiskahin ang lahat ng firearms at explosives doon para matiyak ang kaligtasan ng publiko at umiral ang batas at kaayusan sa nasabing lugar* (I have also ordered the confiscation of all firearms and explosives in Mt. Diwalwal to ensure the safety of the public and that law and order would prevail in the area),” the President said in an address over radio this afternoon.

The President directed Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, chairman of the Peace and Order Council of Southern Mindanao or Region 11, to oversee the seizure of the firearms and explosives.

Earlier, she had ordered the temporary cessation of mining activities in the site after violence sparked anew, aggravating an already tense situation that had stirred the area in the last 19 years.

She said that for the meantime, the government would take complete control of the area to ensure the peace.

“*Ipinag-utos ko sa Department of Natural Resources at sa Department of Interior and Local Government na itigil na muna ang pagmimina habang inaayos natin ang mga problema, kabilang na ang tungkol sa environment at ang kapakanan ng small-scale miners* (I have ordered DENR and the DILG to stop for the meantime the mining operations in the area while we are solving issues pertaining to the environment and the welfare of small-scale miners),” she said.

“*Sa ganitong paraan lamang natin mapapangalagaan ang kapakanan ng mga taga-Mount Diwalwal at nang sa gayon ay maipagpatuloy nila ang kanilang mga gawaing pangkabuhayan nang walang sagabal* (Only in this way can we protect the security of those living in Mt. Diwalwal and they can continue their livelihood without disturbance),” the President said.

She noted that the mining issue in Mt. Diwalwal has dragged on for 19 years and that many people have died from mining hazards.

Last week, many small-scale miners barricaded the Tagmanok Bridge in Mawab, Compostela Valley. They sought for an investigation of a fumigation incident in a tunnel in Mt. Diwata where a miner died of suffocation.

GMA cites moves of RP allies to freeze CPP-NPA assets

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the governments of the United States, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom for their decision to freeze CPP-NPA assets.

In a radio address this afternoon, the President also agreed with the US declaration of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) as a foreign terrorist group.

"Maliwanag, ipinagbabawal ng ating batas ang armadong pagkilos laban sa pamahalaan, lalo na ang terorismo tulad ng ginagawa ng CPP-NPA (It is clear that our laws prohibit armed movements against government, particularly the terrorism perpetrated by the CPP-NPA)," the President said.

She said the CPP maintained an armed component – the NPA, an armed group whose primary objective is to bring down the government and the democratic system through force and violence.

She noted that the NPA had been involved in countless acts of violence, not only against soldiers but also against unarmed and innocent civilians.

They have committed crimes such as arson, extortion and the assassination of political leaders, "including (the torture and killing of) common people they happen not to fancy," she said. They have also continued to engage in the destruction of public utilities and public transport utilities, she added.

"Ang mga pagkilos na ito ay itinuturing nating acts of terrorism (We consider these as acts of terrorism)," she said.

"Hanggang mayroong armed component ang CPP, itinuturing natin silang lumalabag sa ating Saligang Batas (Until there exists an armed component of the CPP, we will consider them as violating the Constitution)," she said.

Meanwhile, Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable and Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said the reported plan of Jose Ma. Sison to retire from the National Democratic Front (NDF) had no bearing in the peace talks between the government and the NDF, the political arm of the CPP.

"Joma Sison is not a member of the NPF panel. He is only an adviser. His plans will not affect the peace talks, which are being done through back channeling," they said. Luis Jalandoni chairs the NDF panel and can speak for it officially, they added.

GMA glad over better lives of Baseco residents

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today visited the family-beneficiaries of a 500-unit government housing project at the Baseco Compound at the Port Area, Manila, seeing to it that victims of a recent big fire that hit the area have started rebuilding their lives.

"Those who became victims of the fire and lost their shelters are happier because they now have their respective houses and a community to boot with," the President said.

The temporary houses, made of bamboo and nipa, cost some P15,000 each. These were considered as temporary shelters inasmuch as the family-beneficiary have the option to later relocate to low-cost government housing projects.

“While the houses are temporary, these are much better than the previous structures here, so the residents are much happier now,” the President said.

She said the Eight Thousand Foundation, one of the private institutions assisting the government in the project, would donate 250 lavatory units for the housing area.

In response to the request of the residents, the President said there would also be a donation of materials to be used for the construction of septic tanks and a drainage system in the community.

The lavatories and bathrooms would be put up in between every two houses.

The President said the housing project has given livelihood to beneficiaries of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) since they were the ones tapped to build the housing units.

Several Baseco residents have opted to build concrete houses with the help of the City Government of Manila which provided them with P15,000 worth of construction materials.

Among those who joined the President in the project visitation and inspection were Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza, NAPC Lead Convenor Teresita Deles, and National Housing Authority General Manager Edgardo Pamintuan.

GMA urges empowerment for barangay, youth leaders

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today gave due stress on the important role being played by barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan officials in strengthening national institutions and in building a strong Republic.

Speaking before the Barangay Orientation Session and Pledge of Commitment ceremony at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City, the President also congratulated the newly-elected officials in Metro Manila.

Metro Manila, which has more than 1,700 barangays, is composed of the cities of Manila, Caloocan, Quezon, Pasig, Marikina, Mandaluyong, Malabon, Valenzuela, Makati, Muntinlupa, Pasay, Las Piñas, Parañaque, and the municipalities of San Juan, Pateros, Navotas and Taguig.

In her speech, the President said that as proof of her recognition of the role of the barangays in the country, she had personally removed from her power the signing of travel authority for the village officials.

She said the power was now vested on the secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government.

Since she assumed the presidency in January 2001, the President said that one of the initial steps that she took was to hasten the release of the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) of local government units and the different barangays in the country.

During the occasion, the Chief Executive witnessed the pledging of commitment of Metro Manila’s barangay and SK officials who vowed to pursue the President’s vision for a strong Republic.

In their pledge, the barangay officials and youth representatives also committed themselves to promote good governance and provide dedicated and sincere services to their respective communities.

Among those who graced the occasion were Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Metro Manila Development Authority Chairman Bayani Fernando, Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao Trinidad, Malabon Mayor Amado Vicencio, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, Marikina Mayor Ma. Lourdes Fernando, Pateros Mayor Rosendo Capco, Taguig Mayor Freddie Tinga and Liga ng Mga Barangay National President James Martin Lin.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 17, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033638/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug17.htm>

The President's Day: August 18, 2002

18 AUGUST 2002

- **GMA cites El Shaddai's strong faith in God**
- **GMA to visit Lucena City on Monday**

GMA cites El Shaddai's strong faith in God

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the El Shaddai – DWXI Prayer Partners Foundation on the occasion of its 18th anniversary, a feat that she described as an “anointment from God.”

In an extemporaneous speech during the anniversary celebration in Paranaque City, the President said: “If it was the handiwork of man, it will not reach 18 years. But this is truly the blessings of El Shaddai.”

The President arrived at around 12 midnight and stayed until 4:00 in the morning.

In her speech, she recalled that when she was visiting El Shaddai prayer meetings with her former classmates when she was still a senator and then as vice president, “I would always prefer to seat in front of the stage to listen attentively to Brother Mike.”

In one of those instances, one of her classmates had remarked: “Truly, this man (Velarde) is anointed.”

According to her, the doubts that evolved during the early stages of the El Shaddai Prayer Partners were merely part of the trials from God.

She recalled a story in the Bible about a woman from the Gentiles, who had strong faith in God even when she was not part of God's “chosen ones.”

“How much more the children of Yahweh El Shaddai? How much more the Philippines which used to be the only Catholic nation in Asia? But now, there is East Timor. My brothers and sisters, the more we should hope for blessings of Yahweh El Shaddai,” the President said.

She added that El Shaddai has now millions of people in its flock joining the celebration of their 18th founding anniversary.

“The hope that Velarde has given the members of the El Shaddai Prayer Partners 18 years ago is not a false hope,” she stressed.

In her speech, the President also asked the El Shaddai members to join her in praying for the good health of Pope John Paul II and to allow him to push through with his trip to the Philippines early next year.

Despite the trials confronting the country, the President urged the people not to lose their faith.

“We are all children of Yahweh El Shaddai,” the President told the huge crowd.

At the same time, she conveyed her greetings to Mr. Velarde who will celebrate his birthday on Tuesday.

Prior to her speech, the President, together with Mr. Velarde, stood as godmother and godfather, respectively to 13 couples who exchanged vows in a mass wedding ceremony officiated by Catholic Bishop Teodoro Bacani.

GMA to visit Lucena City on Monday

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will visit Lucena City on Monday (August 19) and confer with local government officials on the progress of their province.

The visit coincides with the celebration of Quezon Day in the whole of Quezon Province.

During her visit, the President is expected to unveil the marker of the Quezon Convention and Training Center in the city.

She will also lead in the awarding of the Quezon *Medalya ng Karangalan* (Medal of Honor) at the training center.

The President will likewise preside in the orientation of newly-elected barangay officials, as she is expected to confer with municipal and city mayors of Quezon in a working luncheon.

Barangay officials, meanwhile, are anticipated to give the President their pledge of support in ceremonies at the training center.

On Monday, people in the province will commemorate the 124th birth anniversary of President Manuel L. Quezon. He died on August 1, 1944 while battling complications from tuberculosis.

President Quezon is best remembered as having worked for the institution of a national language based on Tagalog. He was the first president of the Philippine Commonwealth and was known as the principal architect of Philippine Independence.

He was born in Baler, Tayabas (now Quezon) province, on August 19, 1878 to a schoolteacher and small landholder of Tagalog descent.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 18, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033653/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug18.htm>

The President's Day: August 19, 2002

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- Gov't remains open to peace talks with CPP-NDF – Golez
- GMA accepts Bañez' resignation with a 'sad heart'
- GMA cites military, civilian anti-NPA moves in Quezon
- Quezon Power Plant free from mercury emissions
- GMA's cites, Quezon's legacy, says it is relevant to building of strong republic
- GMA cites Pagbilao barangay chief in failed NPA raid
- Gov't to continue back-channeling efforts with NDF, says Palace
- GMA says she has adopted Quezon's management style
- GMA presents 'Medalya ng Karangalan' to 8 individuals from Quezon
- GMA presents to media Central Luzon's most-wanted, suspected kidnaper

Gov't remains open to peace talks with CPP-NDF – Golez

The alleged threat of the National Democratic Front (NDF) to pull out of the peace talks with government has yet to be confirmed.

National Security Adviser Roilo Golez today said many statements have been lately attributed to the NDF, the political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), but they later denied having said such.

Golez said Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita and the government peace panel headed by Silvestre Bello III were looking into the matter.

He said the government's position was very clear – that it remained open to formal negotiations or back channel arrangements.

“We have persons prepared for formal or back channel talks,” he said in the vernacular during a radio interview this morning.

“Ang hinihingi lang namin sa kanila ay matigil iyong pagpaslang ng mga inosenteng civilian at matigil iyong sinasabi nating acts of terrorism na talagang nakakasira sa kapayapaan at nakakasira sa imahen ng ating bansa (We have been asking them to stop killing innocent civilians and perpetrating acts of terrorism that destroy the peace and the country's image),” he added.

There was also an earlier appeal to the communist group not to launch attacks on vital utilities and facilities as these would affect the people.

“Sana ay huwag nilang isali ang mga non-combatants (I hope they would not include non-combatants),” he said.

Golez stressed that the issue on the reported retirement of CPP founding chairman Jose Maria Sison, who had acquired Dutch citizenship, was “internal” to the communist group.

The security adviser also pointed out that the all-out war against the New People's Army (NPA), the CPP's armed component, was a state policy as it was a government's duty to protect the people, particularly those in the countryside, and preserve their way of life.

He noted strides in the campaign against the NPA, citing military victories either in preventing NPA guerillas from spreading their influence in or in expelling NPA units from some far-flung villages.

GMA accepts Bañez' resignation with a 'sad heart'

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today accepted with a "sad heart" the resignation of Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) Commissioner Rene Bañez, citing the latter as a "staunch ally in my own advocacy of good and effective governance."

In a statement released to the media by Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in his press briefing this afternoon, the President said Bañez has managed to plant the "seeds of significant reforms" in his short stay in office.

The President said Bañez' desire to restructure the BIR comes with very good intentions to expand the revenue base of the country.

She thanked Bañez for the "very courageous efforts" he undertook and for the milestones he was able to muster under extreme pressure from the many stakeholders of the country.

Below is the full text of the President's statement:

"I accept the resignation of BIR Commissioner Rene Bañez with a sad heart. He is a strong advocate of instituting reforms at the BIR, and a staunch ally in my own advocacy of good and effective governance.

"Commissioner Bañez' desire to restructure the BIR comes with very good intentions to expand the revenue base of the country. He also worked toward freeing the system from political pressures to ensure the long-term sustainability of our collection efforts.

"In his short stay in office, he managed to plant the seeds of significant reforms. In fact, I just signed Executive Order No. 114, which authorizes the restructuring of the BIR by January 2003 into a taxpayer-focused organization. He also made possible the completion and filing by House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. of House Bill No. 5054. Finally, he was able to institute important administrative measures that are directed toward enhancing revenue collections. These are the VAT Relief System, VAT Audit, Internal Audit, and E-filing and payment system.

The administrative measures have been responsible for the discovery of the tax diversion case involving some Land Bank employees, and the under-declaration of value-added taxes by 312 corporate and individual taxpayers to which cases are currently being filed.

Let me, therefore, thank Commissioner Bañez for the very courageous efforts he undertook during his term at the BIR. Secretary Camacho and I congratulate him for the milestones he was able to muster in so short a time and under extreme pressure from the many stakeholders of the country."

GMA cites military, civilian anti-NPA moves in Quezon

MAUBAN, Quezon – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the military's pro-active anti-terrorist stance that prevented a band of communist New People's Army (NPA) guerillas from attacking the Pagbilao Power Plant in Pagbilao, Quezon two days ago.

The President also gave credit to civilians who gave vital information to the military about the movements of the NPA.

"We have a growing number of voluntary informers who are telling us where the enemies lie," she said in a message during a visit here, after she inspected the set-up and security facilities of the Quezon Power Plant.

"I know people here abhor terrorism as much as we do. The people hate the disruption of transport, communication and power facilities that also disrupts the conduct of business and livelihood," she said.

“I commend the management (of the Quezon Power Plant), our armed forces and law enforcers and the communities for their sustained vigilance,” she added.

The President said Southern Luzon Command chief Major General Roy Kyamco informed her that government troops encountered, repelled and were pursuing an NPA band that tried to attack the Pagbilao power plant.

The rebels, who sustained a fatality and left some guns behind, were said to have fled to the Quezon reservation, a forest park in the mountains of Pagbilao.

“I am glad to know that our security plans are not static and are aimed to actively seek out terrorists across a wider swath of operations,” she said.

The President noted that Mauban itself was under NPA threat. “That is why, after the Pagbilao attack, (Defense) Secretary (Angelo) Reyes and I decided to come here to make sure that this is secured,” she said.

She echoed the military and the police forces’ preparedness “to protect public safety and security at all times.”

Further, she called on the people to “get together with the uniformed services, to work together in the effective and responsive security plan that will preclude acts of terrorism.”

“The CPP-NPA has engaged in terrorist acts against civilian targets,” she added, noting that the rebel group had engaged in extortion and arson; the destruction of public utilities; the disruption of public transport; and assassination of political leaders and ordinary citizens.

“The communists are once more showing their true color,” with fresh threats from the NPA to attack power facilities, she pointed out. The NPAs are considered enemies of the state.

The President clarified however, that there are communist groups that did not have armed elements. “We recognize them, we debate with them, but we don’t run after them,” she said.

Quezon Power Plant free from mercury emissions

MAUBAN, Quezon – International environment consultant URS has found the Quezon Power Plant (QPP) in Barangay Cagsiay I here as safe and negative of mercury emissions.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today visited the plant to check on its set-up and security facilities, following reports of a failed attempt by communist New People’s Army rebels to attack the Pagbilao power plant, also in Quezon province, two days ago.

After briefing the President on the plant, QPP officials told media that the URS did not detect any mercury emission after studying water and sediment samples from the plant’s clarifier basins, fishponds and on-site wells and from tissues of fish in the freshwater fishponds.

The officials said the URS has certified that there was no threat of mercury contamination to local residents, marine and animal life in and around the plant site.

The protection of the environment is a primary concern of the QPP, having equipped its power generation facility with complete anti-pollution control equipment such as flue gas desulfurizer that removes the sulfur dioxide from the emission.

The plant also has an electrostatic precipitator that controls particulate emissions before these are released from the 150-meter high stack.

The plant uses low sulfur Indonesian coal, unloaded in enclosed containers to prevent fugitive dust. Further, it has a central wastewater treatment installation.

Officials said Quezon Power (Philippines), Limited Co., the company operating the plant, has facilitated the reforestation of the plant site with over 100,000 indigenous trees and plants.

The company has also carried out social programs such as those on supplementary feeding, scholarships, health and sanitation, skills development and livelihood for the residents of Mauban and its environs.

GMA's cites, Quezon's legacy, says it is relevant to building of strong republic

LUCENA CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the legacy of Manuel L. Quezon, president of the Philippines during the Commonwealth period, saying that this legacy is relevant to the building of a strong Republic that she outlined in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA).

In her speech at the awarding of the *Quezon Medalya ng Karangalan* at the Quezon Convention and Training Center here, the President said that Quezon's leadership style and program of government are still appropriate to this day.

The awarding ceremonies were part of the nationwide celebration of Quezon's 124th birth anniversary.

The President explained one of Quezon's more famous dictums that "he who governs with his heart and not with his mind, is liable to live in injustice and to make mistakes."

She said that Quezon's dictum should be observed by all officials if they want to contribute to the building of a strong Republic.

"Dahil kung minsan ang mga tungkulin natin nakakasira ng puso, kaya kung puso ang gagamitin natin, talagang hindi uubra, kailangan ang utak natin (Because sometimes our duties could influence our hearts, and that is why if we only use our hearts, we are bound to fail; we need our brains)," the President said.

But the President also said that Quezon has cautioned that when one uses his mental prowess alone without developing "the moral qualities of his soul," he will only be using his knowledge to harm his fellow citizens.

The President said that even in the 1930s, Quezon already laid the foundations of what is now known as the agrarian reform program and shelter security for tenant farmers.

She said that Quezon signed the Philippine Rice Shared Tenancy Act on February 1933 assuring tenant farmers of their rights, including the right to own the land where their houses are built.

"Nakita ni Quezon ang importansiya sa lipunan ng problema ng reporma sa lupang inumpisahan ng kanyang programa ng panlipunang katarungan (Quezon saw the importance to society of land reform, which was the basis for his program for social justice)," the President said.

GMA cites Pagbilao barangay chief in failed NPA raid

LUCENA CITY, Quezon – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today gave her special congratulations to the barangay captain and residents of the village where the Pagbilao power plant, target of a failed terrorist attack Saturday, stood.

The President was hoping she would meet the unnamed village chief, saying *"gusto ko siyang bigyan ng espesyal na congratulations dahil naagapan ang raid ng New People's Army sa Pagbilao power plant* (I want to give him my special congratulations for helping prevent an NPA raid on the plant)."

In a speech during the opening of the Quezon Convention and Training Center here, the President cited the residents of Kanlurang Mabolo in Pagbilao for informing the military about the movements of the NPA terrorists.

Reports said elements of the Army's 76th Infantry Battalion on patrol engaged the NPA rebels in a firefight. The military said the rebels suffered many casualties.

The failed attack on the Pagbilao power plant was just one of the many acts of terrorism perpetrated by the NPA, the armed component of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), which recently was included in the United States' list of 34 foreign terrorist organizations.

"Nauunawaan ko ang ginawa ng Estados Unidos na pagsama sa CPP at NPA sa kanilang listahan ng terorista (I would understand why the US included the CPP-NPA in its list of world terrorists)," she said.

It was because the CPP-NPA aimed to overthrow the government and the Filipino people's democratic way of life through force, she explained.

The President also clarified that communism, the ideology, was not against the law, which was why not all communist groups in the world were considered terrorists.

She said the government would continue to talk with communist groups who used peaceful means to gain what they were fighting for.

But communist groups like the NPA who engaged in arson, extortion, assassination of political leaders and ordinary citizens, destruction of utilities and facilities would be the target of the government's campaign against terrorism, she added.

She noted that the fisherfolk of Mauban have been decrying NPA extortion activities.

Gov't to continue back-channeling efforts with NDF, says Palace

Malacañang today said that the government would continue its back-channeling efforts to forge peace with the local communists despite the reported announcement of the National Democratic Front (NDF) that it was withdrawing from the peace negotiations.

In his press briefing, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that formal talks with the NDF have been suspended last year by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo after the communist rebels assassinated two legislators.

"As we have earlier described the situation, we are still on a back-channeling mode," Bunye said.

Bunye said that the President has designated two additional negotiators—Presidential Management Staff head Silvestre Afable, Jr. and Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales—precisely to undertake these back-channeling efforts.

He also said that the government has not yet received a formal communication on the reported pullout from the talks with the government as announced by NDF chief negotiator Luis Jalandoni.

Earlier, in a radio interview, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez also said the government remains open either to formal talks or back-channel arrangements with the NDF.

"We have persons prepared for formal or back-channel talks with the NDF," Golez said.

GMA says she has adopted Quezon's management style

LUCENA CITY, Quezon—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she has adopted the management style of the late President Manuel L. Quezon which was also the management style of his late father, President Diosdado Macapagal.

In her speech here at the awarding of the *Quezon Medalya ng Karangalan*, the President said that her late father had worked as a young lawyer in what is now known as the Presidential Management Staff during the Commonwealth period, with Quezon as president.

The awarding ceremonies were part of the nationwide celebration of Quezon's 124th birth anniversary.

One of the best traits that her father had emulated from President Quezon was the latter's policy of delegating powers to his officials, the President said.

"Ito rin ang aking estilo, hindi lamang sa mga kasapi nga mga Gabinete kundi na rin sa mga local government executives (This is also my style, delegating powers not only to members of my Cabinet but also to local government executives)," the President said.

The President said this is only proper because local government officials are the ones who implement government programs and projects in the local level.

She said that in the future, she will hold less Cabinet meetings but would concentrate on meetings with the governors in the different development areas in the country.

GMA presents 'Medalya ng Karangalan' to 8 individuals from Quezon

LUCENA CITY — On the occasion of Quezon Day, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded the *Quezon Medalya ng Karangalan* (Medal of Honor) to eight individuals from Quezon province who possess the distinguished characteristics of an ideal Filipino according to the standards of the late President Manuel L. Quezon.

The President also inaugurated here the Quezon Convention Center, a modern convention center constructed with the savings of the provincial government.

The Quezon Medal of Honor awardees were Archbishop Angel Lagdameo (Spiritual Leadership), Dennis Abcede (Construction Management), Benito Brizuela (Printing Industry), retired Judge Proceso de Gala (Government Service), Salvii Casino (Broadcast Management), Richard Kristoffer Manapat (Physics Research), Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit (Public Health Management) and (posthumous) Venancio "Tata Insik" Adornado (Environmental Protection).

In her keynote speech, the President enumerated several sayings on the kind of leadership of President Quezon, which still rings true to this day.

Among these is "he who governs with his heart and not with his mind, is liable to live in injustice and mistakes." But she also noted that Quezon also said that "he who has received mental training, but has not developed the moral qualities of the soul will only use his knowledge to harm his fellow citizens."

"Ito rin ang mabuting paalaala para sa ating lahat na opisyaes ng pamahalaan na dapat gamitin natin ang ating kakayahan hindi para manira kung hindi para magtayo ng matatag na republikang Pilipinas (This is a good reminder for government officials like us to use all our abilities, not to destroy one another but build a strong Philippine republic)," she said.

Citing Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit and Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. as good examples of those who render effective public service, the President said if the two lived during the Quezon presidency, the late President would have probably got them for his Cabinet. Dayrit couldn't make it at the awarding ceremonies because of a mission in Surigao province and, instead, sent Mrs. Dayrit to receive the citation.

The President noted that she chose her Cabinet based on the same principles used by Quezon, who said their qualifications are based "purely on the strength of their proven ability and experience, particularly in the field of their respective departments and with due regard to their demonstrated loyalty to the public service."

The President also noted Quezon's policy of free enterprise, a similar feature of her administration.

The President acknowledged that Quezon said, "private business constitutes the pillars of the social structure" and that "to a large degree, the people draw their sustenance from it and the government lives on it. No statesman can fail to recognize this fact."

She said that under the policy of free enterprise, the fight against poverty could be achieved in any part of the world.

In stressing the fact that the government is concerned with the welfare of farmers, the President reported that coconut farmers would have the privilege of maximized life insurance, which would be funded by the coconut levy fund.

She said she is working on an Executive Order that would arrange for the national government, instead of the Government Service Insurance System, to give out life insurance benefits and accident disability benefits to barangay officials and farmers.

The President also revealed that she is not taking away the so-called pork barrel funds from lawmakers as Quezon has said, "the pork barrel has become an inviolate tradition among representatives."

She said that instead of scrapping the pork barrel, she would just allow the release of it bit by bit so that this would not wreck the cash flow of government funds.

The President also noted the importance of the attainment of justice in Philippine government and society, saying that if Filipinos feel that they cannot attain justice from the laws, they could obtain it through unlawful means.

"That's why I must remind you all again that Quezon said 'justice alone can maintain the stability of any country. Force cannot do it,'" she said.

GMA presents to media Central Luzon's most-wanted, suspected kidnaper

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the people to continue to cooperate more closely with law enforcers even as she presented to the media Central Luzon's most-wanted person with a P350,000 price tag on his head and a suspected member of a kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gang.

The President motored to Camp Crame in Quezon City at around 5:30 this afternoon to announce the arrest of Randy Raquino, the No. 1 most-wanted person in Region 3, and Nicomedes Gerilla, a member of the notorious Villaver KFR Gang.

"We need your cooperation to make the criminal cases stronger," the President said, addressing the people in general. "With your help, the campaign against crime becomes most effective," she said.

In her statement, the President congratulated the Philippine National Police (PNP), particularly Senior Supt. Mario San Diego of the Tarlac Police Provincial Office, and other law-enforcement units for the arrest of the two suspects.

Raquino, according to the President, is wanted for various crimes, including robbery-holdup with double homicide, the killing of a Filipino-Chinese, hijacking in Santiago, Isabela and a rape case in May 1996. There are eight warrants for his arrest. No bail was recommended in five of the cases filed against him.

Gerilla has been linked to several kidnap-for-ransom cases and was tagged as the primary negotiator of the Villaver Gang, a sub-group operating under the Fajardo Group.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said Gerilla was the primary negotiator in six kidnapping cases in 2001.

“His arrest is solid proof that manhunt operations will not stop with the arrest of one or two members of a kidnap-for-ransom gang. We will not stop until all kidnappers are behind bars,” the President said.

The President recalled that in her State of the Nation Address (SONA), she mentioned that two of the most notorious kidnapping groups are the Bocala and Fajardo groups.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: August 19, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033707/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug19.htm>

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Pulse Asia, SWS surveys conducted on different dates, says Palace

Malacañang today said the Pulse Asia survey that showed a slight decline of the net performance rating of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was conducted sometime in July and should not be equated with the survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) early this month.

In a radio interview, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that like the SWS, Pulse Asia is also a credible organization. However, one should look into the inclusive dates when the two surveys were made, he added.

Bunye said that the Pulse Asia survey that showed the President's net approval rating dropping to +31 from +36 in April was undertaken in July this year.

He said that on the other hand, the SWS survey that showed the President's net satisfaction rating of 55 percent, or +27 net satisfaction rating, was conducted from August 6 to 9, 2002.

"Mas maaga yong Pulse Asia, so mahirap mong i-compare, para kang nag-compare ng apple at orange(The Pulse Asia survey was done ahead (in July) so it is difficult to make a comparison)," Bunye said.

The President has attributed her good showing at the SWS survey to three factors, namely the partial reduction of the purchased power adjustment (PPA), the defeat of the Abu Sayyaf, and the continued drive against criminality.

All these three positive developments happened in late July and were reflected in the August SWS survey, Bunye said.

Bunye also belied claims that the SWS survey was tainted because it was allegedly funded by groups close to First Gentleman lawyer Jose Miguel Arroyo.

"We kept on saying that the SWS is an independent organization and that its president, Mahar Mangahas, has a reputation that he enjoys in the community at hindi naman basta-basta pagagamit(and would not allow himself to be used by just anybody)," Bunye said.

He said that all these accusations against the First Gentleman are mere speculations. *"I don't think it's fair to the First Gentleman,"* Bunye said.

Palace confirms plans to abolish some small agencies or merge them with existing ones

Malacañang today confirmed that there are proposals to abolish some 14 offices but these are small ones whose functions can be absorbed by some existing agencies.

In a radio interview, Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin said the abolition of these agencies has been studied thoroughly by the Presidential Committee on Effective Governance (PCEG).

Boncodin said that these agencies, with 10 or 20 employees, have functions that have become redundant because they are already being done by other offices or departments.

“Baka mas efficient kung isasama na lamang sa isang existing agency (Maybe it would be more efficient if they would just be merged with an existing agency),” Boncodin said.

Boncodin, however, clarified that all these are still being studied by the PCEG. In fact, she said, the proposed 2003 national budget to be submitted to the House of Representatives tomorrow would still include the appropriations for these 14 small agencies.

The budget secretary also said that those to be affected by the proposed abolition would be offered “generous retirement benefits.

She said that the DBM would see to it that the delay in the release of benefits for those affected by the reorganization at the Philippine National Police would not happen again.

Boncodin also said that the administration is confident that it will be able to meet its revenue targets next year to finance the proposed 2003 national budget of P804 billion.

“I am very convinced that we have a very conservative target, baka nga masyadong conservative na napakadali namang ma-attain ng ating revenue collecting agencies (our projection is very conservative that it would be very easy for our revenue collecting

Fitch ratings maintains stable rating on Philippines

Fitch Ratings has affirmed its stable rating on the Philippines, saying the fiscal deficit running up to about 3.9 percent would still be within “tolerable limits” and that the country exhibits none of the unstable debt dynamics associated with Brazil and Turkey.

In its latest evaluation made available to Malacañang and the Department of Finance, the ratings firm said the fiscal deficit would still maintain a downward trend in the deficit and the public debt/gross domestic product ratios.

Fitch noted that the Philippines had “few parallels with Brazil” given the backdrop of events in Latin America.

“The Philippines exhibits none of the unstable debt dynamics – pervasive indexation, short maturities and high real interest rates – associated with Brazil and Turkey,” Fitch said.

It went on to say that “the government’s modest demands on international capital markets, the absence of an external financing gap in 2002-03 and comfortable external liquidity should work to the Philippines’ advantage,” it added.

The ratings firm also said that on past occasions when the Philippines has been shut out of international capital markets, “it has encountered little difficulty refinancing debt in the domestic market.”

“Today’s benign inflation and interest rate environment and ample liquidity mean that the government has rarely enjoyed more favorable domestic borrowing conditions,” it said.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho welcomed the latest stable rating, saying he would like to acknowledge the goodwill that Fitch Ratings has afforded the Macapagal-Arroyo administration amid the fiscal challenges the government is addressing.

Camacho said Fitch Ratings’ comment attests to its confidence on the Philippine Economic Plan and its progress on maintaining a stable macroeconomic environment and shepherding economic reforms.

Camacho noted that Fitch recognizes that there are time lags on revenue increases from reforms that have been implemented at the Internal Revenue and Customs bureaus to support the 2002 deficit target.

The Philippine government currently enjoys relatively stable debt dynamics, including long maturities, low interest and inflation rates as well as a stable exchange rate and comfortable external position – a result of the government’s economic performance last year and its ongoing debt management strategy.

This strategy aims to take advantage of favorable borrowing conditions to reduce debt and servicing levels, lengthen the overall maturity of the debt portfolio and pre-fund external borrowing requirements.

“Not only have we significantly pre-funded our external borrowing requirements this year but these financing costs have declined by over 200 basis points. Generating significant interest savings equates with fiscal discipline,” Camacho said.

In 2003, the government’s net financing requirements is estimated to be P136 billion, or 28 percent lower than this year’s and 56 percent of which is earmarked to be externally sourced.

The government has announced measures accelerating its collection enforcement, including the uncovering of a tax diversion scheme at the Land Bank, an executive order accelerating the prosecution of 312 firms identified for VAT under-declaration and the expansion to all taxpayers of the e-filing system recently put in place for large taxpayers.

“We are achieving some real, albeit initial, progress from our efforts to enforce revenue collections and we will continue to implement much-needed reforms to ensure a steady and sustainable improvement on this front,” Camacho said.

He added that the government has demonstrated the ability to manage our expenditures and are committed to do the same on revenues. “This is not only integral to our commitment to fiscal discipline but also to good governance,” he said.

GMA orders installation of more safeguards on power plants, transmission lines

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS) to continue to be vigilant in safeguarding vital installations in the country, particularly power plants and transmission lines

In a meeting in Malacañang with members of COCIS and some 50 representatives of power plant operators in Southern Luzon, the President directed the Department of Justice, represented by Justice Undersecretary Manuel Antonio Teehankee, to come up with an Executive Order that would make the crime of sabotaging power facilities as economic sabotage.

The EO would also provide severe penalties against offenders, the President said.

The President called the meeting after her visit to Mauban, Quezon Monday to see for herself the security arrangements made by the military and the police in protecting the power plants located in Southern Luzon that are vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

She also created a task force to be headed by Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. that would come up with very specific security measures for power plants and transmission lines in different parts of the country.

In a press briefing later, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez said that there were reports that elements of the New People’s Army (NPA) would attack the Pagbilao coal-fired power plant over the weekend, particularly last Saturday.

According to Perez, reports of the planned attack on the Pagbilao power plant came in the wake of a statement made by Communist Party of the Philippine founding chairman Jose Maria Sison that the NPA would stage coordinated attacks on all fronts against the government, including the sabotage of power facilities.

“Thanks to the vigilance of civilians in the area near Pagbilao, and the help of the military and the police, the planned attack on a very critical power facility was thwarted,” Perez said.

The President reiterated that any disruption of power supply or other vital facilities are “really atrocious and desperate acts that will only aggravate the poverty and deepen the sufferings of the Filipino people.”

“And we feel that, if indeed the threat of the NPA is true, it will only incur the wrath of innocent people that will be affected by the inconvenience of power loses but also people who will suffer untold economic damages by disruptions of electricity,” Perez said.

The President urged the various sectors of the power sector community to take the necessary precautions and be ready with security measures to meet any contingencies.

The participants to the meeting included officials of some 15 power plants in Southern Luzon, with a total megawatt capacity of 6,500 megawatts, Transco transmission lines, and those from the power plants operated by the National Power Corporation.

“And as the President has said, it is best to be safe than be sorry,” Perez concluded.

GMA lauds PNP Region 1 for arrest of 5 suspected carnappers

TAYUG, Pangasinan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo flew to this town this afternoon by presidential chopper to personally congratulate the Philippine National Police (PNP) of Region 1 (Ilocos) for the arrest of five suspected carnappers who were also charged with illegal possession of firearms and prohibited drugs.

The President cited the team of Chief Inspector Ricardo Revita, group director of 107 Police Mobile Group, and Chief Inspector Manuel Landingin, chief of police of Umingan, Pangasinan. The two are under the leadership of Police Chief Superintendent Arturo Lomibao, head of Police Regional Office I.

The President said that more significantly, one of the five carnapping suspects arrested is a police officer, who was suspended last July 11, 2002 for possession of 98 grams of shabu.

“Again, our police force is sending a clear message: the fight against crime makes no distinction between the man in uniform or the man in plainclothes. A criminal once identified as one will be dealt with in no uncertain terms,” the President said.

The President said that the positive results of the joint operations of the 107 Police Mobile Group and the Umingan Police Station showed the united action of the pillars of the criminal justice system.

The barangay officials of Barangay San Leon, Umingan, Pangasinan led by Barangay Captain Pedro Hernandez and the legal advice of Tayug Regional Trial Courts Judges Oscar Uson and Judge Ulysses Botuyan, all contributed to the success of the operation, the President said.

Those arrested and presented to the media at Camp Narciso Ramos here were PO2 Elmer Ramos, Jason Javier, Eric Pacheco, Ronald Raymund Cabales and Edgardo Martinez.

Recovered from the suspects were the following: one blue Ford Lynx with plate number WRK 260 and one Toyota Corola model '92 with plate number UFL 231.

The Toyota Corolla is included in the list of stolen motor vehicles at the PNP Traffic Management Group.

Also confiscated were M-14 rifle with serial number 1243989, one caliber .30 M2 carbine with serial number 1001563, one M-16 rifle with serial number RP150700, one rifle grenade and two bullet proof vest, one bandolier with several rounds of ammunition, and several car license plates.

The President has been criss-crossing the country as the police force has made major arrests on an almost daily basis.

Just last Friday, the President was in La Union to extend moral support to Jackie Rowena Tiu during the first day of her trial, and a few hours after, the President was at the National Capital Region Police Office where four corrupt policemen were arrested after they were caught in the act of extorting money from civilians.

Yesterday, the President was at Camp Crame in Quezon City where the number one most-wanted man in Region III, Randy Raquino, and Nicodemus Gerilla, a member of the notorious Villaver kidnap for ransom gang, were presented to the media.

GMA orders 4 gov't departments to look into welfare of deportees in Malaysia

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Health and other concerned agencies to look into the well-being and welfare of hundreds of Filipino deportees in Malaysia.

In a press briefing this afternoon at Malacañang, Governor Parouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) said most of these deportees come from the island-provinces of Sulu, Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi.

Hussin said the ARMM has already organized medical teams of nurses, doctors and other health personnel to proceed to an island, the Cagayan de Tawi-Tawi, or Mapon since there are about 600 or 800 deportees that are already on the island.

He also said that he already instructed personnel from the Department of Health to proceed to as far as Sandakan “to look into the situation of our brother Filipinos in the area who are subjects of this deportation.”

According to Hussin, their primary concern now is the resettlement of these deportees.

“My concern is about the resettlement of these people. They are coming in rather big numbers and some of them may have lived in Sabah for quite some time – ten years or maybe even more,” he said, adding that it’s presumed that they do not have houses in the provinces where they came from.

“This must be seriously looked into. Otherwise, it will create problem,” he said.

The ARMM governor said Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat has expressed apprehension on the big number of deportees coming into Zamboanga City, “even fearing that some of the refugees might be infiltrated by criminal elements.”

Hussin noted that as head agency tasked by the President to look into the situation of the deportees, the Department of Social Welfare and Development “is doing its job remarkably well.” He also stressed that the DOH is also doing its work for the welfare of the deportees.

For his part, Assistant Secretary Antonio Rodriguez of the Department of Foreign Affairs said the issue of deportation has been going on for quite a long time now.

From 1990 to 1996, for instance, Rodriguez said, an average of 500 Filipinos were deported from Malaysia.

He said that the deportation has intensified in 1997 and particularly this year.

Rodriguez said the DFA has so far issued 16,000 travel documents starting in February this year. "Their estimate is that, for every travel document that they issue, there are at least three additional family members because they don't issue individual documents," he said.

The DFA official said more or less, some 64,000 Filipinos have already left for the Philippines and about 4,000 more Filipinos are waiting to be deported.

He brushed aside reports that it's open season for all deportable foreign nationals.

"That is not true. The Malaysians have detention centers that can accommodate only 800 persons. So, the Malaysians can only actually deport 800 persons," he said.

Rodriguez also said the Malaysian government had acceded to the representations made by the Philippine Embassy and has extended the period of deportation to August 24, 2002.

"That's why we hope to bring out all Filipinos who are deportable by the 24th of this month," he added.

He said that the government has already sent a six-man team to Sabah to reinforce the consular team in the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur.

"Today, Undersecretary for Special Concerns, Attorney Arthur Brion and our Assistant Secretary for DFA Mindanao, Ambassador Rivas, are also scheduled to go to Zamboanga," he said.

The DFA also sent a three-man team to go to Bungao to meet the deportees going there.

Rodriguez stressed that the President has also instructed them to formalize and make more permanent the presence of a team in Sabah.

"So, we're looking at assigning a permanent component with an appropriate head to man our office in Sabah. More or less, you can anticipate that henceforth, our presence in Sabah will not be on a temporary basis, but on a more permanent basis," he said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 20, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033721/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug20.htm>

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- **Set aside crystal ball and join gov't, people in task of nation building, Bayan Muna urged**
- **Palace denies reports that gov't is short of cash**
- **Special employment program adopted for deportees**
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Statement of the President on Ninoy's 19th Death Anniversary

The death of Ninoy Aquino 19 years ago was a historical event in our nationhood. It breathed life to the restoration of Philippine democracy after a dark period of dictatorship.

In life, what Ninoy gave to the people was already greater than freedom. He inspired us to fight for it. He inspired us to be tough in struggle, even in despair and isolation; to be loyal to principles, and to a high vision.

Ninoy was motivated by his profound love for the Filipino. He truly believed that the Filipino was worth dying for. It was supreme human faith that drove him.

His assassination jolted our people from lethargy and galvanized the nation to put an end to decades of tyranny and exploitation. This is what we learned from his martyrdom: We must never let terror and injustice rule our lives again. We must safeguard our democracy and never allow the ascendancy of dictatorship.

Through the supreme sacrifice, Ninoy contributed a most valuable stone in building the edifice of a strong Republic.

Let this inspire us to commit ourselves to our fight against poverty, crime, terrorism and corruption. Let us all be vigilant for the rule of law and decency.

I shall continue to lead our people under the same principles that Ninoy lived and died for. Let us all set aside our differences and gather our energies so we can forge ahead – each citizen casting his own stone, as Ninoy did, in the national edifice.

Set aside crystal ball and join gov't, people in task of nation building, Bayan Muna urged

The Presidential Liaison Office for Political Affairs urged the left-leaning Bayan Muna to set aside its crystal ball and instead join President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the Filipino people in the more important endeavor of nation building.

"We never thought that Bayan Muna's other political tool is a crystal ball predicting what will happen two years hence," said Hezel Gacutan, chief of staff of the Presidential Liaison Office for Political Affairs in reply to the pronouncement of Bayan Muna Deputy Secretary General Robert de Castro that the President would be "politically dead" by 2004.

"To begin with, the administration is more concerned with public service and addressing the problems of the country today," Gacutan said.

"Trabaho muna (Let's do our work first), and let the people decide when the time comes," he added.

Meanwhile, the Peace for Development, a non-governmental organization of academicians, students and professionals, said the Bayan Muna statement is “more akin to a work of fiction rather than real life.”

Melvin Mitra, chairman of Peace for Development, said that under the administration of what Bayan Muna referred to as a “politically dead president,” the first-ever political summit was held in the country.

“The convention was a political exercise where most of the political parties participated in the spirit of cooperation, joining together in support of good governance,” Peace for Development said.

Mitra said that aside from improving economic performance and increase in investor confidence in the country, the administration was able to achieve the following:

1. The country’s first comprehensive National Health Insurance Program directly benefiting 4 million urban poor families was instituted under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration;
2. Some 180,000 urban poor shelters have been provided;
3. Some 130,000 out-of-school youths have been employed;
4. Some 1,600 school buildings have been constructed and some 1,000 more are soon to be completed.

Peace for Development invited everyone “to look at the record of public service delivery and achievement and not at propaganda (so) we shall see who is truly a politically-dead entity.”

Palace denies reports that gov’t is short of cash

Malacañang today belied reports that the government is running out of cash and may not be able to disburse funds needed for the day-to-day activities of the different agencies.

In an interview, Secretary Emilia Boncodin of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said that, in fact, the DBM has already released the notice of cash allocations (NCAs) for August and September this year of all government agencies.

Boncodin said that the DBM has requested government agencies to give priority to the mandatory requirements for their operations like salaries and payment of bills for water or electricity.

“Iyon ang pinaka-importante kasi baka merong isang ahensiya na maputulan ng tubig o ilaw (This is very important because water or power might be cut off in some agencies),” Boncodin said.

Boncodin said that for other expenditures, like for the maintenance and operating expenses (MOE), the DBM would give an across-the-board allocation for all agencies.

If the DBM would decide to give only 50 percent of the MOE, then this would be the same amount released to all agencies, Boncodin said.

She also stressed that funds for veterans pension and the 13th month pay for state workers are mandatory expenditures and are included in the regular release of funds by the DBM.

Boncodin also said that although the feared ballooning of the fiscal deficit could be remedied by domestic borrowings, there is really a need to control the deficit.

She admitted that the real problem at the moment is how to increase revenue collections. “We have to be able to correct the defects of the revenue structure and the mechanism for collecting revenues,” Boncodin said.

Boncodin said that she was quite puzzled with the low revenue collections, adding that normally if the economy is growing, tax collections should grow.

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 3.8 percent for the second quarter and the inflation rate has remained low, signs that the growth of the economy was remarkable, Boncodin said.

"Kahit papaano our economy is growing, pero iyong ating collection ay hindi kasinglaki ng growth ng economy (Our economy is growing but our collections have not increased proportionate to the economy's growth)," Boncodin said.

Special employment program adopted for deportees

The government has adopted for implementation a Special Employment Program for Filipinos who have been displaced from their jobs in Sabah.

Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas today apprised President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on the moves being undertaken by the various departments of the government to assure the well-being and welfare of hundreds of Filipinos facing deportation in Malaysia.

Sto. Tomas said the Philippine government is requesting Malaysian authorities to allow the return of the Filipinos in more manageable batches and possibly an extension of time within which to repatriate them.

Sto. Tomas said Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople is now in Kuala Lumpur to take up with the Malaysian authorities the plight of the Filipino deportees.

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, on her part, said the DSWD central office in Manila has transferred P1 million to the DSWD office in Region 9 to cover the expenses related to the deportees.

Another P1 million has been earmarked as standby fund for the same purpose, she added.

Soliman said the DSWD regional office has coordinated with the Provincial Social Welfare Officers on Tawi-Tawi and Sulu to prepare for the return of the deportees on August 23 and 24.

Sto. Tomas informed the President that two strategies have been worked out to address the problem of the displaced Filipinos:

— First, to prevent the deportation of Filipinos who are still in Sabah by arranging their regular employment in Sabah; and

— Second, to provide alternative employment or livelihood to those who are already in the Philippines.

Sto. Tomas said Secretary Ople will ask the Malaysian government to allow Filipinos now in Sabah to stay longer there while jobs are being negotiated for them.

A high-level mission led by Director-General Dante Liban of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority and Administrator Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration is also in Malaysia to discuss with the authorities there a system to identify Malaysian employers who have need for contract workers, and to negotiate jobs for Filipinos who are already in that neighboring country.

The TESDA will provide the onsite training and certification for workers in the construction and plantation sectors while the Department of Foreign Affairs, National Statistics Office and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) will establish a quick documentation system of these undocumented workers.

The Department of Trade and Industry and the private sector, particularly the Employers Confederation of the Philippines and the Philippine Contractors Association, will also explore opportunities for service contracts in construction with their Malaysian counterparts, particularly in the Sabah area.

For workers already in the Philippines, Sto. Tomas said the following programs will be pursued:

- The setting up of an Employment Assistance Center by DOLE in coordination with concerned local government units and national officials;
- The profiling and eventual employment assistance by DOLE to the 20,000 workers who are expected to move from Sabah to Mindanao;
- The implementation of livelihood programs such as plantation production of cassava, carrageen in, and domestic fishing by DOLE, in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture and other government agencies to implement livelihood programs;
- The identification of pasture or similar lands for possible cultivation of cassava on a contract growing basis for local processors and manufacturers;
- Identification of high value added crops by the Department of Agriculture for possible cultivation by deportees and the extension of advisory services for agriculture and agriculture-related services.

World Bank cites faster gov't implementation of social projects

Very soon, children of poor families will peruse new textbooks as they enjoy the comfort of newly-built classrooms.

Poverty-stricken communities will also soon receive basic health services in newly-erected clinics and village health centers.

Other social services are in the offing as the government improves on the pace of carrying out World Bank-supported programs and projects.

Robert Vance Pulley, World Bank (WB) Country Director for the Philippines, noted that the government, despite a tight fiscal position, has come up with counterpart funds to assure the completion of vital anti-poverty programs and projects.

“After three consecutive years of declining performance, I am pleased to see this turnaround,” Pulley said.

From June 2001 to June 2002 alone, gross disbursements of WB-financed portfolio went up from \$126 million last year to \$136 million this year, or an increase of eight percent.

“This means that it will take a shorter period of time to deliver the services and infrastructure to the intended poor communities,” the WB official said.

Pulley lauded the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for its resolve “to ensure prompt implementation of projects and the higher allocation and timely release of funds.”

“But while this improvement is encouraging, the Philippines should further improve to at least a 20-percent disbursement ratio, given that most projects are planned for a five-year period,” he said.

In a report, the WB said the country showed significant improvement in its disbursement ratio, which is the percentage of available funds drawn down or spent on projects during the year.

The ratio rose from 12 percent last year to 15 percent this year. A 15-percent ratio implied that the project implementation period was reduced to only 6.7 years, compared to 8.4 years when the ratio was 12 percent.

Prior to 1999, the Philippines was disbursing as much as 24 percent, implying a four-year implementation period.

Pulley said the Department of Finance, National Economic and Development Authority and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) have assured the WB of adequate and timely allocation of resources for the coming year.

This would allow for the faster implementation of Overseas Development Assistance projects.

The WB noted the impressive implementation of the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) of the Department of Education (DepEd), the Social Expenditure Management Project (SEMP) of the DBM, the DepEd and the Department of Social Welfare and Development; and the Second Subic Bay Freeport Project of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

A WB report showed that the TEEP disbursement ratio doubled from eight percent to 16 percent, shortening the implementation time from 12 to six years.

On the other hand, the Subic and SEMP project disbursement ratios rose from 10 to 34 percent and from five to 33 percent, respectively.

Besides this, the DepEd adopted procurement reforms that generated textbook savings of some \$20 million.

The WB likewise commended ahead-of-schedule government disbursements on two social projects, the Agrarian Reform Communities Development Project (ARCDP) of the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Social Fund Project of the Special Zone for Peace and Development (SZOPAD) Management Office under the Office of the President.

Gov't peace panel prepares for possible talks with NDF

The government panel is ready to face the National Democratic Front (NDF), the political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), in another round of peace negotiations.

Despite conflicting media statements of CPP-NDF leaders on the resumption of talks, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said the Philippine panel has continued preparations for possible talks in Oslo, Norway or the Netherlands.

“Nananatili pa rin ang policy ng pamahalaan na ipagpatuloy ang usapang pangkapayapaan (The government policy to continue the peace talks stands),” Ermita said in a radio interview this morning.

He said they might be briefing the Cabinet Oversight Committee on the status of the peace talks.

In the briefing, the panel would likewise seek for the Cabinet and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's approval of documents, or the draft of a Final Peace Agreement, that would serve as the basis for the talks with the NDF, he added.

Ermita said CPP-NDF leaders Jose Maria Sison and Luis Jalandoni appeared vacillating, with both issuing contradicting views.

“Hihintayin pa rin natin iyong official statement sa kanila (We will still wait for their official statement on the matter of the talks),” he said.

He maintained that Jalandoni continued to be the NDF peace panel chairman and Sison was only a panel adviser.

“Hindi natin alam ang kanilang laro (We do not know their game),” he pointed out, but said the government’s door to peace remained open to the NDF panel, headed by Jalandoni.

Ermita also disclosed that back-channeling efforts are going on – with contacts from the NDF and those in the Dutch and Norwegian governments.

He said government peace panel head Silvestre Bello III and Presidential Management Staff and back-channel negotiator-designate Silvestre Afable, Jr. were actively involved in the back-channel efforts.

He noted that the people have been looking forward to a political settlement on the issues raised by the NDF, if only to stop criminal acts, violence and terrorism perpetrated by the New People’s Army in the field.

The government-NDF talks were suspended on June 2001 following the assassinations by the NPA, the armed component of the CPP, of former Tanauan, Batangas Mayor Cesar Platon, former Quezon Rep. Marcial Punzalan, former Cagayan Valley Rep. Rodolfo Aguinaldo, and former Tala-Ingod, Davao del Norte Mayor Jose Labayao.

The talks would have resumed in mid-November last year but were stalled anew when the NPA refused to release four soldiers they held hostage. The CPP-NDF asked government to declare the suspension of military offensives as a condition for the soldiers’ release.

In early March this year, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the temporary suspension of formal talks, as she called for back-channeling efforts to reach the CPP-NDF.

A month later, negotiators Afable and Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales met with Norwegian officials who they asked to inform the CPP-NDF to resume talks on the draft of a Final Peace Agreement.

The CPP-NDF flatly rejected the proposal, which included discussions on the demobilization of the NPA.

When the President ordered the pullout of troops in Mindanao and had them returned to their mother camps in Luzon to help neutralize the NPA’s criminal and terrorist activities, the CPP-NDF reacted and charged government of waging an all-out war resulting in military human rights violations as it would jeopardize the resumption of peace talks.

The CPP-NDF also reacted negatively to the United States’ declaration of the communist group as a foreign terrorist organization. This was followed by the freezing of CPP-NDF assets by the British and Dutch governments. They regarded this as adverse to the resumption of talks.

Through all these, the government said it would address the atrocities being committed by the NPA while keeping lines open for talks with the NDF.

GMA joins people in commemorating Plaza Miranda bombing

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today unveiled the commemorative marker of Plaza Miranda in Quiapo, Manila where, 31 years ago, nine innocent civilians were killed and scores wounded in bombings allegedly perpetrated by communist elements.

The President was assisted by Manila Mayor Lito Atienza during the unveiling rites.

The President also walked and passed through the Lacson Underpass, named after former Manila Mayor Arsenio Lacson, to view and inspect the improvements of the shopping arcade in the underpass.

The President motored to Plaza Miranda after attending a Mass to commemorate the 19th death anniversary of former Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr. at the Manila Memorial Park in Sucat, Paranaque City.

During a short program at the plaza, the President listened to a message from former Senate President Jovito Salonga, read by Judy Araneta Roxas, the wife of late Senator Gerardo Roxas and mother of Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II.

The Roxas couple — together with Salonga and the late Senator Sergio Osmeña, Jr. and other leaders of the Liberal Party (LP) who were then presenting their official candidates to the national polls — were among those wounded in the bombing.

Roxas said Salonga recalled the night after the attack. Many people saw him wounded. His doctor even thought he would not survive.

“Only God’s amazing grace, the professional skill, perseverance and devotion of my 34 doctors, who refused to bill me for their services, and the prayers and the love of my family saved me from the shadow of the valley of death,” Salonga said.

He said that when he was in the Manila Medical Center from August 21 to October, 1971, he prayed that the bloody event would not happen again.

“As I am in the habit of saying, in a democracy we can disagree without being disagreeable; we can differ without being difficult. This is the meaning and essence of civility in an open, free and just society,” he added.

He thanked the President for attending the commemoration. He also lauded Mayor Atienza for bringing life back to Plaza Miranda.

“Now it looks like a real plaza. Clean, no more hookers and peddlers. There is an obelisk with inscriptions, an achievement of Mayor Atienza,” he said.

Seven HMB suspects presented to GMA

CABIAO, Nueva Ecija – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presented to the media seven suspected members of the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB) who were arrested here early this morning.

The President arrived here at around 1 p.m. on board a helicopter shortly after attending the unveiling of a commemorative marker of the Plaza Miranda bombing in Quiapo, Manila.

In a statement read by the President at the Municipal Hall here, she said the arrest of the seven suspected communist members was another accomplishment of the government in its intensified campaign against criminality and terrorism in the country.

The suspects, who are believed to be remnants of the HMB, were arrested by the Cabiao police at around 6 a.m. in Barangay Bagong Silang, Cabiao, Nueva Ecija.

In a report to the President, Philippine National Police (PNP) Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. identified the arrested suspects as Alfredo Cruz, Val Galang, Michael Ortiz, Daniel Simbulan, Jason Ramos, Bienvenido Ramos and Jovy Soliman.

During the operation, the police were able to confiscate two M14 rifles, three M16 armalite rifles, three rifle grenades, one carbine rifle, various camouflage vests, seven backpacks and subversive documents.

In her statement, the President noted that the arrest were made possible through information given by concerned citizens who saw the armed men in their area.

“I call on our citizens to come forward and report to your police and to Patrol 117 any information you may have on any illegal activities,” she said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also took the opportunity to congratulate the team of Chief Inspector Rolando Santos, Cabaio police chief, and Nueva Ecija PNP Provincial Director Senior Supt. Raul Bacalzo for the successful drive against the HMB members.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 21, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033737/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug21.htm>

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Canlas, Ople, Alvarez to lead RP group in int'l summit in sustainable development

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople and Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Heherson Alvarez will lead the Philippine delegation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa from August 26 to September 4.

The country's delegation — composed of some 68 officials from government, business and the civil society — will join over 65,000 participants from other countries, including more than 100 presidents and prime ministers.

The world summit will celebrate the 10th year anniversary of the historic Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as it will assess how far each country has progressed in promoting the sustainable development agenda adopted in the Global Agenda 21.

Canlas, also chairman of the Philippine Council on Sustainable Development (PCSD), will submit proposals on various key issues, including an international sustainable development governance structure, water and sanitation, and stakeholder participation.

He said the PCSD stood as among the first mechanisms in the world created to follow up national commitments to the Global Agenda 21, a report from the National Economic and Development Authority said.

Canlas said the Philippines wanted the WSSD to come up with concrete measures so that the Rio Earth Summit and the Millennium Development Goals, which a need to reduce poverty by half in 2015, could be realized.

He said the Philippine delegation will support moves:

- To put up the World Solidarity Fund to bankroll poverty alleviation programs in developing countries;
- To extend debt relief or debt cancellation that do not compromise Official Development Assistance (ODA) for developing countries;
- To clear targets and timelines for reducing poverty and the number of people without access to water and sanitation; to adopt renewable energy; and
- To ratify and implement protocols and conventions, such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Convention on Climate Change, the Basel Convention, Rotterdam Convention and Stockholm Convention on chemicals and wastes, and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Canlas said the delegation maintained that the summit should not be a venue for renegotiation of what had been previously agreed upon, but should build upon the agreement contained in the Doha Development Agenda and the Monterey Consensus.

In Doha and Monterey, a framework was reached to improve the market access of developing countries and to increase financial assistance for development.

He said all countries should work together to ensure that the benefits of growth and development are broadly shared.

“It is vital that the needs of the present generation are satisfactorily met without diminishing the capacity of future generations to meet theirs,” Canlas said.

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

I understand that the discovery of the tax diversion case at the Land Bank has caused anxiety about the integrity of the tax payment system.

I would like to reassure large and small taxpayers that banks are now equipped to take your payments either on the basis of e-filing or e-payment system for large taxpayers and through the debit payment for non-large taxpayers. The e-payment system was institutionalized by the BIR as of August 1, 2002 and is further being enhanced to broaden the number of banks that can accept payment.

The debit payment system, which banks will soon be authorized to accept, will require taxpayers to fill out an agreed form of debit memos to their banks authorizing the transfer of cash from their account to the Bureau of Treasury, payable to the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

These methods of payment will reduce the risk of diverting check payments, as this method is done electronically and very secure.

I would like to thank Congressman Enrique Garcia for spearheading the work done with the banking system in developing the debit payment system. A task force is in fact being constituted to continue working on these modes of payment, which Acting BIR Commissioner Cornelio Gison will need to closely monitor for implementation.

In the meantime, let us not allow ourselves to be paralyzed by the events transpiring in the Government’s efforts to uncover the unlawful activities depriving our nation of much-needed resources. This is a time when the Government needs the help of all well-meaning citizens in doing their share of building our revenue base and guarding those revenues with much zeal and vigilance.

We are intent in cleaning up the BIR and freeing it from the clutches of corrupt individuals. But we cannot do this alone. Join me and my team in this crusade so we can continue the work toward building a strong republic.

Datumanong orders deeper probe of alleged anomalies in DPWH

A more thorough investigation of alleged illegal deals in the repair of vehicles and equipment and other anomalies in the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is in the works.

DPWH Secretary Simeon Datumanong, on directives from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, said the investigation would also cover reported substandard projects, procurements, and other such sources of graft and corrupt practices in the agency.

Earlier, the President ordered the filing of charges against three DPWH bureau directors and 38 employees for alleged involvement in a P139-million vehicle repair anomaly.

At the same time, Datumanong rescinded the contract of and banned Urban Consolidated Constructors Phil., Inc. (UCCPI) from joining in any bidding or entering into any contract with the DPWH. The UCCPI abandoned the construction of the Bayawan-Kalumbayan Road, Contract Package VIII in Negros Oriental.

He also ordered the termination of the contract for the construction of the Bayugan-Awa-San Francisco (Prosperidad) Road Section along the Surigao-Davao road in Mindanao, as the contractor, LS Sarmiento/Conception Basic/J&P Builders, incurred intolerable slippages in project implementation.

“I won’t hesitate to throw the books at contractors who are incurring delays in implementing government projects,” he said.

Datumanong created a committee to look into reports of anomalies.

He also called for the speedy implementation of reforms in asset management and project implementation, while strengthening DPWH procurement processes for civil works, supplies and equipment, and consultancy services.

Ongoing reforms included the use of a computerized registry of contractors in the pre-qualification process; post evaluation of contractors; posting of bid advertisements in the DPWH web site and the Department of Budget and Management’s (DBM) electronic procurement system and in newspapers.

Meanwhile, the agency is working on the substantial payment of claims from construction firms for work completed as per contract.

The DPWH said the cash requirement for August 2002 to pay due and demandable claims nationwide has reached P4.5 billion. The agency had asked the DBM for the cash release of P2 billion in accordance with the DBM ceiling. The balance would be carried over to September 2002.

This would effectively ease the cash flow of contractors and claimants, Datumanong said.

GMA focused on her main goals, Palace says

Malacañang today stressed that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo continues to focus her efforts in fighting crime, eradicating poverty, lowering the cost of power, and practicing good governance.

When asked to comment on a foreign newspaper report that Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri is emerging as the better leader in the region, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that the two leaders have different styles.

“I still believe that the President has got what it takes to really lead our country,” Bunye said in his regular press briefing.

Bunye noted that the President would rather concentrate on the targets that she had enunciated in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA).

“Of course, the overall objective is the elimination of poverty within 10 years. The immediate targets would be the campaign against criminality and addressing the power rates,” Bunye said.

“We believe the President can deliver on her promises. Based on her qualification, based on her training and on what she has done so far, we believe that the President could really propel our country forward,” Bunye said.

No extension for Cimatú based on GMA’s previous statements — Bunye

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today said that there wouldn’t be any extension for Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatú, who is due to retire next month.

Bunye made this emphasis when asked if President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is inclined to extend Cimatú’s term in the light of the development in Patikul, Sulu where armed men kidnapped six individuals.

“I think the President has already made the announcement several times that while she believes in the capacity of Gen. Cimatú, there are other generals who are waiting in the wings and just as capable,” Bunye said in his regular press briefing in Malacañang.

Cimatú, who was confirmed by the Commission on Appointments Tuesday, is due to retire on September 1.

Meanwhile, Bunye said the government is not implementing a news blackout on the latest kidnapping incident in Sulu.

But he said that it is better for Malacañang not to comment on the latest kidnapping incident as there are still ongoing operations against the perpetrators.

“The President has not made any comment. I think the policy right now is not to comment on any ongoing operations and would rather let the men in the field give the details of the operations,” he said.

“But of course, the President is very concerned about the safety of the hostages,” Bunye added.

GMA okays draft memo institutionalizing Kalahi anti-poverty program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has approved a draft Memorandum Circular (MC) institutionalizing the Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (Kalahi) as the framework and program for poverty reduction.

The President approved the draft memorandum during the second National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) en banc meeting in Malacañang wherein she also inducted into office Presidential Adviser on Cooperatives Roberto Pagdanganan and the farmers, fisher folk, youth and students sectoral representatives of the NAPC.

Under the MC, all government poverty reduction programs and projects shall anchor on Kalahi. The government, through Kalahi, shall solicit the active participation of basic sector organizations, other civil society organizations, and the business sector in its poverty reduction programs or activities.

The poverty reduction program has three goals – reduced poverty, improved governance, and empowered communities.

It will be based on the five strategies: accelerated asset reform; improved access to human development services; provision of employment and livelihood opportunities; social protection and security from violence; and institutionalized and strengthened participation in governance.

To facilitate proper targeting of Kalahi sites, planning, coordination and monitoring of poverty reduction program, projects and resources, the Memorandum Circular established the following convergence groups, adhering to the principle of open and inclusive membership:

1. The National KALAHÍ Convergence Group composed of heads and or focal persons of the national government agencies such as the Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Agriculture, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, National Economic and Development Authority, People’s Credit and Finance Corporation, Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Commission on Higher Education, Department of Justice, Department of Finance, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Public Works, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, Technology and Livelihood Resource Center, National Housing Authority, National Youth Commission, National Food Authority, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Philippine

Information Agency, and other national government agencies that may be identified later, national chapters of local government leagues, and the NAPC Basic Sector Representatives.

2. The Regional Kalahi Convergence Groups, composed of heads and or local persons of the regional counterparts of the National Kalahi convergence group agencies, the Presidential Assistant for Regional Development or the Regional Development Officer (RDO).

To effectively implement Kalahi in all targeted areas and communities, funding shall be sourced from allocation from program funds of the national government agencies and from funds of local government units.

The Kalahi program of the government was conceptualized from the President's inaugural address which specifically said that the fight against poverty should be won within the decade.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 22, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033754/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug22.htm>

The President's Day: August 23, 2002

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- **Palace set to issue an M.O. on how to dispose of public lands for the informal settlers**
- **Budget deficit still very manageable, says Bunye**
- **Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**
- **Military yet to ascertain abductors' link to Abu Sayyaf, says Reyes**
- **Gov't can implement absentee-voting bill if okayed by Congress — Palace**
- **Other regional currencies also slid along with the peso, says Palace**
- **GMA still bent on implementing capital punishment this year, says Press Secretary**

Palace set to issue an M.O. on how to dispose of public lands for the informal settlers

Malacañang will soon issue a Memorandum Order (MO) that would set government policy and guidelines on the disposition of public lands for the informal settlers and providing funds for this program.

The MO will direct the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) to adopt certain guidelines on how to regularize the status of informal settlers now occupying government lands.

These guidelines were discussed during the second en banc meeting of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) held in Malacañang yesterday and presided over by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

One of the items in the agenda of the meeting was the immediate disposition of all government lands that have not been used for the purposes for which they have been reserved during the past 10 years.

The President said she would study if there is a need for an executive order that would declare open to disposition for socialized housing purposes certain government-owned lands defined under Republic Act 7279.

The President also directed the NAPC to hold en banc meetings every month. He also directed the fast tracking of the completed staff work on memorandum orders or presidential proclamations as petitioned by actual settlers on the following:

- Authorizing the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to dispose of certain portions of right-of-way of its abandoned aqueduct in favor of the bonafide family occupants for socialized housing;
- Lifting the directive holding in abeyance the implementation of Proclamation No. 770, s. 1966, on the TELOF Property in Pugad Baboy in Valenzuela;
- Amending MO 119, series of 1987, which provided guidelines for the implementation of Proclamation No. 187, series of 1987, on the Western Bicutan farmlands;
- Directing the Department of Justice and HUDCC to investigate the reported irregularities in the titling of lands on portions of the Lungsod Silangan Townsite Reservation located in the province of Rizal, and to explore and recommend possible tenurial arrangements for their legitimate occupants.

The President is also set to sign an MO directing NAPC and the Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor (PCUP) to act as the national and regional clearing houses for the conduct of demolition and eviction activities involving the homeless and underprivileged.

For ongoing demolitions, the President will be issuing a directive to implementing agencies to seek prior approval of NAPC and PCUP for national infrastructure projects and PCUP and the Department of Interior and Local Government for regional and local infrastructure projects.

Budget deficit still very manageable, says Bunye

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today stressed that the country's budget deficit was "still very manageable," despite having slightly gone beyond the P130-billion target for the year.

Bunye, in a radio interview, said the government has instituted a number of measures to cut down on or postpone non-urgent public expenses.

He cited training and travel expenses that could be stricken off the expense list of government agencies.

"This is one way to control the deficit," he said.

But he allayed fears of local officials on rumors that the national government would withhold the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) being given to the latter for their programs and projects.

Bunye said there is a provision in the Local Government Code that would allow the withholding of the IRA if there is an unmanageable budget deficit but this would not happen under the present situation.

He also said the national government would release to members of Congress their Countrywide Development Funds to make sure that vital projects are implemented.

Earlier, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin belied reports that the government was running out of cash and might be unable to disburse funds needed for the day-to-day operations of the different agencies.

Boncodin said the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has released the notice of cash allocations for August and September of all government agencies.

She urged the agencies to prioritize their mandatory operational requirements like salaries and the payment for water and power bills.

On the other hand, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho stressed that the government would go on maintaining fiscal discipline, as it remained committed to budget deficit targets that correspond to about 3.3 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

The GDP is the sum total of all goods and services a local economy produces in a particular period of time.

Camacho expressed optimism that surpluses would be attained in the next few months going into the last semester.

He projected better revenue collections and substantial proceeds from the sale of big-ticket state assets to keep the budget deficit in line.

Meanwhile, former Economic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito said that there was "no real strong economic reason to fear a larger-than-target deficit at this point."

But Habito said the state budget would have to be spent well, with priorities – particularly in infrastructure development — given due social and economic relevance in so far as the country's growth potentials were concerned.

He even called for the relaxation of the budget deficit ceiling so that the country could expand the GDP to the targeted 4 percent to 4.5 percent.

Habito said performance targets like the inflation rate and the interest rate would not be adversely affected with a breach in the deficit ceiling.

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

I will be issuing shortly an Executive Order promulgating the Restructuring Program of Electric Cooperatives (ECs), which among others, authorized the condonation of ECs Rural Electrification loans incurred as of 26 June 2001.

This means eighteen (18) billion pesos worth of government support directly benefiting almost six (6) million households served by 119 ECs throughout the country.

This E.O. effectively condoning the loans of all ECs, means the eventual lowering of electric rates and improved power service.

The program the E.O. outlines, setting forth its terms and conditions, demands vigorous positive response in terms of drastic reforms, mandated as well as self-imposed, both of which will exact tremendous sacrifices.

Together with me, our countrymen, particularly the rural folk, recognize, appreciate and thank the leaders of the rural electrification program for their extraordinary achievements in providing for our people better quality of life, triggering economic development in the countryside. I am happy and grateful for what you did in the Lanao del Sur, Masbate, Aklan and Basilan, thus manifesting a dramatic demonstration of massive cooperation of all ECs from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Considering, however, the utmost importance of the power sector, without which no country can really progress in many aspects of human endeavors, I must state categorically the following:

1. I will not allow any EC to hold hostage to its inefficiencies the thousands of member-consumers in its area coverage. Our people deserve the best, and I will see to it that they get it.
2. I shall expect transparency and honesty in all transactions. Any dishonest act must be considered a crime against the thousands affected by it, and this I will not tolerate.
3. I hereby direct the National Electrification Administration (NEA) to exercise forcefully, strictly and consistently its supervisory power over the ECs.
4. I want to see dramatic impact results from the performance improvement and rehabilitation and efficiency plans of ECs within the next 180 days, after which for those which fail, all other measures shall be open for consideration.

Even as I demand much now, I pledge total support for the ECs and the NEA.

Military yet to ascertain abductors' link to Abu Sayyaf, says Reyes

Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes today stressed that the military has yet to ascertain the involvement of Muin Sajiron, prime suspect in the recent abduction of six preachers of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Sulu, to the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Reyes also stressed that there was no direct evidence yet to say that the Abu Sayyaf was responsible for the abductions and reported beheading of two of the hostages.

"We cannot, as of now, categorically ascertain that he (Muin Sajiron) is Abu Sayyaf. The moment that we ascertain that, then we will tell you," he said.

He said Sajiron, leader of the gang that abducted the six preachers in Patikul town, was not Abu Sayyaf but "a loose cannon" who could not be controlled even by his uncle, Abu Sayyaf leader Radulan Sajiron.

Reyes recalled that it was Muin who led the group that kidnapped broadcast journalist Maan Macapagal, who was on her way home after an interview with the Abu Sayyaf.

Muin defied Abu Sayyaf safety clearances earlier given by the terrorist group to Macapagal.

The defense chief said Muin is a drug-crazed man.

“I was informed by the Mayor (Hasir Hayudini) of Patikul and (Sulu) Governor (Yusop) Jikiri, that in all probability, this guy is heavily into drugs,” he said.

Reyes said the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) go by the Order of Battle in identifying members of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf.

“(Muin) is not in the Order of Battle. He is what we might call a loose cannon. Not even Radulan Sajiron can influence him,” he said.

Earlier, AFP spokesman retired Major General Melchor Rosales claimed that Brig. Gen. Romeo Tolentino, commander of the Sulu-based Army’s 10th Infantry Brigade, never stated that the Abu Sayyaf was behind the abduction of the six preachers.

Rosales also clarified that there were several other criminal groups operating in Sulu. These are pirates, lost commands, outlaws, breakaway groups and others.

Meanwhile, Reyes clarified that the military had not reduced forces in Sulu, but had even injected the Army’s 55th Infantry Battalion in the province three weeks ago, and the 14th Infantry Battalion two months ago.

“We have increased, as a matter of fact, our Armed Forces elements there because we knew and we know that we have to recover the remaining Indonesian hostages and we have to address the presence of personalities there,” he said.

He further refuted the reported sightings of Abu Sabaya, as claimed by witnesses from the camp of Fr. Cirilo Nacorda, the parish priest of Lamitan in Basilan who also was a victim of Abu Sayyaf atrocities.

“He says that he was told, he heard that Abu Sabaya is alive. I don’t think that he saw Abu Sabaya. If Abu Sabaya is alive and somebody had seen him, then please come forward,” he said.

Gov’t can implement absentee-voting bill if okayed by Congress — Palace

Malacañang today assured the public that the government would be able to implement the absentee-voting law in the presidential elections in 2004 if Congress would enact it on time.

“It will indeed be difficult to implement the law, but it will not be impossible,” Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio “Toting” Bunye said today in his press briefing in Malacañang.

Bunye said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo believes that the absentee-voting bill, now being deliberated in both houses of Congress, “is a very worthwhile legislation.”

The press secretary agreed with the observation of Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople that Philippine foreign missions, given their budgetary constraints, may not be able to fully implement the absentee-voting law in the 2004 polls.

Ople said that Philippine embassies and consulates, particularly in areas with a large concentration of Filipinos, such as the United States, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Japan and Canada, may not be able to properly handle the new voting system because of lack of adequate funding and personnel.

Bunye said the present election procedures in the country would be multiplied several times over with the additional overseas voting.

“There is also the problem of actual monitoring, counting, and safeguarding of ballots,” Bunye said.

These concerns, however, are now being addressed by the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Ople said that despite their apprehensions, he has already directed DFA Undersecretary for Special Concerns Arturo Brion to look into possible methods that could ensure the implementation of the new polling system in Philippine foreign missions in the 2004 elections.

Other regional currencies also slid along with the peso, says Palace

Malacañang today said that the fall of the Philippine peso vis a vis the US dollar is not peculiar to the Philippine currency but is also being experienced by other currencies in the region.

In his press briefing in Malacañang, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio “Toting” Bunye said the Thai baht and the Japanese yen have also gone down.

“So, this could be the effect of a trend and is not limited to the Philippines,” Bunye said.

Even currency traders have said that currencies in the region have started to weaken against the greenback and this could have pulled the peso down in the process.

Bunye also explained that another factor that could have affected the peso-dollar exchange rate were the heavy corporate demands for the dollar during the last two or three days.

The *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP) said that imports of goods expanded for the fourth consecutive month beginning February, peaking in April at 18.8 percent but tapering off in May at 3.9 percent.

But total imports for the first five months of this year reached \$12.547 billion, 3.2 percent higher than the level a year ago, the BSP said.

“These developments reflected in part replenishment and inventory buildup as manufacturers have geared up importation following expectations of more robust domestic demands,” the BSP said.

“There is an increasing demand for US dollars because of more import activities,” Bunye said.

GMA still bent on implementing capital punishment this year, says Press Secretary

Malacañang today reiterated the position of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to implement the capital punishment within the year.

“Maybe not on the exact date as planned but definitely some executions will be carried out within the year,” Press Secretary Ignacio “Toting” Bunye told reporters during a press briefing in Malacañang.

Bunye said the President received advice from various quarters, particularly on the issue on the date of the first execution under her administration. Scheduled for execution on August 30 is convicted rapist Rolando Padayawon.

Bunye said he believed there is merit in postponing the very first execution.

During the press briefing, Bunye also said the Palace will have to take into consideration the date of the execution of Padayawon, which incidentally falls on the eve of the birthday of Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin.

Padayawon is one of the 22 death convicts who are scheduled to die by lethal injection before the year ends.

“It’s quite clear at this stage that she will implement or she will carry out some of these death penalties within the year, that’s for sure,” the Press Secretary stressed.

“As to the date of the first execution, that’s still being determined,” he added.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: August 23, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033849/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug23.htm>

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GMA warns namedroppers: you will be prosecuted with the full force of the law

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today warned anew people who use the name of any member of her family or the Office of the President in the pursuit of illegal activities, saying that they will be prosecuted with the full force of the law.

In her regular radio address this morning, the President noted the recent arrest by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) of a poseur who claimed that he was connected with the Office of the President.

According to the NBI, the suspect claimed that he represents First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo and that he was in charge of the supposed sale of a government property in Tokyo.

The President said she was thankful that somebody reported the incident to her and the man was immediately arrested by the NBI.

"Let this be a firm warning to anyone using the name of my family and my office to get away with wrongdoings. We will prosecute such name-droppers and influence peddlers in full measure," the President said.

On Wednesday, the NBI charged a certain Anthony Deslate, 38, with usurpation of authority for dropping the name of the First Gentleman.

Deslate reportedly tried to solicit P3 million from a Japanese trader by passing himself as a presidential adviser authorized to sell a government land in Tokyo.

In a press conference at the NBI headquarters in Manila, the First Gentleman said he would not allow anybody to use his name in any business transactions in both the private and the public sectors.

GMA cites civilians' role in foiling NPA attack in Quezon power plant

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the significant role of civilians in foiling the attack of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed component of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), at the Pagbilao Power plant in Pagbilao, Quezon last week.

Residents of Kanlurang Mabolo in Pagbilao, led by their barangay captain, has informed the military about the movements of the NPA which led to the terrorists' defeat in an encounter last Saturday.

"Salamat na lamang sa tulong ng mga mamamayan sa Pagbilao ay naagapan ito at natalo iyong mga NPA sa encounter (I thank the people of Pagbilao. With their help, the military was able to trounce the NPA in the encounter)," the President said in her regular radio address this morning.

The President noted that the government has been warned of fresh attacks by the NPA on public utilities and infrastructure, communication and power lines and transport facilities in its bid to bring down the government.

She said she proceeded to Mauban, Quezon last Monday principally to check on the security arrangements on the town's power plant.

"Tiniyak ng military at police sa akin nuong nagpunta ako sa power plant ng Mauban na pinuprotektahan nila ito. Gayundin ang mga distribution lines o linyang dinadaluyan ng kuryente (The military and the police have assured me of the security of the plant, as well as their distribution lines)," the President said.

The President said it is important for the public to feel that the government has secured these infrastructures.

"Mahalaga ito para maging palagay ang ating loob at panatag ang ating isipan. Hindi tayo kailanman dapat padala sa pananakot ng mga armadong organisasyon tulad ng NPA (It is important for us to feel secured. We must not allow armed groups like the NPA to sow fear among us)," the President said.

The failed attack on the Pagbilao power plant was just one of the many acts of terrorism perpetrated by the CPP-NPA, which was recently included in the United States' list of 34 foreign terrorist organizations.

GMA visits family of OFW acquitted of murder in Saudi Arabia

CAVITE CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today visited the family of Joselito Alejo, one of the three overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who were acquitted in a murder case in Saudi Arabia.

The President, who arrived here at around 10 a.m., assured Mrs. Dalisay Alejo, wife of the OFW, of the government's help for the immediate return of her husband to the country.

The three OFWs were acquitted by the Saudi court last July 22 and are now awaiting clearances from the Saudi government before their repatriation to the Philippines.

During her visit, the President comforted Alejo's wife and daughter Ann Camille, 13, saying she is glad that Alejo was acquitted from the charges and will soon be reunited with his family.

"At least this is a happy occasion for us," the President told the Alejo family.

In return, Mrs. Alejo thanked the President and the other agencies of the government, particularly the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), for providing her husband with the necessary assistance.

The President likewise directed the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to find ways on how to help Alejo find another overseas employment as soon as he comes back from Saudi Arabia.

According to Mrs. Alejo, her husband has been an OFW since 1980 and has traveled several times to Saudi Arabia.

Records showed that Alejo left the Philippines on March 10, 1997 to work as a trailer driver for Astra Farms in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia.

On August 10, 1997, Alejo and two other OFWs, namely Romeo Cordova and Ramiro Esmero, were picked up by Saudi authorities for questioning regarding the murder of Saudi policeman.

The three OFWs were detained for almost five years and had spent six months in solitary confinement inside a maximum security prison in Saudi Arabia.

Among those who accompanied the President in her visit to the Alejo family residence were Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, DFA Assistant Secretary for Personnel and Administrative Services Victoria Bataclan, Cavite Gov. Erineo Maliksi and Cavite City Mayor Bernardo Paredes.

Military now pursuing bandits involved in the abduction of six civilians in Sulu — GMA

The military, with the assistance of local officials, is now pursuing the members of a bandit group that abducted six innocent civilians in Patikul, Sulu, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today.

“Kumikilos na ang ating mga sundalo maging ang ating mga local government officials upang tugisin ang mga bandidong may kagagawan nito (Our soldiers as well as local government officials are now working to go after the bandits who are responsible for this crime),” the President said in her weekend radio address aired nationwide this morning.

At the same time, the President called on the public to help her in efforts against crime, terrorism, graft and corruption, which, she said, are holding back the attainment of peace and prosperity for the Filipino citizen.

“Tulungan ninyo akong sugpuin ang krimen, terorismo at katiwalian na maging sagabal para magkaroon ng mapayapa at magandang buhay ang baw’t Filipino (Help me in the fight against crime, terrorism and corruption, which are a hindrance to peace and good life for every Filipino),” the President said.

The President further enjoined all Filipinos to join her in her efforts to eradicate poverty and bring about good governance.

Defense Secretary Angelo T. Reyes earlier stressed that the military has yet to ascertain the involvement of Muin Sajiron, the prime suspect in the abduction of six individuals in Sulu, to the Abu Sayyaf group.

He said Sajiron, leader of the gang that abducted the six preachers, was not Abu Sayyaf but “a loose cannon” and drug-crazed man who could not be controlled even by his uncle, Abu Sayyaf leader Radulan Sajiron.

Meanwhile, in stressing government efforts against crime and terrorism, the President cited the successful raid of the biggest factory of fake videos and compact discs undertaken by the Crime Investigation and Detection Group Chief Nestorio Gualberto and Video Regulatory Board chairman Ramon “Bong” Revilla, Jr.

“Natutuwa na rin ako na nakapuntos na naman tayo laban sa organized crime (I am happy that we scored anew against organized crime),” the President said. The illegal factory is deemed to be worth P1 billion.

The President also acknowledged the efforts of other law enforcement agencies in the fight against kidnapping, prohibited drugs and carnapping, the latest of which resulted in the capture of a policeman, PO2 Elmer Ramos, who was allegedly involved in carnapping activities in Umingan, Pangasinan.

“Patuloy nating dudurugin ang mga sindikato ng krimen at terorismo. Maliit man o malaki, hindi natin titigilan ang pagtugis sa kanila (We continue to crush these syndicates involved in crime and terrorism. Big or small, we would not stop the war against them),” the President said.

“Hindi maaaring maghari ang kaharasan at panggugulo ng iilan sa ating lipunan (We will not allow violence and crime of a few to rule our society),” she added.

GMA stresses need for efficient tax collection

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the need for an honest and efficient collection of taxes, saying the revenue supports government efforts, which include funding for infrastructure, development programs and pro-poor projects.

“Kailangan natin ang matapat at maayos na pagkolekta ng buwis (We need an honest and efficient collection of taxes),” the President said in her radio address aired nationwide this morning.

“Alam naman nating lahat na sa ibinabayad na buwis kinukuha ang perang ginagamit ng gobyerno para sa mga paaralan, kalsada, patubig, rural electrification at iba pang development projects (We all know that it is in the taxes that we pay that the government obtains funding for the construction of schools, roads, irrigation systems, rural electrification and other development projects),” the President said.

At the same time, the President expressed sadness over the resignation of Commissioner Rene Bañez from the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

“Siya ay isang malaking kawalan sa pamahalaan dahil hangad kong mapatupad niya ang mga reporma sa BIR – una na ang pagsasa-ayos ng sistema ng koleksyon ng buwis (He’s a big loss in the government because I tasked him to institute reforms in the BIR, including putting in order the system of tax collection),” she said.

The President said that like the late Ninoy Aquino, whose 19th death anniversary was commemorated last August 21 and the victims of the Plaza Miranda bombing, it is her wish to attain a truthful and honest government.

“Kasama ng aking Gabinete, nagsisikap kaming maipatupad na mabuti ang mga patakaran at program ng pamahalaan at labanan ang katiwalian na nagiging hadlang sa ating pag-unlad (I and my Cabinet are doing all we can to accomplish government programs and fight corruption, which is holding back the country’s development),” the President said.

The President said tax collection fuels pro-poor projects, a priority in her administration as she has declared war against poverty and seeks to eradicate it within the decade.

“Kaya, nais kong ipa-alaala sa inyo na gawing ugali ang pagbayad ng tamang buwis, at ginagawan natin lahat ng paraan upang ito ay magamit ng wasto (This is why I would like to remind you to pay the right taxes because we are making sure that the government would use them properly),” the President said.

The President noted the admiration expressed by World Bank country director Robert Vance Pulley on the progress of the government’s anti-poverty program despite the lack of adequate funds.

She added that the WB official also thinks highly of her Cabinet, especially her economic team.

The President said that Vance Pulley commented that the poor children would be able to read new books inside new classrooms, poor communities would be able to receive medical services inside clinics and health centers, and agencies would be able to dispense social services effectively.

She quoted the WB official as saying that because of the resolve of the administration to ensure the prompt implementation of projects, there is now a shorter period of time to deliver the services and infrastructure to the intended poor communities.

Full text of the President’s radio address (August 24, 2002)

Magandang umaga muli sa inyong lahat.

Nitong nakaraang Agosto a beinte-uno, muli nating ginunita ang anibersaryo ng pagkamatay ni dating Senador Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino. Si Ninoy ay nagsilbing liwanag ng pag-asa para sa marami nating mga kababayan noong panahon ng *martial law*. Natatandaan pa marahil ninyo na hinarap niya ng buong tapang ang diktadura at tiniis ang hirap nang makulong sa bilangguan alang-alang sa kaniyang pagiging makabayan at maka-Pilipino. Sa kaniyang kabayanihan, iminulat niya ang ating mga mata na kaya nating bawiin ang dignidad at kalayaan ng sambayanan sa nagkakaisang pagkilos.

Katulad ni Ninoy, hangad ng aking Administrasyon ang matapat na pamamahala sa ating bayan. Kasama ng aking Gabinete, nagsisikap kaming maipatupad na mabuti ang mga polisiya at programa ng pamahalaan at labanan ang katiwalian na nagiging hadlang sa ating pag-unlad.

Kaya't nanghihinayang ako sa pagbibitiw ni Rene Bañez bilang *Commissioner* ng *Bureau of Internal Revenue*. Siya ay isang malaking kawalan sa pamahalaan dahil hangad kong maipatupad niya ang mga reporma sa BIR, unang una ang pagsasaayos ng sistema ng koleksiyon ng buwis.

Sa panahon ngayon, kailangan natin ang matapat at maayos na pagkolekta ng buwis. Alam naman nating lahat na sa ibinabayad na buwis kinukuha ang perang ginagamit ng gobyerno para sa mga paaralan, kalsada, patubig, *rural electrification*, at iba pang *development projects*.

Ito ay mahalaga dahil ang pag-unlad ng buhay ng mahihirap nating mga kababayan ay nakasalalay sa mga proyektong tulad nito. Alam na rin ninyo marahil na ang pangunahing layunin ng aking administrasyon ay ang wakasan ang kahirapan sa loob ng dekadang kasalukuyan. Kaya, nais kong ipalala sa inyo na gawing ugali ng pagbayad ng tamang buwis.

At ginagawa natin ang lahat ng paraan upang ito ay magamit ng wasto.

Sabi nga ng *World Bank Country Director* sa ating bansa na si Robert Vance Pulley, hinahangaan niya ang pagsulong ng ating *anti-poverty programs* sa kabila ng mahigpit nating kakulangan sa pondo.

Sa lalong madaling panahon, aniya, ang mga batang galing sa mahihirap na pamilya ay makagagamit na ng mga bagong libro sa loob ng mga bagong gawang paaralan.

Ang mga mahihirap na komunidad ay makatatanggap na rin ng mga serbisyong pangkalusugan sa mga bagong tayong *clinics at health centers*.

Ang iba pang *social services* ay mas magiging mabilis habang pinagbubuti ng gobyerno ang implementasyon ng mga programa at proyektong suportado ng *World Bank*.

Dagdag pa ng nasabing *WB official*, "*Because of the resolve of the administration to ensure the prompt implementation of projects, there is now a shorter period of time to deliver the services and infrastructure to the intended poor communities.*"

Hindi rin tayo tumitigil sa paghahanap ng paraan para lutasin ang iba pang problemang hinaharap ng ating bansa, lalung-lalo na ang krimen at terorismo. Huwag nating kalimutan na *development comes hand in hand with peace and order*.

Kaya, ako ay natutuwa na nakapuntos na naman tayo laban sa *organized crime*. Binabati ko sina CIDG Chief Nestorio Gualberto at VRB Chairman Bong Revilla sa kanilang *raid* sa isang *warehouse* sa Meycauayan, Bulacan, kung saan nakumpiska nila ang may isang bilyong pisong halaga ng *video at audio compact discs at piracy equipment*. Naaresto nila ang grupo ng *foreign nationals* na nasa likod ng naturang ilegal na gawain. Hinihingi ko ang suporta ng madla sa kampanya laban sa *video piracy* isang uri ng paganakaw.

Binabati ko rin ang mga nakahuli sa limang pinaghihinalaang *carnapper*, kasama ang isang pulis, sa bayan ng Umingan sa Pangasinan.

Tungkol naman sa pagdukot sa anim na sibilyan ng grupong Abu Sayyaf sa Patikul, Sulu, kumikilos na ang ating mga sundalo upang tugisin ang mga bandidong may kagagawan nito.

Isang impostor naman na nagpapakilalang *representative* ni First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, at umano ay *Officer In Charge* ng pamahalaan sa pagbebenta o pagpapa-upa ng lupa sa Tokyo, Japan, ang agad na ipinadarakip natin sa NBI.

Let this be a firm warning to anyone intending to use the good name of my family and office for their own interests. The government will not waste any time in prosecuting impostors and influence peddlers. We will not hesitate to employ the full force of the law in dealing with criminals who undermine our efforts in building a strong republic.

Patuloy nating dudurugin ang mga sindikato ng krimen at terorismo. Maliit man o malaki, hindi natin titigilan ang pagtugis sa kanila. Hindi maaring maghari ang karahasan at panggugulo ng iilan sa ating lipunan.

Mahal kong mga kababayan, marami pa tayong kailangang gawin upang lalong mapabilis ang ating pag-unlad. Kaya, tulungan n'yo akong sugpuin ang krimen, terorismo, at katiwalian na nagiging sagabal para magkaroon ng mapayapa at magandang buhay ang bawata Pilipino. Samahan n'yo ako sa aking hangaring wakasan ang kahirapan at pairalin ang matapat na pamamahala sa ating bansa.

Maraming salamat at magandang araw sa inyong lahat.

GMA mulls transfer of coast guard headquarters to Sangley Point in Cavite

CAVITE CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is mulling a comprehensive plan to transfer the headquarters of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) to Sangley Point in order to spur economic activity in this city.

The President brought up this idea today during an informal meeting with Cavite officials led by Gov. Erineo Maliksi and Cavite City Mayor Bernardo Paredes.

She motored here this morning to visit the family of Joselito Alejo, one of the three overseas Filipino workers who were acquitted recently on a murder case in Saudi Arabia.

During their discussion, the Chief Executive said the present property being occupied by the PCG at Port Area, Manila is a prime commercial property which can be privatized to alleviate the country's budget deficit.

“Sayang naman napaka-commercial ng area. Sayang ang value, i-privatize natin, ang laking bagay for our budget deficit (It is a commercial area, we will privatize it so that the proceeds can help in solving our budget deficit),” the President said.

According to the President, the transfer of the PCG to Sangley Point could also increase the value of property in Cavite City and its neighboring towns.

At present, Sangley Point is home to the 15th Strike Wing, the elite group of the Philippine Air Force (PAF).

In order to further enhance economic activity in Cavite, the President asked Gov. Maliksi to include in their mission abroad the viability and potentials of Sangley Point as an investment site.

She said the province could also invite prospective build-operate-transfer (BOT) investors to submit their own proposal.

“It should be something they can afford and you just choose the best proposal,” the President said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo recalled that it was through the lessons of Sangley Point as to why the government has created the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA).

She said the BCDA was actually meant to avoid the repetition of another Sangley Point where economic activity had stopped after the closure of the American base.

In the case of Subic, the President said there are more workers now in the freeport than during the time when the US facilities were there.

In a related development, PCG chief Vice Admiral Reuben Lista welcomed the President's proposal to transfer the PCG headquarters to Sangley Point for as long as their vital structures would be replicated in the site.

He said Sangley Point is very ideal for the purposes and operation of the PCG.

GMA okays P9.56 billion budget for CARP in FY 2003

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today approved the amount of P9.56 billion for the implementation of the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) for fiscal year 2003.

In the 31st meeting of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) held this afternoon in Malacañang, the President also endorsed the provision of additional fund for the bond servicing requirement of CARP, specifically its inclusion in the Automatic Appropriation for the Debt Service Program.

Out of the CARP outlay, a total of P6.047 billion will be used as regular allocation of the Agrarian Reform Fund (ARF) to cover the funds needed for land acquisition and distribution.

The allocation for the Program Beneficiaries Development under the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Program (AFMP) is P3.512 billion.

The bulk of the AFMP-ARF budget, which is P3.021 billion, is for foreign assisted projects.

The budget for CARP, as recommended by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), basically adopts the FY 2002 CARP budget level and is 71 percent lower than the initial proposal of P16.379 billion.

To be able to meet the commitment of the President in her State of the Nation Address to distribute at least 100,000 hectares of private agricultural lands annually, the priority allocation of funds for land acquisition and distribution is for landowners' compensation.

For next year, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) is targeting a total of 110,677 hectares of lands for distribution to CARP beneficiaries. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), on the other hand, is targeting 5,410 hectares for distribution next year.

Under the AFMP-ARF program, the DAR would also launch some 335 agrarian reform communities (ARCs) and build 40 communal irrigation projects as well as 100 kilometers of farm-to-market roads.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 24, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033902/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug24.htm>

The President's Day: August 25, 2002

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- **GMA disapproves 9 stock distribution option applications**
- **GMA lauds joint police, military team for death of escaped Pentagon KFR leader Marohombsar**
- **Golez cites gov't wins over crime, terrorism**
- **Bunye stresses people's role in curbing crime**

GMA disapproves 9 stock distribution option applications

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, as chairman of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC), has disapproved nine stock distribution option (SDO) applications and ordered the immediate coverage of these landholdings under compulsory acquisition.

The President concurred with the PARC Executive Committee recommendation for the disapproval of the nine SDO applications during the 31st meeting of the PARC in Malacañang.

The nine disapproved applications and are now under compulsory acquisition are the following:

1. 271 Montinolla-Escarilla and Company, Inc. (MECO) located in Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte;
2. Kalaong Plantation, Inc. (KPI), with an area of 178 hectares and located in Maitum, South Cotabato;
3. Malibu Agro-Industrial Corporation (MAC), located in La Carlota, Negros Occidental, involving 625 hectares;
4. Ozamis Agricultural Development, Inc. Estate in Quezon, Bukidnon involving 1,603 hectares;
5. 14 Colored Corporations, a conglomeration of 14 small corporations, in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, involving a total area of 1,147;
6. Valmayor Hermanos, Inc., in Canlaon City, Negros Oriental with 638 hectares;
7. San Jose Sugar Development Corporation in San Jose City, Negros Occidental, 744 hectares;
8. Garcona Agri-Industrial Enterprises in Medelin, Cebu involving 46 hectares; and
9. AFC Agri-Business Corporation located in Buenavista, Guimaras, involving 371 hectares.

The President, in giving her concurrence to the disapproval of the SDO applications, said that the emphasis now is acquisition and redistribution of land.

GMA lauds joint police, military team for death of escaped Pentagon KFR leader Marohombsar

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today described the killing of Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gang leader Faisal Marohombsar as another shining star in the government's all-out war against criminals and terrorists.

This was another "big blow" to the infamous Pentagon KFR group, the President said, as she hinted that operations have been ongoing against Marohombsar's partner in Mindanao, Alonto Tahir.

She reminded everyone that Tahir was not, in any way, connected with the respected Alonto clan in the Lanao provinces.

She lauded the Philippine National Police (PNP), the military, cooperative citizens and the media for helping each other make Marohombsar pay for his sordid crimes against the Filipino people, particularly the victims of his kidnapping activities.

The body of Marohombsar was presented to the President.

In a light vein, she said “*mabuti hindi sea encounter ito para hindi nalunod si Faisal Marohombsar. Makikita ng buong mundo ang kanyang bangkay* (it was good Faisal was not killed in a sea encounter. Now, the whole world can see his corpse).”

She referred to the sea encounter between crack Navy troops and Abu Sayyaf terrorists led by Aldam Tilao aka Abu Sabaya off the coast of Zamboanga del Norte where Abu Sabaya was killed.

The President this morning motored to Magallanes, Cavite, scene of an early morning firefight between Marohombsar and combined elements of the PNP’s Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (PACER), National Capital Region Regional Police Office (NCRPO), Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) and the Anti-Crime Task Force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ACTAFP).

The joint police and military team was hunting down Marohombsar, escapees Abdul Macaumbang and Roland Patinio, and several others in connection with the abduction of four-year-old Patricia Chong and her nanny, Winena Jordan, last August 19 in Alabang, Muntinlupa City.

Kidnap victims Chong and Jordan were safely rescued at about 8 a.m. today.

The President also thanked the media for not reporting the kidnapping incident although it was being broadcast in text messages.

“*Kasi kung ni-report iyon, mas manganganib yung bata* (Reporting it in the media could have endangered the life of the child),” she said.

She added that the cooperation of the media enabled the police and the military to undertake the operation and uncover the truth behind the union of the Pentagon gang and the Villaver-Fajardo (KFR) gang, both in the Order of Battle of the military and the police.

The joint police-military team also arrested a policeman, Police Officer 2 Armando Ayson of the Magallanes Police Station, and Jimmy Lumabad in connection with the kidnapping case.

Marohombsar, Macaumbang and Patinio escaped from the defunct PNP National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTAF) detention center last June 19 and had thus been the subject of a manhunt.

Magallanes Mayor Filomena Maligaya said Marohombsar and his group had rented a house in Barangay Pacheco. The kidnap group was reported to have been in that safehouse for the last three weeks, Maligaya said.

The President, in her inspection of the encounter site, was told that a soldier of the ACTAFP, Technical Sergeant Willie Madayag, was wounded during the firefight.

The President, together with PNP Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. and AFP Chief of Staff Roy Cimatu, awarded financial aid to Madayag who was brought to the nearby Naic Doctor’s Hospital in Naic, Cavite.

The Chief Executive further expressed her gladness over the cooperation that civilians in the area gave to authorities, prompting the police and the military to get Marohombsar.

This, she said, was the best way to curb crime nationwide, as she again stressed the value of unity in all efforts to maintain law and order in the country and secure a better life for Filipinos.

She reiterated her appeal to all peace-loving citizens to immediately call Hotline 117, an immediate response police action system.

“Nananawagan din ako sa mga pamilyang maykaya na mag-ingat duon sa mga hina-hire nila. Puwede naming kayong tulongang makakuha ng background information sa mga ito (I urge families wanting to hire drivers to check with the National Bureau of Investigation on the background of these people),” she said.

She recalled incidents whereby drivers of rich families colluded with the kidnappers.

Golez cites gov’t wins over crime, terrorism

National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez today noted the victories made by the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in its peace and order drive and all-out war against terrorists nationwide.

Golez said the killing of Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gang leader Faisal Mahorombsar and other criminal and terrorist leaders showed that the current administration stood as having the most number of scores against organized crime and terrorist groups over the years.

He further noted the government’s triumphs against illegal drugs, with the discovery of two shabu factories in Luzon.

“This shows that the President’s personal attention to anti-crime efforts is working brilliantly,” he said.

He added the people could expect more scores in the next few weeks.

Marohombsar was killed in an encounter with joint police and military elements in Barangay Pacheco, Magallanes, Cavite.

The KFR leader, with two other suspects, escaped last June 19. He was responsible for the abductions of Italian priest Guiseppi Pierantoni and four Chinese nationals.

Bunye stresses people’s role in curbing crime

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today noted the vital role of the public in maintaining peace and order, saying, “citizens are the first line of defense in our war against crime.”

In a radio interview, Bunye said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had expressed appreciation for the concerned persons who provided the effective information that led to today’s recovery of two kidnap victims by a joint police-military team and the death of Pentagon Gang kidnap leader Faisal Marohombsar in a firefight.

With the death of Marohombsar, Bunye said the President has issued a “stern reminder against criminal elements that crime does not pay.”

“You cannot forever evade the long arm of the law...our law enforcers will get you one way or the other,” Bunye said.

Bunye further noted that the President praised the excellent teamwork and coordination of the various elements that participated in the operations.

“She also issued instructions to adequately reward the civilian enforcers who tipped off the law enforcers on the suspicious presence” of criminal and terrorist groups, Bunye said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 25, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033915/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug25.htm>

The President's Day: August 26, 2002

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- **Gov't, U.S. NGOs to launch social, medical intervention in Sulu**
- **GMA, Ebdane confident kidnappings to be curbed in just six months**
- **Gov't has money to pay salaries, bonuses of state workers, veterans' pensions, says Palace**
- **Unilever top executives assure GMA: We've never gone away, we're here for good**
- **Perez to ask oil firms to justify price hike of LPG**
- **GMA congratulates Intel exec for plans to expand business in Philippines, open 2nd Computer Clubhouse**
- **GMA's European trip part of RP's diplomatic commitment and economic diplomacy, says Palace**
- **GMA, Guingona to lead Alay Lakad 2002**
- **Marohombsar killed in a shootout, not rubout, Palace says**
- **GMA statement of postponement of Europe trip**

Gov't, U.S. NGOs to launch social, medical intervention in Sulu

The Philippine government and the various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the United States will jointly launch a short-term intervention and long-term development program that will provide medical and social infrastructure to help the people of Sulu.

In a briefing held this morning in Malacañang, Al Santoli, senior vice president of the American Foreign Policy Council (AFPC), informed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that the Development for Peace in Sulu (DPIS) is a partnership program aimed at helping restore peace and order in Sulu through means other than military action.

Aside from the President, those who attended the briefing were Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman and US Ambassador to the Philippines Francis Ricciardone.

The DPIS program is expected to kick off on Aug. 28, 2002 with the delivery of US\$1 million worth of medicine and medical equipment per year for the next three years to Jolo hospitals.

The shipment will include antibiotics, pain relievers, cough and cold preparations, and other medicines.

AFPC officials said the specific objectives of the project are:

- the uplifting of social conditions of the people of Jolo through a medical aid component;
- to deny the terrorist and other criminal elements a breeding ground for terrorism; and,
- to showcase the medical aid program in Jolo as a pilot project which can be replicated in other conflict-stricken areas of the country.

Under its implementation concept, the DPIS' socio-economic development program shall be initiated with the following phases:

1. initiate confidence-building activities in the target community;
2. harness existing initiatives of local government units and NGOs in the area to achieve convergence; and,
3. gradually address basic needs of the community such as potable water, electricity and sanitation.

AFPC officials noted that the program will also help in building up trust among the populace, the improvement of medical facilities and infrastructure in the community and the development of a self-reliant medical service.

Founded in 1982, AFPC is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing information to those who make or influence the foreign policy of the United States and to assist world leaders in strengthening democracies and market economies.

AFPC is widely recognized as a source of timely, insightful analysis on issues of foreign policy, and works closely with members of Congress, the Executive Branch and the policy-making community in the US.

The lead agencies for the DPIS program are the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Health (DOH) and the provincial government of Sulu.

On the other hand, the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) shall serve as the priming agency during the start-up of the program.

They will be assisted by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Finance (DOF) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

GMA, Ebdane confident kidnappings to be curbed in just six months

The way things are looking, kidnappings will be curbed not in one year but in just six months.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today gave this assessment to a group of Japanese executives led by Atsutoshi Nishida, president of Toshiba Digital Media Network Co., who made a courtesy call on her in Malacañang.

“I gave the PNP (Philippine National Police) chief (Director General Hermogenes) Ebdane one year to eliminate kidnapping but I talked to him yesterday and he thinks it could be just six months,” the President said.

The President noted the many arrests made by the Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (PACER) and the Anti-Crime Task Force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ACTAFP) for the past several weeks.

Yesterday, Ebdane and Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Roy Cimatu scored another major success in the war against crime with the death of Pentagon Gang leader Faisal Marohombsar during an encounter in Magallanes, Cavite. The President motored to the area and personally congratulated the joint forces of PACER and ACTAFP, which were also able to recover a four-year old kidnap and her nanny.

The President likewise told the businessmen that she would continue to be “hands-on” in connection with government efforts to curb crime.

She acknowledged the importance of maintaining peace and order in enticing businessmen to invest in the country.

Nishida called on the President to personally inform her that Toshiba has decided to locate in the Philippines the manufacturing of its laptop computers, which are due to fill up a worldwide market.

Aside from Nishida, among those present during the courtesy call were Masaaki Mukushi, president of Toshiba Information Equipment Philippines Inc.; Hidejiro Shimomitsu, vice-president of Toshiba Digital Media Network; Junichi Iwata, Chief Production Executive of Toshiba; and Kazuo Maruyama, Executive Vice President of Toshiba.

The President earlier said that the police and the military have uncovered the truth behind the union of the Pentagon Gang and the Villaver-Fajardo Gang.

The President has been micro-managing the efforts against crime, going to various places around the country to personally present suspected criminals to media.

Last week, she went to Tayug, Pangasinan to personally congratulate the PNP officers of Region 1 (Ilocos) for the arrest of five suspected carnappers who were also charged with illegal possession of firearms and prohibited drugs.

A day earlier, she presented at the PNP headquarters in Quezon City Randy Raquino, the No. 1 most-wanted person in Region 3 (Central Luzon) and Nicomedes Gerilla, a member of the notorious Villaver Gang of kidnappers.

The President has also presented to media the members of the Bucala Kidnap-for-Ransom (KFR) Gang and a former policeman who led the Durano KFR group.

Emphasizing that the government efforts against crime is not confined to Metro Manila, the President has also presented arrested members of the Sagada-Kalinga group, one of the most notorious holdup gangs involved in a series of robbery-holdups of restaurants, buses and pawnshops in the provinces of the Cordillera Autonomous Region, Benguet, Pangasinan and La Union.

Gov't has money to pay salaries, bonuses of state workers, veterans' pensions, says Palace

Despite the tight fiscal position of the national government, it will not renege in its obligation to pay state workers their salaries and annual Christmas bonus as well as the monthly pensions of Filipino veterans, Malacañang said today.

In an interview, Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin said these are mandatory expenditures and are allocated in the yearly budget.

Boncodin also said that she did not believe that there is a need to declare the public sector deficit as "unmanageable" as feared by some sectors. "I don't think I would like to recommend it," she said.

"Kailangan lang gumawa tayo ng paraan kung paano matutugunan iyong pinakaimportanteng pangangailangan (What is needed is that we should devise ways on how to meet the more important requirements)," Boncodin said.

On Thursday, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said that the fiscal deficit for the seven month period, from January to July, 2002, has already reached P133 billion, which is P3 billion more than the full-year target of P130 billion.

Boncodin said one way of controlling the further rise in the fiscal deficit is to step up revenue collections.

She said that the collection shortfall, particularly in the Bureau of Internal Revenue, was caused by two factors, the undervaluation of the value-added tax (VAT) by some big taxpayers and the diversion of tax collections to private accounts.

These are now all being investigated by the proper authorities.

Unilever top executives assure GMA: We've never gone away, we're here for good

The worldwide chairman of the consumer products conglomerate Unilever today assured President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of continued confidence in the Philippines, saying the country offers a wide range of opportunities both as a market and source of excellent human resource for his company.

Unilever Worldwide Chairman Antony Burgmans, who paid a courtesy call on the President this morning, noted that the company is celebrating its 75th year in the Philippines this year.

"We've never gone away. We're here for the good and the bad times," Burgmans said.

He told the President that although business was hard sometimes in the past, most of the years are “happy years” and that the company has been achieving double-digit growth continuously.

Burgmans also expressed gratitude that the Filipino consumer has come to rely on Unilever products which, he said, continue to be competitive with the rest in its field.

Howard Belton, chairman and chief executive officer of Unilever Philippines who was also present during the call, noted that their plants in the country, aided by their partners here, are responsible for producing 50 million stick-on deodorants for the world’s deodorant market.

Belton noted that these products are big successes especially in Eastern Europe and Latin America.

The President said she is very grateful as she noted her administration’s continuing efforts to make the country competitive in the eyes of the foreign investor.

The President also thanked Burgmans for being a member of the International Board of Advisers, the group of business big shots who regularly give the country free advice on how to make the Philippines more competitive.

Unilever is the maker of home and personal care products.

The business has expanded more into foods, with the acquisition of Bestfoods in 2000 whose local company in the Philippines is the California Manufacturing Company.

At present, Unilever Philippines is expanding its business and aims to be a net exporter in the future.

Unilever is a multinational company that performs both in business and maintains corporate social responsibility in areas such as agriculture, fish conservation and clean water stewardship.

Unilever has been involved in the protection of fresh water resources such as the Pasig River, the La Mesa Watershed and Laguna de Bay.

During the call, Burgmans also gave the President a copy of “Laguna de Bay: The Living Lake,” a coffee table book which Unilever sponsored.

Aside from Burgmans and Belton, those present at the call were Presidential Adviser on International Competitiveness Roberto Romulo, Unilever Philippines General Manager Chito Macapagal, California Manufacturing Corp. Managing Director and CEO Marcial Aaron and Selecta Managing Director and CEO John Marie Concepcion

Perez to ask oil firms to justify price hike of LPG

The Department of Energy (DoE) will ask oil companies to explain why they have increased the price of their liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), a socially sensitive product.

In an interview, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez said that he will direct the Oil Industry Administration Bureau to ask the oil companies, particularly Shell, to justify its increase of P8.80 per 11-kilogram tank of LPG.

Perez said that during the past one and a half year, the oil companies did not raise the price of LPG despite the increase in the price of crude oil.

“Gusto kong pag-aralan, ano ba ang justification at bakit kailangan silang magtaas ng presyo ngayon (I want to make a study, what is the justification and why do they have to increase the price now),” Perez said.

According to Perez, Shell has notified the DoE about three days ago that they would increase the price of their LPG by 80 centavos per kilogram.

Shell said that they have a contract with a foreign source that had expired and that they are now buying the product at a higher price.

Perez also expressed the hope that the price of crude oil in the world market would go down and that the peso would strengthen in the next few days so that any upward movement in the price of fuel products could be averted.

GMA congratulates Intel exec for plans to expand business in Philippines, open 2nd Computer Clubhouse

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated Craig R. Barret, president and chief executive officer of Intel Corporation, for his firm's plans to expand their business in the Philippines and open the second Intel Computer Clubhouse in General Trias, Cavite.

"Congratulations and thank you. We are looking forward to your expansion of your business in the Philippines," the President said during her meeting with Barret this afternoon at Malacañang's Music Room.

The Intel head made a courtesy call on the President to personally inform her and invite her to the launching of their second Intel Computer Clubhouse located near the Governor Ferrer National High School in General Trias, Cavite.

Barret said the Computer Clubhouse is a program where youths aged 10 to 18 have access to technology equipment and mentors to develop technology and life skills that encourage self-confidence and foster creativity.

Barret also explained to President that one of the greatest benefits of an Intel Computer Clubhouse is seeing the excitement of young people using PCs (personal computers), peripherals and applications to create art, music and websites, while working together to solve problems.

"The youth in Cavite will learn to use technology by investigating it for themselves. The Computer Clubhouse also allow young people to see for themselves how exciting computing and the Internet can be and help develop the necessary technology skills for today's competitive digital economy," Barret said.

The first Intel Computer Clubhouse in the Philippines opened last May 2002 at the Mater Dolorosa Parish in Makati City and approximately 300 young Filipinos have already used the facility.

After their conversation, the President proceeded to the Ceremonial Hall to lead the distribution of presidential citations and a P200,000 cash award each to the winners of Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) where four high school students from Manila Science High School and the Mindanao State University and a teacher from Iloilo won the major awards at Intel ISEF held in the United States last May.

Those who received presidential citation and cash awards were Richard Kristoffer Sanchez Manapat, Jeric Valles Macalintal and Allan Noriel Estrella. The three students of Manila Science High School won the first-prize award and \$3,000 for their physics project.

Prem Villas Fortran Moso Rara of the Integrated Developmental School – Mindanao State University in Lanao del Norte, won the second prize and \$1,500 for his microbiology project.

Dr. Josette Biyo of the Philippine Science High School in Iloilo was awarded the Intel Excellence in Teaching Award. The \$20,000 teaching grant she received will enable Dr. Biyo to conduct intensive science research workshops. She also received \$5,000 in cash and a high-performance computer.

Present during the courtesy call of Barret were Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II and Science and Technology Secretary Estrella F. Alabastro.

GMA's European trip part of RP's diplomatic commitment and economic diplomacy, says Palace

Malacañang today said the trip of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to Italy, Spain and Denmark next month is part of the country's diplomatic commitment and the forging of closer economic cooperation with the leading members of the European Community.

"If you're fulfilling this as a part of international commitment then it is necessary because once you are invited and you accept, then this is in line with protocol to go ahead with the trip," Press Secretary Ignacio "Toting" Bunye told reporters during a press briefing in Malacañang.

Bunye said the trip, which will take the President to Italy, Spain and Denmark, is also part of the President's economic diplomacy.

The President's forthcoming trip is also an investment promotion opportunity aimed at widening the access of Philippine exports like food products, electronics, garments to the European market.

According to Bunye, the President will go to the Vatican upon the invitation of Pope John Paul II, while she will be visiting Spain on the invitation of King Juan Carlos.

While in Italy, the Chief Executive will relay the country's prayers for the good health of the Pope so he can visit Manila again in January 2003 for the World Meeting of Families.

Since the President's visit to Spain is in the nature of a state visit, it would mean less expense for the government because the host country will shoulder most of the expenses.

In Copenhagen, Denmark, the President will be joining other heads of state in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), a meeting aimed at forging closer economic cooperation among Asian and European countries.

Participants to the ASEM include the heads of state and government of 10 Asian nations (Brunei Darussalam, China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) and 15 European nations (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) as well as the President of the European Commission.

The ASEM aims to provide an opportunity for leaders to exchange views on current regional and global issues. These discussions could serve as a basis for further cooperation on specific issues of mutual interest.

In the area of economic cooperation, the summit seeks to strengthen the economic relations between the two regions by taking advantage of existing complementarities and developing synergies, which would promote greater economic growth and development.

GMA, Guingona to lead Alay Lakad 2002

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. are expected to lead this year's Alay Lakad Para sa Kabataan Day, slated on Sunday, September 1, 2002 by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 168.

Government officials, civic leaders and business groups are also expected to grace this annual walk for a cause which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

The theme of this year's Alay Lakad is "HAKBANG MAMAMAYAN! Kinabukasan ng Kabataan," urging the people to step forward and be counted in helping the out-of-school youth have a better future, according to Alay Lakad Foundation Inc. (ALFI) president Frank Evaristo.

The nationwide Alay Lakad is the signature fund-raising event of the Alay Lakad Foundation and involves various government agencies, the education sector, business establishments, local government units and socio-civic organizations.

Participants will walk some two to 10 kilometers as a symbol of solidarity towards the promotion of its key advocacy of enabling and empowering the out-of-school youth to become responsible and productive citizens. This year's host civic organization is the Rotary International Districts 3810 and 3830, with the support of the Philippine Jaycees, the Lions Club International and the Kiwanis International.

As part of this year's fund-raising campaign, Alay Lakad will be selling commemorative cover as approved by Postmaster General Nicasio Rodriguez of the Philippine Postal Corporation. This is a special customized letter envelope depicting the design of Alay Lakad that can be used for mailing letters or plain souvenir to commemorate the 30th year anniversary of the Foundation.

Proceeds of this fund-raising campaign will benefit the country's out-of-school youth through scholarship assistance, skills training and livelihood programs.

Donations will be accepted on the Walk Day itself, Sunday, September 1, at the Quirino Grandstand, Rizal Park. For inquiries and other details, call the ALFI National Office at 523-1539 or 522-6134.

Marohombsar killed in a shootout, not rubout, Palace says

Malacañang today brushed aside reports that notorious kidnap for ransom gang leader Faisal Marohombsar was killed in a rubout and not in a firefight with elements of the police and the military in Magallanes, Cavite last Sunday.

In his regular press briefing in Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that during the combined military and police rescue operations, one of the team members, T/Sgt. Willie Madayag, was wounded.

"You don't have a rubout where one of your men is also shot," Bunye said.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who went to Magallanes, Cavite to personally congratulate the rescue team, even inspected the injuries suffered by Madayag in his shoulder.

In a related development, Bunye also said that the Philippine government will not insist on its request for a copy of the video footage taken by US intelligence on the killing of Abu Sayyaf spokesman Abu Sabaya.

"We understand the reluctance of the US government to release the video footage for public viewing. So, we will not insist," Bunye said.

But Bunye said that based on the video footage, which was viewed by the President and corroborated by testimonies of several witnesses, Sabaya is dead.

Earlier, US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone said that the US government would not release the video footage for security reasons.

GMA statement of postponement of Europe trip

While I firmly believe in the importance of personally carrying out the message of trade, investment and other opportunities in the Philippines to international audiences, as President, my priority is always where I am needed the most. Given the fact that some members of the Economic Team will be meeting with a number of heads of state in October at the APEC meeting in Mexico, I have decided to postpone my visit to Europe, originally planned for this coming month. I look forward to meeting our European friends at a later date.

In remaining in the Philippines, I will focus on ensuring that our economic plan that was so successful last year remains on track. There has been a number of developments, namely on the fiscal and peace and order fronts, that require my continued stewardship. The appointment of a new BIR Commissioner, continued implementation of tax collection measures and related reforms and concurrent expenditure reductions all require the public will and support of the Executive Office to push through so that results are being brought to bear as quickly as possible. The same applies to our campaign for peace and order in all parts of the country. We have the Abu Sayyaf and criminal groups on the run but we cannot rest. We need to follow through and ensure that threats such as this are completely eliminated, once and for all.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 26, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033932/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug26.htm>

The President's Day: August 27, 2002

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- **GMA warns swindlers posing as employees of Office of the President, DBM**
- **GMA presents six rice hijackers to media**
- **GMA urges House, Senate to pass 2 priority economic bills**
- **GMA names Parayno as new B.I.R. Commissioner**
- **Filipino businessmen remain bullish on RP economy during fourth quarter**

GMA warns swindlers posing as employees of Office of the President, DBM

The President said she would show to the people, particularly well-meaning private businessmen, that government transactions follow standard operating procedures that are transparent and are in accordance with laws.

“Extortionists and so-called facilitators do not have a place under our system. Let this be a warning to those who continue to engage in this practice. We will not rest until all of you are locked up in jail,” she said.

During the press briefing at the DBM building in Malacañang, the President presented architect Manuel Tolentino following an entrapment undertaken by the Special Project Group-Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (SPG-PAOCC), Regional Intelligence Special Operation Office (RISOO), Regional Intelligence and Investigation Division (RIID), and the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO).

The entrapment followed a complaint filed by a private contractor who said that Tolentino demanded P200,000 as facilitation expenses for the immediate release of funds from DBM.

According to the contractor, Tolentino also claimed that he could get an approval of a proposed project in Sibulan, Negros Oriental from the OP and that he can likewise facilitate the release of the needed documents because of his strong connections with the Office of the First Gentleman, Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo.

The President said the latest arrest is a manifestation that her administration is also focusing on white-collar crimes, citing the recent discovery of tax scams in the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

The President noted that this is not the first time that they have apprehended swindlers who introduce themselves as DBM employees.

She said the police are on the lookout for the swindlers’ “connections” in the two government offices.

The President further noted that there are two kinds of such racket in the DBM. The first type, she said, is perpetrated by a swindler who approaches a local government official, claiming that he facilitated the approval of his Special Allotment Release Order SARO when, in fact, it has been approved without a need to lobby for it.

The President noted that these people even have authentic copies of SAROs, complete with the appropriate bar codes, bolstering the suspicion that they have connections inside the offices.

The other modus operandi, the President said, is that the swindler produces a totally fake SARO. “Because of these, there are many who are complaining,” she said.

“Nananawagan ako sa mga LGUs. Huwag kayong maniniwala kung may nagpupunta sa inyo sinasabi ‘O ilalakad ko ang SARO mo bigyan mo ako ng porsyento.’ Hindi ganoon yun. Lalo na yung malalaking amount, ako mismo ang nagaapprove doon at ako’y hindi humihingi ng porsyento, kaya huwag kayong magbigay ng porsyento kahit kanino (I am calling on the LGUs not to believe those people who approach them and claim that they can facilitate

their SAROs in exchange for a commission. That is not how we work. I personally approve SAROs especially if the amount involved is big, and I don't ask for a commission)," the President said.

"Ginagamit na naman ang pangalan ng aking asawa. Di mas lalong hinuhuli natin pag ginagamit ang pangalan ng aking asawa (They are using again the name of my husband, which is why we are more determined to push harder to catch them)," she said.

GMA presents six rice hijackers to media

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presented to the media six suspected hijackers who were allegedly victimizing rice traders transporting their products along the Maharlika Highway in Gapan, Nueva Ecija.

The hijackers were arrested after the owner of a 10-wheeler truck carrying 500 sacks of rice informed the Bulacan Police Traffic Management Office of the hijacking of his vehicle and its cargo.

The suspects were apprehended yesterday at an abandoned iceplant in Barangay Bayanihan in Gapan while the truck was later found abandoned along Gapan-Olongapo Road. The arresting team was composed of members of the Regional Traffic Management Office 3 in Central Luzon and the Bulacan Traffic Management Group (TMG) led by Police Superintendent Vladimir Kahulugan and Police Inspectors Serafin Macaraig and Rhoderick Maniego.

The six suspects were identified as Diorico Pacaanas, Domingo de Roma, Delfin Gutierrez, Batoy Camacho, Angelou Camacho and Romeo Santaren.

Recovered from the suspects were 46 sacks of rice and P12,170 in cash. Appropriate charges are being prepared against the suspects.

In her brief remarks, the President said she appreciates the efforts of the TMG and the other organizations that are focusing on the anti-crime campaign she ordered Philippine National Police chief Director Gen. Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. to launch recently.

"Big crimes like kidnapping, crimes that affect ordinary people like hijacking, blue-collar crimes, white-collar crimes. I have said in my State of the Nation Address that we have to have decisive victories in all these fronts," the President said.

GMA urges House, Senate to pass 2 priority economic bills

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the leaders of Congress to enact two priority economic measures – the Transco (Transmission Corporation) franchise bill, and the complementary securitization bill and special purpose asset vehicle (SPAV) bill — before Congress takes its recess on September 7.

In the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) meeting which she presided over in Malacañang this morning, the President emphasized the need for confidence-building measures in order to address the problems that the country is now facing.

"This is to counter the currency and financial pressure the Philippines faces arising from the turmoil in Brazil and Argentina and the budget deficit of the national government," the President said.

"So if the House of Representatives could pass these two bills this week, I hope that the Senate could pass it next week," the President said.

The President said that now that the ruling coalition has the majority in both houses of Congress, it would not be difficult to pass these bills.

The immediate passage of these bills will show to the world that the Philippines is still a functioning economy, the President further said.

Secretary Gabriel Claudio, Presidential Legislative Adviser and head of the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office (PLLO), also reported to the LEDAC that the deliberation of one common legislative agenda measure, the Free Patents Law, has been concluded at the level of the bicameral conference committee of Congress.

This will pave the way for the ratification of the bicameral report, Claudio said.

The President explained that the Free Patents Law is part of the De Soto reforms which will formalize informal settlers ownership of the land they occupy.

“Therefore this will allow the poor to have access to lands,” the President said, stressing that the law is a very important pro-poor measure.

The President likewise asked Congress to pass vital legislations, a number of which are already in advanced stages, and with only a concerted push, can actually be enacted even before Congress takes its first break for the second regular session on September 7.

These are the Magna Carta for Barangay Business Enterprises, the proposed Housing and Urban Reform Act, and the removal of documentary stamp tax on secondary transactions.

GMA names Parayno as new B.I.R. Commissioner

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has formally appointed former Customs Commissioner Guillermo Parayno as the next Commissioner of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

In his press briefing this afternoon, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that the President announced Parayno’s appointment Monday night.

Bunye said that Parayno, who served as customs commissioner during the term of former President Fidel V. Ramos, is expected to institute reforms at the BIR and at the same time address the collection problems of the agency.

Parayno will be taking over the position vacated by BIR Commissioner Rene Banez.

According to Bunye, Parayno will wind up his affairs in his present post and will take his oath of office around September 15.

Parayno is at present consultant of the World Bank for its projects in several Central Asian countries.

Previous to his stint at the Bureau of Customs, Parayno was an officer of the Armed Forces of the Philippines where he rose to the rank of colonel before he retired.

He is a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, Class 1971.

Filipino businessmen remain bullish on RP economy during fourth quarter

Majority of the respondents to the Business Expectations Survey (BES) conducted in July by the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP) are bullish on the performance of the economy during the fourth quarter of this year.

In a report to Malacañang, the BSP said the optimistic outlook of the BES respondents for the last quarter of the year is based on their anticipation of increases in consumer demand during the Christmas season as well as on the expected inflow of dollar remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

The respondents also said that they were optimistic that the economy will continue to grow in the third quarter, but with a slight softening in business activity due mainly to poor weather conditions usually observed during the period.

In the third quarter, the respondents expect the economy to grow as more firms projected higher volume of production and total orders. Other business-related factors support this positive trend as the indices on credit access and financial conditions showed improving values.

The BSP said that in the fourth quarter, the bullish outlook is shared by firms from all sectors of the economy, particularly services and industry.

In addition to positive seasonal factors, other signs of improving economic growth were evident, the BSP said, citing as example the employment index which “entered positive territory” for the first time in five quarters, with more firms planning to hire more workers by yearend.

At the same time, 10.7 percent of respondent firms indicated expansion plans for the quarter. As a result of improving demand and business activity, respondents anticipate higher borrowing and inflation rates during the period, the BSP said.

The respondents also expect the peso to strengthen from a rebound in foreign exchange inflows at yearend, particularly from remittances of OFWs.

The survey results showed that the confidence index for the industry sector improved to 22.0 percent from 12.0 percent in the previous quarter. On the other hand, confidence indices for trade and services declined but remained positive.

The confidence index for the construction sector remained negative at 3.3 percent, but was an improvement from the negative 4.5 percent posted in the second quarter, the BSP said.

Stiff competition and insufficient demand remained the primary factors that limit production and business activity, according to about 80 percent of the respondent firms. Other factors cited by around one-third of respondent firms are access to credit, financial problems and labor problems.

Starting with the second quarter of 2001, the BSP has conducted the BES using the harmonized set of core questions for Asian countries suggested by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The survey covers 12 major industry groups (grouped into 4 major economic sectors), with firms drawn from the top 3,000 corporations in Metro Manila as listed by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The third quarter survey, which was conducted in July 2002 with 251 respondent firms, had a 41.8 percent response rate.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: August 27, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033947/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug27.htm>

The President's Day: August 28, 2002

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- **GMA launches sustained, high-intensity war on drugs**
- **Repatriates to welcome GMA in Bongao visit**
- **GMA to award land titles to 103 CARP families**
- **GMA names ex-Congressman Jaafar as crisis manager on the Mindanao refugee problem**
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GMA grants reprieve to 3 death convicts

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has granted a reprieve to three death convicts and reset their execution to a later date.

All the three convicts who were granted the presidential reprieve were meted the death penalty for the crime of rape.

One of the convicts, Rolando Pagdayawon y Salabaria, was scheduled for execution on Aug. 30, 2002. He was granted a reprieve until Nov. 28, 2002.

Pagdayawon was meted the death penalty by the Regional Trial Court (RTC), Branch 33, of Davao City

Earlier, Malacañang announced that the President would stay the execution of Pagdayawon in deference to the birthday of Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin who has been urging the government to abolish the death penalty.

The second convict granted a reprieve was Eddie Sernadilla y Ventires whose execution was scheduled on Sept. 3, 2002. His execution has been reset to Dec. 2, 2002.

Sernadilla was meted the death penalty by RTC, Branch 57, of San Carlos City, Pangasinan.

The third convict whose death sentence has been temporarily suspended was Filomeno Serrano y Callado. He was scheduled to be administered the lethal injection on Sept. 20, 2002 but this was moved to Dec. 19, 2002.

Serrano was sentenced to death by RTC, Branch 265, of Pasig City.

The President said that the reprieve given to the three death convicts would give the Office of the President additional time "to conduct a thorough study in order to determine if executive clemency may be extended to the prisoners."

The power of the President to grant a reprieve or executive clemency is provided for under Section 19, Article VII of the Philippine Constitution.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that the presidential order granting the reprieve, which was signed Tuesday, would be forwarded today to the Department of Justice.

GMA launches sustained, high-intensity war on drugs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo launched today a “sustained and high-intensity campaign” against illegal drugs in the country as part of her administration’s no-letup drive against all forms of criminality and terrorism.

The President announced the launching of another important leg of the government’s intensified war against criminality as she emerged from a meeting this morning with the top officials of the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) and the Philippine Drugs Enforcement Agency (PDEA) at the Music Room in Malacañang.

“I want to announce this as the launch of what’s going to be a very, very sustained and high-intensity drug campaign,” the President told reporters after the meeting.

An Order of Battle listing main target personalities and syndicates similar to the one drawn up during the launching of the anti-kidnapping campaign will be finalized soon in the city, town and barangay levels.

The President said there is now a need to put more stress on the anti-drug campaign following the series of successful campaigns against kidnapping and other criminal gangs, particularly the group of Faisal Marohombsar, in the course of rescuing their last victim, Patricia Chong.

Marohombsar was killed during a shootout with combined Philippine National Police-Armed Forces of the Philippines elements in Magallanes, Cavite last Sunday.

“Many of those rogues that you would see behind me during many of the times when I went to the police to congratulate them, many of them were on drugs when they were arrested. They were on drugs when they were doing rape. They were on drugs when they were doing their crimes,” she said.

The President noted that the drug problem is an “underpinning problem” of the whole peace and order problem in the country.

“This is a very important leg of our peace and order campaign,” the President told reporters.

At the same time, President Macapagal-Arroyo expressed optimism that the combined efforts of the revitalized DDB and the newly-created PDEA would result in an effective campaign against the drug menace.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, who also attended the DDB-PDEA meeting, said the value of the illegal drug trade in the country is estimated at P250 billion to P300 billion a year.

This coming Sunday (Sept. 1), Lina said the President will join them in the presentation and validation of existing drug syndicates in the country.

According to him, the process of presenting and validating drug syndicates will be similar to the process that the government went through with the kidnap-for-ransom syndicates.

“There’s a list already but we have to validate and we have to go to the process,” Lina said.

He explained that in every city and municipality, there will be an identification of pushers and users so that the police will know who to place under surveillance and arrest later on.

“We will do our best to come up with an order of battle per municipality and city,” Lina said, adding that drug syndicates have existing networks down to the barangay level.

While other countries have declared year 2020 as the target year when they can declare themselves as drug-free, the Philippines, according to Lina, has declared 2010 as the year where the country could be drug-free.

However, the DILG secretary said there is a growing consensus among the members of the DDB to advance the said date to 2005.

During the meeting with the President, Lina said the PDEA had already arrested 31 people, 23 of which are drugs pushers and one financier.

Lina added that PDEA operatives also confiscated more than P16 million worth of various illegal drugs and has caused the filing of 16 separate cases in court.

He said the DILG is now reorganizing and revitalizing the Anti-Drug Abuse Councils (ADACs) nationwide at the level of the province, city, municipality and barangay in response to the President's call made in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 22.

In her SONA, the President stressed that in the war against drug trade, "there will be no compromise and no quarter, not for fear or favor."

Repatriates to welcome GMA in Bongao visit

BONGAO, Tawi-Tawi – Thousands of Filipino repatriates who arrived here from Malaysia are set to see and talk with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo when she visits this town on Thursday (August 29).

This will be the President's first visit to the area since she was sworn in as the country's Chief Executive on January 21, 2001.

The repatriates, who arrived from Malaysia, would like to tell the President their problems and the hardships they went through after they left the port area of Sandakan in Sabah, a town official said.

They needed adequate food, clothing, shelter, medicine and livelihood.

"But most of all, we need the assurance that we are most welcome and most accepted in our country, our homeland," said a middle-aged woman who was among those who opted to flee Sandakan after authorities carried out the deportation of some 300,000 illegal aliens in Malaysia.

"We know the President can fill this need," she said.

The repatriates used to live in Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan, the Zamboanga peninsula and other Mindanao provinces before they sought work in Sabah.

Some of them have fled Mindanao following the outbreak of the Bangsamoro rebellion in the early '70s, and sailed to Sandakan in search for greener pastures.

However, their dreams and aspirations were cut short by their expulsion by the Malaysia government. Many children born there sailed home to the Philippines with their parent-repatriates.

"We want to start productive lives anew in our places of birth, if we could no longer be accommodated in Malaysia, where many of us have been working since the early '70s," Hamid Abdullah, 36, a repatriate from Sulu, said.

Leon Omoso, regional director of the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) in Western Mindanao, earlier reported that some 1,497 of the repatriates arrived here Monday morning aboard a navy boat.

Omoso cited Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) figures that said more repatriates were expected to arrive in batches soon.

He said this was the first time repatriates were being processed here. Earlier, the documentation of the deportees were done in Zamboanga City.

The DSWD said it had been distributing foodstuffs, clothing and medicines to repatriates who have been coming here since February.

GMA to award land titles to 103 CARP families

ZAMBOANGA CITY – On Thursday (August 29) afternoon, a total of 103 agrarian reform family-beneficiaries in Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga Sibugay provinces will finally own the land they have been living on and tilling all these years.

They will personally receive from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo their land titles in a program marking the celebration of the 43rd founding anniversary of the town of Kumalarang, Zamboanga del Sur.

The President is expected to join the people of Kumalarang at the Kumalarang National High School gym, after attending another appointment with the people of Sergio Osmeña, Sr. town in Zamboanga del Norte.

A report from the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) in Western Mindanao said the awarding of the land patents and titles supported the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

The President, in her State of the Nation Address, had vowed to eradicate poverty in the country within the decade. Part of the promise, much of which had been implemented even beyond targets, was the distribution of land to both the urban and rural poor.

The PIA, quoting the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Zamboanga del Sur provincial office, said the land distribution fell under the DENR's "Handog Titulo" program.

The program assures small-time farmers security over the lands they cultivate. The land patents and titles they get serve as their evidence of ownership.

At the same time, beneficiaries may use the land documents as instruments of collateral for agricultural and small-scale livelihood programs from banks and other financial institutions.

GMA names ex-Congressman Jaafar as crisis manager on the Mindanao refugee problem

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the appointment of former Tawi-Tawi Congressman Nur Jaafar as the government's crisis manager on the repatriation of thousands of undocumented Filipinos from Sabah to Mindanao.

In her weekly luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President also announced that she would be flying to Bongao, Tawi-Tawi tomorrow to personally look into situation.

"That's why I am going to Bongao. I am going to preside over a meeting with officials of concerned agencies and then make an ocular inspection," the President said.

The President said that Jaafar would be coordinating with the regional directors of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Health (DOH) as well as with officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on how to handle the orderly repatriation of the Filipinos to their final destinations.

Majority of the repatriates are from Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan, the Zamboanga peninsula and other Mindanao provinces before they migrated to Sabah to find employment.

The President said she would also be sending Jaafar to Sandakan in Sabah so that he can look at the issue from the Malaysian side.

The President said that the government would be sending doctors on board Philippine Navy ships that would fetch the refugees to safeguard their health conditions, especially among the children.

According to the President, she has ordered that the entry point of refugees coming home through special trips conducted by the PN to be in Bongao. She said that only those repatriates who will be taking the commercial boats will land in Zamboanga City.

GMA confident RP, Malaysia can work together to make repatriation of immigrants orderly

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today that she is confident the Philippines and Malaysia can work together to make the repatriation of undocumented Filipinos to Mindanao in an orderly manner.

“If we work together, we will be able to make it much, much more orderly, as it has been orderly in the past,” the President said in her weekly luncheon meeting with the Malacañang Press Corps.

The President said that her impression, from the report of Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, is that Malaysian authorities were also unhappy over the manner that the repatriation has been conducted.

She was referring to news reports that some of the Filipino deportees have been maltreated while in detention centers in Sandakan, Sabah before their repatriation to the Philippines.

“My impression is that even the Malaysian officials were abhorred with what they saw on TV,” the President said.

The President said that Malaysian authorities have assured Secretary Ople that they would handle the situation in a humane way.

“That is why Secretary Ople has said that there is some gap between what they (Malaysian authorities) assured him and what actually happened, and he would like to call their attention to that,” the President said.

The President also confirmed that Malaysia is willing to welcome Filipino workers provided they are properly documented, adding that in peninsular Malaysia, there are many Filipino workers and they don't have problems.

GMA to interact with repatriates from Malaysia, distribute relief goods

BONGAO, Tawi-Tawi – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will personally welcome another batch of some 1,400 repatriates from Malaysia who are expected to land here tomorrow from Sabah.

The President, who is due to arrive here in the morning, will also interact with this new batch of repatriates and those who arrived earlier and find out for herself the problems they are faced with and offer solutions.

She will also distribute relief goods and medical supplies to the Filipinos expelled from Malaysia for lack of proper documentation.

According to the regional office of the Department of Labor and Employment, the President has directed DOLE and local government officials here to coordinate efforts in setting up livelihood projects that will benefit the repatriates and their families.

The Department of Foreign Affairs, in response to the President's order, also informed Malacañang that it is setting up a processing center here to facilitate the documentation of Filipino travelers and workers.

The center will assist a similar office in Zamboanga in processing documents for travelers and workers within two to four days.

Former Rep. Nur Jaafar, whom the President appointed as the crisis manager on the repatriation of the undocumented Filipinos, also said the government is preparing a plan of action for the remaining 80,000 Filipinos in Sabah.

GMA appoints Morales, Callejo to Supreme Court

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has appointed Court of Appeals Justices Conchita Morales and Romeo Callejo, Sr. to fill up two of the three vacancies in the Supreme Court.

The President said the new Supreme Court justices were the two topnotchers in the list submitted by the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC),

Morales will replace Justice Jose Melo who retired last May 28, 2002 while Callejo will take the place of Justice Sabino de Leon, Jr. who retired last June 9, 2002.

In his press briefing this afternoon, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said under the Constitution, any vacancy in the Supreme Court must be filled within 90 days from its occurrence from among the list of nominees of the JBC.

Bunye said that in a letter dated August 14, 2002, the JBC submitted a list of nine nominees which was received by the Office of the President on August 15.

CA Justices Morales and Callejo were tied for first place as they both received the unanimous vote of seven JBC members, Bunye said.

A graduate of the University of the Philippines (UP) College of Law, Morales has been in the judiciary for 19 years, eight years in the Court of Appeals and 11 years with the Regional Trial Court.

Prior to her appointment to the high tribunal, Morales was the chairman of the CA's seventh division.

Morales was born in Paoay, Ilocos Norte on June 19, 1941.

Callejo, Sr. has served 16 years in the judiciary, eight years in the Court of Appeals and eight years as an RTC judge. He was the chairman of the CA's 11th division.

A graduate of the San Beda College, Callejo has taught law in San Beda, Ateneo de Manila University and the Far Eastern University.

He was born in Sta. Lucia, Ilocos Sur on April 28, 1937.

GOCC, GFI execs have complied with M.O. 20, PAGC says

Press Secretary Ignacio "Toting" Bunye today said a good number of officials have already complied with the President's directive through Memorandum Order No. 20, requiring all government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), Government Financial Institutions (GFIs) and subsidiaries exempted from the salary standardization law (SSL) to implement pay rationalization in all senior officer positions.

The Press Secretary issued the statement in the wake of news reports that Presidential Anti-Graft Commission Chairman Dario Rama has started the investigation of some government owned and controlled corporations on their compliance with the SSL.

“We would like to point out that this is merely an inquiry into the implementation of Memorandum Order No. 20 requiring all government- owned and controlled corporations to rationalize their salary structures,” Bunye said during a press briefing this afternoon at Malacañang.

Bunye said the PAGC’s move to conduct an investigation on the matter is in line with the administration’s commitment to good governance, which is being espoused by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

“A good number of officials covered by the inquiry have already submitted their explanations, among them Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Gov. Rafael Buenaventura,” he said.

Under MO No. 20, the President said Administrative Order No. 5, which she issued shortly after assumption into office on Jan. 20, 2001, directs the adoption of fiscal discipline measures in the public sector to sustain economic recovery and address the fiscal deficit problem.

“There is a need to channel scarce resources of the government into more priority and critical concerns like poverty reduction, agriculture modernization and agrarian reform, information and communication technology, tourism, peace and order,” according to the President.

The President said the re-channeling of government resources necessitates looking at compensation packages of GOCCs and GFIs that are exempt from or do not follow the SSL.

MO No. 20 also said that a preliminary review was conducted on the pay practices of certain GOCCs, GFIs and subsidiaries in their officer positions to determine pay disparity with comparable positions in national government agencies (NGAs).

GMA welcomes Japanese invitation to take part in Expo 2002

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today welcomed the invitation of the Japanese government for the participation of the Philippines in the World Expo in 2005.

“We will be very happy to participate,” the President told Mikio Shimoji, Parliament Secretary of Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), who called on her at the Music Room in Malacañang.

Several government agencies led by the Department of Tourism (DOT) are already in the process of coordinating with their respective counterparts in Japan for the preparation of the Philippine participation in the said event to be hosted by Japan.

According to Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II who was present in the meeting, the Philippines had earlier requested the Japanese government for an Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in order to enable the country to have a good presentation in the upcoming international trade fair.

During their meeting, Shimoji also asked the President to look into the possibility of establishing a direct flight between Manila and Okinawa in view of the significant number of Okinawans residing in the Philippines and the sizeable influx of Japanese tourists to the country.

“That’s a good idea. If it will improve the Japanese visits to the Philippines, we can ask the Secretary of Transportation to provide more flights,” President Macapagal-Arroyo told the visiting Japanese official.

The Chief Executive pointed out that the policy of her administration is to promote tourism and it was for that purpose that the government liberalized its air policy.

For his part, Shimoji informed the President that majority of the chief executive officers of the Japanese companies here in the Philippines are very happy about the quality of Filipino workers.

He said the Japanese business executives also acknowledged the President's sincere efforts against criminality and terrorism.

The President assured the Japanese official that her administration would continue to work hard in resolving the issue of criminality and terrorism.

Shimoji likewise offered to help facilitate the issue of human resource exchange program which was discussed by the President with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

The Japanese official, who arrived here last August 26, said he has learned to like the Philippines and its people and promised to visit the country more often.

Aside from Shimoji and Roxas, among those present during the meeting were Sadahiro Sugita, METI director for Asia and the Pacific; Yoshimasa Sakai, METI deputy director for Trade and Investment Facilitation Division; Trade and Industry Undersecretary Tomas Aquino and Bureau of International Trade Relations Director Ramon Cabigting.

Sergio Osmeña, Sr., Kumalarang folk share dev't goals

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The towns of Sergio Osmeña, Sr. and Kumalarang in the Zamboanga peninsula may be poles apart. But on Thursday (August 29), their residents will share a common event – a rare yet memorable visit from the country's Chief Executive.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is set to arrive in Sergio Osmeña, Sr., dubbed as a potential landlocked summer capital in Mindanao, in Zamboanga del Norte and in Kumalarang, a progressive agricultural beehive facing the coast of Dumaguiling Bay, in Zamboanga del Sur.

Fresh from a scheduled mid-morning rendezvous with Filipino repatriates from Malaysia in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, the President will jump off for the two towns from Pagadian.

Sergio Osmeña Sr. is some six to seven hours by road up north from Pagadian City while Kumalarang may be reached in three to four hours down southeast from Pagadian City. Sergio Osmeña, Sr. is only two hours nearer to Dipolog City.

What makes the twin visit more significant is the President's desire to uplift the lives of the indigenous Filipino people, particularly the poor.

According to Leon Omoso, regional director of the Philippine Information Agency (PIA), both towns were once strongholds of the Subanen tribesmen.

In due time, many of the lumads (highlanders) of Sergio Osmeña, Sr. and Kumalarang were converted to the Christian and Islamic faiths, respectively; though a number clung to the tribe's unique customs and traditions, Omoso said.

This immersion into a different cultural and social psyche, however, did not obliterate but instead strengthened the blood of the Subanen in them, he added.

On Thursday, the Subanens will once more come to the fore – with honor and dignity – to receive from the President the realization of their dreams, that is to own the piece of land they have nurtured as their home and source of farming livelihood.

Beside this, the President is expected to award to them socio-economic programs and projects intended to increase their chances of getting a better share of the national wealth.

The President may also take up the eco-tourism potentials of Sergio Osmeña, Sr. (population: 39,437) and Kumalarang (population: 27,680).

The first boasts of its cool weather and the beauty of Mt. Malindang. The second takes pride in its Cabug Island and Sicade Falls.

These natural wonders are coupled by the edible colors almost found everywhere – gold for palay and corn, green for most fruits and vegetables among others.

Both towns contribute to the agricultural productivity in the area, thus helping boost the government's drive to attain food sufficiency.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 28, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514033959/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug28.htm>

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Bunye says issue on PAGC inquiry on GOCC, GFI execs 'overblown'

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today described as "overblown" the reaction of some sectors to the inquiry conducted by the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) on the compliance with Memorandum Order No. 20.

In an interview, Bunye also appealed to the politicians not to ride on the action taken by the PAGC so as not to muddle the issue.

"Masyado lang overblown itong controversy na ito at maraming sumasakay na mga politiko at talagang parang ginatungan pa nila iyong magkabilang panig (The controversy is just overblown and a number of politicians are adding fire to both sides)," Bunye said.

Bunye reiterated that a number of the 15 GOCC and GFI executives cited by the PAGC in its charge sheet have already substantially complied with M.O. 20 and have justified their salaries, including Governor Rafael Buenaventura of the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP).

"Anyway, let's be sober about this thing. There is nothing unusual about what is going on," Bunye said.

According to Bunye, the PAGC's move to conduct an investigation on the matter is in line with the administration's commitment to good governance as espoused by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

M.O. 20 requires all executives of GOCCs, GFIs, and their subsidiaries, who are exempted from the salary standardization law, to rationalize their salary structures.

The executives are also required to submit their justification if they want their present salary structures to be retained.

Economy turns in a surprise, exceeds growth projections in 2nd quarter

The economy expanded at a rate exceeding government projections during the second quarter of this year, raising hopes that the budget deficit will be contained and whole-year growth targets attained.

"The economy turned in a pleasant surprise in the second quarter by growing at a rate that exceeded even NEDA's projections," National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Director-General Dante B. Canlas said today.

"Given the growth rates of 4.5 percent and 5.2 percent in real GDP and GNP, respectively, the economy is on track to meet the government's whole year growth projections: 4 to 4.5 percent for real GDP and 5 to 5.5 percent for real GNP," said Canlas, who is also socioeconomic planning secretary.

In the first half of the year, the average growth rates are 4.1 percent for real GDP and 4.7 percent for real GNP.

The broad-based nature of the expansion is encouraging, Canlas said.

“Looking at aggregate supply, although agriculture slowed down in the second quarter, industry recovered strongly,” he said. Services, meanwhile, continued to gain strength, he added.

On the aggregate-demand side, the decline in investment slowed down in the second quarter, suggesting a bottoming out, Canlas said.

With the help of Congress, which commits to enact key economic reform bills into laws, such as the Transmission Corporation (Transco) franchise and the Special Purpose Asset Vehicle (SPAV), “investments may hit positive territory in the second half of the year,” the NEDA head said.

“Economic performance as of the second semester indicates that the economic program of the administration is working. The deficit-reduction program will thus continue,” he added.

The output-growth figures that the National Statistical Coordination Board just released raises the likelihood that the target deficit-to-GDP ratio of 3.3 percent in 2002 will be realized, Canlas said.

This fiscal stance and a monetary policy rule based on maintaining price stability, plus the commitment to long-term structural reforms, promote private sector-led growth, which is vital to the economy’s continuing expansion, Canlas said.

GMA begins two-day visit to Mindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today braved low dark clouds and a slight drizzle as she planed in here to begin a two-day visit to different parts of Mindanao in her bid to quickly address issues affecting peace and development in the area.

The plane bearing the President landed at about 10:45 a.m. at the Edwin Andrews Air Base (EAAB).

She was given the usual planeside honors, after which she greeted her welcomers, among whom were regional and local officials, a group from the city’s cooperative federation and students of the Ateneo de Zamboanga University.

After pleasantries with welcoming officials, the President presided over a closed-door meeting with Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat and Rep. Celso Lobregat over the Sabah Filipino repatriation issue and with the military on ongoing anti-terrorist operations in Mindanao, particularly Sulu.

She took off for Bongao, Tawi-Tawi shortly before noon when the weather cleared.

The President is scheduled to meet some 1,400 Filipino repatriates aboard a Navy boat expected to arrive today at the Bongao port.

However, there were reports that the Navy boat was stranded in Mapun Island off Bongao due to harsh sea conditions and bad weather.

She will also look into the conditions of and personally lend a hand to ease the plight of some 1,500 Filipinos who were repatriated this week from Sandakan in Sabah.

While in Tawi-Tawi, she is expected to lead other officials in giving out emergency food, clothing and medicine aid to the repatriates, who included children, waiting for the processing of their papers.

From Bongao, the President will hop off to Pagadian City and proceed to Sergio Osmeña Sr. town in Zamboanga del Norte where she will attend a program.

Later, she will address the people of Kumaralang, Zamboanga del Sur, which celebrates its 43rd founding anniversary today.

The President is set to return to and spend the night in Pagadian City.

Before leaving tomorrow (August 30) for Surigao City, she will lead officials in the ground-breaking rites for the Iligan City-Aurora, Zamboanga del Sur road.

In Surigao, the President is set to attend the Mindanao Business conference and grace another program in Butuan City.

She will also find time to confer with provincial and local officials and the media to discuss concerns in both cities.

GMA visit raises hopes for faster solutions to Zamboanga City problems on repatriates

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo here today, her fourth since she became the country's Chief Executive, bodes well for the city government.

This was the assessment of city officials who hoped that the President's visit would relieve the locality from burdens spawned by the sudden entry of thousands of Filipino repatriates from Sandakan, Sabah, Malaysia.

City Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat today discussed with the President and other officials possible programs that would put an end to the woes, both of the repatriates and city residents.

The local officials said having the processing of the documents of the repatriates done in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi was a good start. Earlier, the processing was made here.

Most of the repatriates hail from Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan that are parts of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao while Zamboanga City is in the Western Mindanao region.

Except for the regular help from concerned agencies, the city government has found it hard to secure enough funds to help feed, clothe and house the repatriates.

Local police records even showed that the incidence of petty crimes, many of these perpetrated by children of repatriates, rose slightly.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development regional office said it had spent some P10 million for the repatriates since 1995.

At the same time, the city government has been contending with the influx of migrants from neighboring Zamboanga del Norte province, where recent military operations against the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group were conducted.

Another positive move to ease problems brought about by the repatriation issue was the creation of Task Force Deportees that Lobregat headed.

Lobregat hoped to align the task force's objectives with the programs of the President to address the matter.

The mayor said the President had expressed support to the task force, but the latter wanted officials to institute the more organized and orderly handling of the arrival of the repatriates.

She noted the President's "deep concern" for the city, which faced problems on what to do with some 20,000 repatriates who landed at the port of Zamboanga after fleeing from Sandakan, Sabah, since January.

Lobregat said the President would personally assess the extent of the problem.

President Macapagal-Arroyo flew from here to Bongao, Tawi-Tawi shortly before noon.

She said she wanted to look into the conditions of more than 3,000 Filipino repatriates who arrived this week from Sandakan in Navy boats.

The Malaysian government is set to banish some 300,000 illegal aliens from Sabah after giving them a four-month notice to leave or face deportation.

Statement of Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye

I would like to take exception to reports that the President ordered the investigation of any government officials for violation of Memorandum No. 20, dated June 25, 2001, which directs head of GOCCs and GFIs and their subsidiaries to implement a pay rationalization plan for all senior officer positions. The MO mandates the reduction of pay scales of senior officers and suspends the grant of salary increases and other benefits unless authorized by the President.

The President ordered no such investigation. The fact is that the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission, acting on its own behest and initiative, is conducting a formal inquiry into the compliance of GFIs and GOCCs with the Memorandum Order. This is part of the job of the PAGC, to check on the status of implementation of pertinent Presidential issuances.

There is no point in making a mountain out of this molehill. The officials concerned are complying with the President's instructions and are working closely with the PAGC to resolve the issue.

Gov't drafts comprehensive peace pact with NDF

The government has come up with the final draft of the single comprehensive peace agreement with the National Democratic Front, proving that while formal peace talks have been suspended, lines of communications remain open between parties, Press Secretary Ignacio "Toting" Bunye said.

In his regular press briefing this afternoon, Bunye said the government peace panel met this morning with the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS), wherein the draft was presented.

During the meeting, Bunye said, the COCIS has given itself one week to submit comments on the draft agreement.

Bunye said the government panel has expressed optimism that despite the suspension of the formal talks, it is "still moving as expected."

"Our position on the matter remains the same that while the formal talks have been suspended, our lines of communication remain open," Bunye said.

Bunye noted that the President would like to have attained a single and comprehensive peace accord, "in effect discard(ing) the piecemeal type of agreement" and giving way for the attainment of peace finally.

Peace talks were suspended after the New People's Army, the armed wing of the communist movement, assassinated two congressmen last year.

Before they were suspended last June, the talks were focused on socio-economic reforms.

This would have been followed by discussions on political and electoral reforms and, finally, the disposition of forces.

GMA plans to send FVR to Malaysia to talk to Mahathir on Filipino repatriate issue

BONGAO, Tawi-Tawi — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today disclosed she would ask former President Fidel V. Ramos to go to Malaysia and talk with Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on the fate of undocumented Filipinos in that neighboring state.

The President made the disclosure at the Sanga-Sanga airport where she boarded a plane that would take her to Pagadian City on the third leg of her two-day visit to Mindanao.

She had just finished conferring with local officials and some 1,500 Filipino repatriates who arrived here this morning from Sandakan, Sabah, aboard the Navy boat BRP Dagupan City.

"I plan to ask President Ramos to go to Malaysia to speak with Prime Minister Mahathir and also to the Chief Minister of Sabah about the situation so that the remaining deportations and voluntary return will be much, much smoother," she said.

This would also be "for the benefit of peace and development in Southern Philippines and in southern Asia," she added.

The President said that four more Navy vessels are scheduled to go to Sandakan between today and Saturday to fetch more repatriates.

Filipino immigration officers and doctors will accompany the repatriates on the Navy vessels so they could immediately process and attend to the health needs, respectively, of the deportees.

The Malaysian government has set August 31 as the deadline for illegal aliens in Sabah to return to their respective countries.

Malaysian government reports showed that some 300,000 illegal aliens lived and worked in Sabah through the years.

The President arrived here from Zamboanga City at about 2 p.m. and left for Pagadian City shortly before 4 p.m.

During her brief stay here, she thanked the local officials and heads of concerned agencies of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao for immediately assisting the repatriates.

"Nagpapasalamat ako sa mga mamamayan ng Tawi-Tawi, lalo na kay Governor Rashidin Halon Matba, sa buong puso nilang pagtanggap sa mga deportees (I also thank the people of Tawi-Tawi, led by Gov. Matba, for the hospitality they accorded the deportees)," she added.

On Saturday, the President said she would meet with Tawi-Tawi's leaders and heads of concerned line agencies in Malacañang on the status of the repatriates.

The meeting would follow the confirmation of former Tawi-Tawi Rep. Nur Jaafar who was named Presidential Adviser on Muslim Affairs.

Following her arrival here, the President proceeded to the Mindanao State University conference room where she presided over a closed-door meeting with military officers on the peace and order situation in Mindanao.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 29, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034011/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug29.htm>

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GMA orders coast guard to eradicate sea piracy off Zambo Del Sur

PAGADIAN CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the Philippine Coast Guard to eradicate sea piracy off Zamboanga del Sur in a bid to boost business and make the region a prime supplier of carrageenin.

The President told an audience here led by Zamboanga del Sur Gov. Aurora Cerilles and Zamboanga del Sur Rep. Filomena San Juan and the mayors of the province that she instructed Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza to launch an intensified operation against pirates in the seas off Zamboanga del Norte.

“Let’s clean up the seas of Zamboanga del Sur. Let’s clean up the pirates there,” the President ordered Mendoza.

Mrs. Arroyo said she gave the directive to Mendoza after conferring with Rep. San Juan regarding the future of the economy of the region.

Zamboanga del Sur, according to San Juan, is fast becoming a center for seaweed production. Seaweed is converted into carrageenin, which is a basic material for natural preservatives.

The President noted that seaweeds from Zamboanga del Sur could be shipped to Cebu, where a modern carrageenin production facility is located, but seaweed producers in the province could not be so because pirates abound in the seas off the region.

Mendoza, according to Mrs. Arroyo, has identified the pirates and their supporters and would be launching soon an intensified operation against them.

In the same meeting, the President stressed that her administration would always pursue a “peace goes with development” policy in Mindanao. She also noted that while her administration is pursuing peace with Muslim separatists in Mindanao, it would always be under the principles of the Constitution.

“We will not become great as a Republic, we will not become strong as a Republic, if we do not recognize that we are a multi-ethnic society,” Mrs. Arroyo said.

She stressed that terrorism and war in Mindanao is rooted in the Muslims’ perception of economic exclusion. Thus, it is important that Filipino Muslims be fully integrated into the economy and be given a chance to achieve economic development.

“It is important that we address the roots of war and terrorism, and that is economic exclusion (of Filipino Muslims),” the President said.

GMA guest at RM Awards night tomorrow

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is this year's guest of honor in the Ramon Magsaysay Awards to be held tomorrow at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

President Macapagal-Arroyo will present the medallion and the award certificate to this year's laureates: Hilario Davide, Jr., (Philippines) for Government Service; Dr. Ruth Pfau, (Pakistan) for Public Service; Dr. Cynthia Maung (Burma) for Community Leadership; Bharat Koirala (Nepal) for Journalism, Literature and Creative Communications; Venerable Pamnyun Snim (Korea) for Peace and International Understanding; and Sandeep Pandey (India) for Emergent Leadership.

This year's presentation ceremonies, which carries the theme "Making Asia A Better Place," will also feature widely-acclaimed guest artists such as pop vocalist Anna Fegi, who is singing the Philippine National Anthem *a capella*; the PLM Rondalla; the Bayanihan national folk dance company which won the Magsaysay Award for Peace and International Understanding in 1965; and noted Korean flutist Hae Won Shin.

Established in 1957, the Ramon Magsaysay Award honors the memory and leadership example of the third Philippine president. The award is given yearly individuals or organizations in Asia who manifest the same sense of selfless service that ruled the life of the late president.

Since 1958, when the first awards were given, 229 individuals and organizations, regardless of race, creed, sex or nationality, have received the award.

Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation president Carmencita Abella says "This year's six Magsaysay awardees, much like their peers before them, personify selfless leadership that is making a lasting difference towards making Asia a better place to live in."

GMA cites vital role of Butuan airport extension project in trade expansion

BUTUAN CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the importance of immediately implementing the Butuan airport extension project to spur agricultural and industrial trade between Agusan and the domestic markets.

In remarks she delivered in Cebuano before officials and Butuanons led by Mayor Leonides Therese Plaza at the Almont Inland Resort Hotel here, the President said the project should proceed "by the end of this year."

"Mahimo na extended ang airport sa Butuan. Ingon ni Mayor Plaza, ang mga produkto sa Agusan Norte ug Sur ug Butuan ang mga prutas sa Agusan adlaw-adlaw na makaadto sa laing-laing lugar sa Leyte ug mercado sa tibuok Pilipinas (The airport extension is imperative. Mayor Plaza says this will speed up trading. Agricultural products from Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur and Butuan City can daily and easily find their way to the domestic markets)," she said.

"Therefore, this will spur the development of industries here in Butuan and Agusan," she added.

The President said she was very happy over the partnership shown by the leaders and people of Butuan and Agusan with the administration.

She said this partnership was most expressed in many areas.

"We are partners in government, peace, development, in working on a good strong Philippine Republic and in developing Agusan into a prosperous multi-ethnic society that we want our country to be," she noted.

The President also hoped that this “unity will truly bring Butuan to the Land of Fulfillment from the Land of Promise that was Mindanao all these years.”

DOJ to assist Filipinos if complaints or claims for compensation are filed with Malaysian courts

The Department of Justice (DOJ) will assist Filipinos who have suffered maltreatment in the hands of Malaysian authorities if they would decide to file complaints or seek damages.

But in an interview, Justice Secretary Hernando Perez said the complaints should be filed in Malaysia and should be coursed through the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), more particularly with the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur.

Perez said that since a Filipino lawyer cannot practice in Malaysia, the DFA or the complainant should hire a Malaysian lawyer and the DOJ will extend all the legal assistance that would be needed in prosecuting the case.

Meanwhile, the DFA said that under traditional international law, a private person should exhaust all domestic remedies available at the host country where the injury took place before asking the Philippine government to enter the picture.

Since the injury or the maltreatment happened in Malaysia, appropriate remedies may be sought under the Malaysian justice system, the DFA said.

According to the DFA, only when all avenues have been exhausted would the Philippine government extend diplomatic assistance in pursuing any claim for compensation.

The government will not normally act without the consent of the victims, the DFA said.

But Commissioner Purificacion Quisumbing of the Commission on Human Rights said that the Philippines could present a strong case against Malaysia before the United Nations Human Rights Commission or any relevant UN body.

Quisumbing said that under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty, Malaysia can be held responsible for the deaths of several Filipino children as a result of the inhuman conditions the Filipino deportees were subjected during their detention in Sabah.

Statement of Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye

There is no question that corruption is a serious barrier to sustainable economic development in the Philippines. But there is also no question that President Macapagal-Arroyo is committed to ensuring that this challenge to win the war over poverty is attacked head-on.

The recent investigation into the tax scam, the adoption of E-Procurement and E-Payment, the reduction of red tape, are clear examples that this is a government that will not tolerate corruption at any level.

This will be a long battle but it is an important battle if we are to build a strong republic that is at the center of the President’s vision for the future of the Philippines.

GMA urges Mindanao business leaders to push regional growth, help gov’t address poverty

SURIGAO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the business community and other stakeholders here to push Mindanao’s development forward and to address poverty that is the root of the area’s security problem, as well as that of the entire country.

“I had a chance as a child to see poverty in Muslim areas, the same poverty that still pervades the Muslim provinces of the Philippines today,” the President said in a speech before the 11th Mindanao Business Conference (MBC) at the Provincial Convention Center here.

Since these Muslim provinces remained the poorest in the country, the President said it was very clear from the experience of the country and Mindanao that “poverty is the root of our national security problems, including the hostage crisis in Sulu.”

When she presided over a military command conference Thursday, the President said she was convinced the Sulu hostage crisis was only temporary.

She likewise noted Mindanao’s wealth, in terms of human and natural resources.

She said Mindanao “provides more than a third of the gross national value-added for agriculture, fishery and forestry, 43 percent of the Philippine domestic trade, 30 percent of the country’s yellow corn output, 75 percent of fresh coffee berries, 30 percent of the national cattle population, 43 percent of total commercial fish production, and 39 percent of total output.”

In her speech, the President said she was happy to announce the most recent report that the Philippines has achieved a 5.2 percent growth rate in its gross national product (GNP) for the first half of the year 2002.

“I have not seen the breakdown but if we go by past year’s records, I am quite sure that Mindanao’s growth rate is even higher than 5.2 percent,” she said.

The Chief Executive said there was merit to the economic logic for her administration to place agricultural modernization as one of the pillars of the fight against poverty and “of our building up a strong Philippine Republic.”

“There is more than logic in ensuring our vital performance for Mindanao agriculture,” she said.

On natural resources, the President felt elated that after 19 years, the government has found a solution to the anarchy that has reigned at the gold mining area in Mt. Diwalwal, Compostela Valley.

She thanked the leaders of the mining industry who attended the MBC conference for helping the government find a solution to the almost two-decade problem in Mt. Diwalwal.

GMA orders land bank to release loan facilities to Mindanao coffee, rice farmers

SURIGAO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) president Gary Teves to release loan facilities to coffee and rice farmers in Mindanao to enable them to increase their productivity.

“I hope that with the increase credit, there will be increase in productivity,” the President said in her speech before the 11th Mindanao Business Conference (MBC) at the Provincial Capitol Convention Center here.

During her speech, the President noted that this year she launched the rice hybrid commercialization program in 44 provinces to double the yields of rice farmers.

She said the hybrid technology was developed in collaboration between the Philippine Rice Institute (PhilRice) and last year’s Ramon Magsaysay awardee, Yuan Long Pin of China.

The President noted that 60 percent of the targeted hectareage of 50,000 for this year is located in Mindanao.

As a result of the program, she said there are now a good number of small hybrid seed growers in Zamboanga Peninsula, in the Davao provinces and Lanao del Sur.

At the same time, the President tasked Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor to see to it that all the seeds of seed growers in Mindanao are accessed by farmers.

According to her, the government has made a strategic decision to remove the hybrid rice from the laboratory and commercialize it, thus inducing private firms to bring in better technologies.

“I will not be surprised if those private firms who are even improving the technologies some more will use these technologies not just to double but to triple our rice productivity in the future,” the President said.

She added that PhilRice is also tapping Taiwanese post-harvest technologies that will reduce losses in grain output.

Soon a commercial facility using the system will rise in Isabela province in Luzon, even as she expressed hope that Mindanao will also access the same technology.

With regards to the coffee, the President recalled that last April, she launched the Café Isla program to revive the coffee industry in the country.

She explained that Café Isla seeks to improve the productivity of standing trees to make them like Colombian coffee.

By increasing the application of fertilizer and promoting good agricultural practices, she said farms are expected to gain an incremental yield of at least one metric ton per hectare.

At the same time, she said the Café Isla also seeks to upgrade the quality of Philippine coffee beans by educating Filipino farmers in post-harvest handling technology.

The program, the President added, will teach the farmers when to pick the berries, how to dry and sort them out properly and where to have their dried beans milled so that their harvests approximate the internationally-acceptable quality level.

Furthermore, she said Café Isla aims to increase consumer awareness of Philippine coffee by systematically encouraging coffee shops, hotels and restaurants to label coffee blends that use Philippine beans.

Of the 22,000 hectares of Café Isla, 15,000 are to be implemented in Mindanao and 1,300 will be implemented in the CARAGA area.

GMA to push measures aimed at speeding up development of Mindanao

SURIGAO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured Mindanaoans that her administration would implement measures that are designed not only to speed up the development of Mindanao but also to make doing business in the island more competitive.

In her keynote address at the 11th Mindanao Business Conference held at the Capitol Convention Center here, the President announced three directives that would reduce the cost of transport and cargo handling in Mindanao ports.

First, the President said, she has directed the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) to adopt a universal rate in collecting government shares from the revenues of cargo handlers.

“Starting next month, I am pegging the rate to 10 percent for the domestic ports and 20 percent for international ports. This is my initial move to mitigate the cost of cargo handling, especially in Davao and Zamboanga,” the President said.

The second move that the President announced was the freezing of the 35 percent increase in port and wharfage fees ordered implemented by the previous administration for the next five years.

She said that non-implementation of the 35 percent increase in port and wharfage fees, which are being charged by the PPA, would mean a loss of P200 million a year in government revenues.

But the President said she was making the gamble because she believes that there will be an increase in logistic efficiency and movement of goods that would be enough to offset the expected loss of P200 million.

“I am taking this gamble to set the stage for Mindanao’s growth once again,” the President said.

In this regard, the President also called on the cargo handling operators to freeze their arrastre and stevedoring fees for 24 months. She also asked them to undertake “aggressive investments” in modernizing their port handling facilities.

The President also said that she has directed the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) to work closely with the PPA and the private sector to help unbundled all the charges related to the cargo handling component in the freight charges,

She asked the participants to the conference, composed of the country’s top businessmen, to unite behind her administration in the building of a strong Republic.

“Once again, let us work together. Transform this most successful conference into a most successful effort to make this part of the Republic not just a land of promise but a land of fulfillment,” the President said.

GMA directs Land Bank to make P1 billion available for corn industry

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today disclosed that the concession agreement the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (PIATCO) entered into with the Estrada administration was onerous and burdensome to the government and the Filipino people.

The agreement was for the construction of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, which is almost completed.

In his regular press briefing in Malacañang, Bunye said that most of the onerous provisions were incorporated in the Amended and Restated Concession Agreement signed on November 26, 1998.

He also noted that Fraport AG, the German technical partner of the Cheng Group in Piatco, had quarrelsome relations with the Cheng Group and had approached the government to consider the termination of the concession agreement.

Fraport proposed that the government operate the NAIA Terminal 3. Fraport offered to grant the government a loan enough for the latter to get back the airport at a cost of some S400 million, under favorable terms.

There was merit to the proposal that PIATCO knew of since July 2002, Bunye said.

The Press Secretary turned over the briefing to Presidential Adviser on Strategic Projects Gloria Tan-Climaco who explained the details of her recommendations to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to consider a government decision to take Fraport's offer.

Tan-Climaco said one of the agreement's onerous provisions gave PIATCO the right to require outbound international passengers to pay a \$20 terminal fee, making it the highest in the region. So far, the highest rate is \$11.50 in Vietnam.

She said that her office had been asking PIATCO for a breakdown of the terminal fee since January.

"We want to understand how we will be able to justify to the Filipino people what is the rate that would be charged there," she added.

Tan-Climaco said unlike most contracts that provided a cap on the project cost, the contract provided only for the minimum. "Hence, PIATCO claims it has a project cost of \$657 million when the original minimum project cost was \$350 million," she said.

"In the statement of (PIATCO vice president and spokesperson Moises) Tolentino, he was saying that they don't want to be audited because they are the ones who are paying for the project. If you look at the facts, the ones who are paying for the project initially is Fraport, (the German technical partner of the Cheng Group in PIATCO). But ultimately, its you and me and anyone who takes plane out of that terminal," she said.

"The way the contract is structured, you and I have no option but to use that airport for the longest period of time until they have 10 million passengers going through that airport for three consecutive years. So far, Terminals 1 and 2 have a combined 7 million-passenger population.

"It's still a long way to go so what I'm saying is that the one who's gonna pay for the airport is you and me and everyone who's going to be using that airport," she said.

Tan-Climaco also stressed that the government was not willing to acquire the operations of the NAIA Terminal 3, contrary to projections made by newspaper reports.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: August 30, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034022/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug30.htm>

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Maceda thanks GMA for creating RP Film Development Council

Film producer Marichu P. Maceda has thanked President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for signing into law last June 7 Republic Act 9167 creating the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP).

The President signed the bill in simple rites at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang. The signing was witnessed by members of the Senate and the House of Representatives and prominent personalities in the movie industry.

In a letter, Maceda said the film and entertainment sector was "deeply grateful" for the President's approval of the law.

"Finally, after years of futile attempts, a law has been passed to benefit the Philippine movie industry. At long last, we see a flicker of light at the end of a dark tunnel," she said.

As a fitting tribute to the President, local artists have composed, recorded and produced the song, "*Maraming Salamat Po* (Thank You Very Much)," in compact disc.

Maceda said the song, "specially composed to commemorate the birth of RA 9176," was sang by Pops Fernandez, with lyrics written by Edith Gallardo and music by Moy Ortiz.

Under the law, the FDCP is tasked to establish and implement a Cinema Evaluation System, an incentive-reward system for movie producers.

A Cinema Evaluation Board shall evaluate and grade films submitted to the council.

The Board, in grading the films, would not, however, be authorized to delete, shorten or modify the submitted films.

The law also provides that the Movie Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) and the Videogram Regulatory Board (VRB) will give due weight and consideration for the graded film's viewing, reproduction, exportation and other purposes.

The Board will formulate an evaluation system on the degree of excellence in film directing, screenplay, cinematography, editing, production design, music scoring, sound and acting performances.

NIA's P93-M income in 1st sem spurs financial turnaround

The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) posted a net operating income of some P93 million in the first semester, in a major turnaround that breathed life back to the agency's flailing finances in past years.

In a report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor, NIA Administrator Jesus Emmanuel Paras said total revenues hit P689.8 million from January to June, up by 33 percent from P486.8 million derived in the same period in 2001.

Irrigation fees collected reached P333.2 million, up by 56 percent from P213.7 million year-on-year, Paras said.

Management fees posted a 100-percent increase, to P169.8 million from P81.1 million while equipment rentals rose by 12 percent to P50 million from P44.6 million in the same period under review, Paras said.

He added that total agency expenses remained within the programmed amount at P597.5 million in the same period this year.

Paras noted that NIA had been incurring heavy operating losses from 1992 until 2000, except in 1997 and in 1999, averaging P62 million yearly. In 2000, the NIA registered a net operating loss of almost P122 million.

He attributed the financial turnaround to a combination of various revenue-enhancing and cost cutting efforts.

According to Paras, for the first time in many years, the insurance and health care contributions of NIA field personnel were paid without government subsidy.

For the whole year, Paras projected an aggregate revenue of P1.8 billion, 40 percent higher than last year's actual revenue.

GMA orders PDEA, law enforcers to step up elimination of drug rings in country

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) to make sure that a specific unit is assigned to neutralize each identified transnational and local illegal drug ring operating in the country.

In a short message before law enforcers who attended a two-day PDEA-sponsored intelligence workshop in Camp Crame, the President said these special units should ably pinpoint, monitor the activities of and eliminate the drug syndicates.

She cited PDEA Director General Undersecretary Anselmo Avenido's report that said 11 transnational and 215 local drug groups have been identified to be actively operating in the country.

The report noted that of the 215 local drug groups, 116 are in Luzon, 48 in the Visayas and 51 in Mindanao.

The President called on the Philippine National Police (PNP), the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and other law enforcement agencies to help the PDEA in the fight against drug groups.

She said this support should come while the PDEA could not yet fully operate and while its personnel and resources could not yet ably carry out the provisions of the Dangerous Drugs Act.

She considered the police and other law enforcers as deputized PDEA agents.

The PDEA, she said, should be informed of operations within 24 hours from the time of actual custody of suspects or seizure of dangerous drugs, precursors and paraphernalia.

The President further directed all law enforcement agencies to work closely with other concerned public and private sectors to put up a united front against drug rings.

She stressed that illegal drug syndicates are interlinked with other criminal groups; but if the government and the people would join forces, it would be easier to cut off these links and eliminate these criminal groups.

She urged local government units to help the authorities in naming persons involved in street-level drug pushing.

She added that Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. has reorganized and revitalized the anti-drug abuse councils in all local government levels, as she ordered city and town mayors to put up multi-sectoral anti-drug monitoring teams.

The President believed that with everyone's help, the government would crush the illegal drug groups; thus, ensuring peaceful communities free from drugs and devoid of crime.

GMA lauds PACER, Cavite police for speedy rescue of kidnap victim

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today paid tribute to the officers and men of the Philippine National Police (PNP) Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (PACER) unit and the Cavite Police Provincial Office who rescued last August 27 a kidnap-for-ransom victim and later arrested six suspected kidnapers belonging to the notorious Tresvalles Gang.

The President personally congratulated the policemen who saved kidnap victim Jan Arad Fernandez, 24, two days after the abduction in Bacoor, Cavite.

She said she was glad over the speed by which the police have responded to recent kidnapping incidents.

She recalled that the kidnapping of Rowena Jackie Tiu was solved in eight days; the recent Patricia Chong kidnap in six days, and the Fernandez kidnap, in just two days.

The search-and-rescue operations for Fernandez were immediately launched after the victim's father, Arthur Fernandez, alerted the police.

The police arrested six Fernandez kidnap suspects on August 29. Presented to the media today at Camp Crame were the suspects Dennis Tresvalles, the alleged gang leader; Conrado Jocson, Noel Tresvalles, Gonzago Quario, Dominador Layacan, and Allan Garcia.

They were arrested in different hideouts by the four PACER tracker teams led by Superintendent Alan Purisima and the Cavite Police led by Cavite Police Provincial Director Senior Superintendent Samuel Pagdilao.

PNP Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane said the Tresvalles Gang had been responsible for a string of robbery and holdup incidents in Cavite since last year.

Ebdane told the President the gang preyed on pawnshops, buses and jeepneys, gasoline stations and others, stretching from Cavite to Laguna provinces.

The suspects were detained at the PACER Detention Center in Camp Crame.

GMA directs Lina, LGUs to adopt accommodation policy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. to come up with a policy of accommodation on the case of Filipino repatriates from Malaysia to ease possible congestion in cities and towns in Mindanao where the repatriates disembark.

The President announced a more “pragmatic focus and effective response” to the problems of the repatriates and their host local government unit during the culmination of a two-day Intelligence Workshop sponsored by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) at Camp Crame.

She said Secretary Lina would be responsible for the enforcement of law and order in the areas where the repatriates would be accommodated.

Adequate support should also be given to local government units that would accommodate the repatriates, who are expected to arrive in big numbers in the next few weeks from the port island of Sandakan, Sabah, Malaysia.

The President last Thursday flew to Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, to personally look into the conditions of some 3,000 Filipinos repatriated from Sandakan. They were fetched by Philippine Navy boats.

While in Bongao, the President directed state agencies to coordinate and speed up efforts to set up livelihood projects to benefit the repatriates and their families, besides providing food, health care, shelter and transport assistance.

A processing center to facilitate the documentation of repatriates had been set up in Bongao.

A similar center was also set up in Zamboanga City to process Filipino travelers and workers who arrived by commercial boats from Sandakan.

The Malaysian government has decided to send home some 300,000 illegal aliens it said had been overstaying in Sabah, after giving the latter a four-month notice to leave or face deportation.

Datumanong leads groundbreaking of 97-km Iligan-Aurora Road project

Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon Datumanong today led officials in simple groundbreaking rites for the construction of the 97.3-kilometer Iligan City-Aurora Road project linking Lanao del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur.

With Datumanong were Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Assistant Secretary Bashir Rasuman, DPWH-Asian Development Bank (ADB)-Project Management Office Director Subair Diron, and other public works and local officials.

Datumanong said the P616 million road project was one of the projects in the second year program of the structural overlay component, sixth road project bankrolled by the government, the ADB and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

He said the improvement of the road pavement and the impending retrofitting of its bridges would convert the Iligan-Aurora road into a first class highway that would spur the faster inter-regional movement of goods and services in Mindanao.

Meanwhile, Assistant Secretary Rasuman, in-charge of DPWH operations in Mindanao, said the Iligan City-Aurora road’s upgrading was deemed needed after the section deteriorated due to loads from heavy volume of traffic in the area.

Rasuman said the upgrading involved the transformation of the road from asphalt to a 6.10-meter Portland cement concrete pavement two-lane roadway with shoulder improvement.

The project construction would take 900 calendar days. It is under contract with Hanjin Heavy Industries & Construction Co. Ltd.

Besides this, other civil works included a drainage system to prolong structural life and to minimize flooding, a counter-landslide structure, and safety installations of guardrails, road signs and lane marks.

The DPWH would likewise repair and retrofit all 24 bridges within the road section at P169.87 million under the bridge component of ADB 6th road project.

The bidding would be conducted on November.

Datumanong had earlier directed Project Director Diron and consultants Japan Overseas Consultants Co. Ltd., Proconsult Inc., Techniks Group Corp. and TCGI Engineers to effectively oversee project works.

He said the improvement of the Iligan City-Aurora Road would support President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's efforts to improve law and order, tourism, and economic and social development programs in Mindanao.

GMA calls for prudence, sobriety over Sabah repatriation issue

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called for "prudence, sobriety and reason" among the Filipino people on the plight of thousands of Filipino repatriates from Malaysia, as she disclosed a five-point program to address the issue.

She also urged that the "Philippine claim to Sabah must be firmly delinked from the issue of the repatriates."

In a message aired nationwide, the President stressed that this is not the time for people to stir controversies out of the situation but rather, the "time for our nation to come together for a humanitarian cause."

She said she saw the sufferings of thousands of Filipinos who fled from Sandakan, Sabah, Malaysia when she visited Bongao, Tawi-Tawi Thursday.

"Many of them are sick and hungry. They need our help," she said, as she urged everyone – civic-minded groups, the media and others — to extend whatever assistance, recalling the Filipinos' innate trait to respond to the needs of their neighbors whenever tragedy strikes.

The President said the "events have brought in their wake serious controversies," which some people have tried to exploit "to serve their selfish ends, to erode our relations with Malaysia, or to pursue political or terroristic ends inimical to the common interests of both nations."

"I must ask for prudence, sobriety and reason among our people," she urged.

"The problem of deportees from Sabah must be viewed from the overall spirit of goodwill, amity and mutual respect that have characterized our relations with Malaysia," she added.

The Chief Executive said she had talked with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad by phone Friday and "we came to an understanding on how best to ease the situation affecting our countrymen in Sabah."

She said an official Philippine mission would be going to Kuala Lumpur, capital of Malaysia, on Monday (September 2) to thresh out the details of her discussion with Mahathir.

"Malaysia is our ally in security, peace and development. Together with Indonesia, (Malaysia) is a co-signatory to our trilateral agreement on the interdiction of crime and terrorism along our common seas," she stressed.

"Malaysia has assisted us in the peace process in Mindanao," she added, referring to peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) hosted by Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur.

“We enjoy strong investment and trade ties, particularly within the context of the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area,” she said.

The President warned against grandstanding and diplomatic adventurism. “This is not the way to resolve bilateral problems between long-standing friends.”

She presented a five-point “pragmatic, focused, effective response” to the problem of repatriates to include:

- Ensuring the safety and welfare of the repatriates. The National Disaster Coordinating Council shall put up coordination centers as necessary to attain this objective.
- Heightened alert among the military and police forces in areas where potential problems on law and order may arise. The Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) shall be responsible for the strategy and deployment options.
- Adoption of a policy of accommodation in local government units (LGU) to ease geographical congestion. The DILG shall draw up a plan and involved LGUs shall receive full support.
- Deployment of doctors and medical workers to care for Filipinos in detention centers. The departments of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and Health will work closely to implement this. Diplomatic initiatives will also be made to attain this end.
- Speedy documentation processes for the repatriates. The DFA and the Department of Labor and Employment must have a clear picture of who and where the undocumented Filipinos are and how they can be legitimized under a rolling comprehensive plan.

GMA, IMF officials discuss gov’t gains

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today received International Monetary Fund (IMF) resident representative Sean Nolan who ended an almost four-year assignment in the country.

Nolan, accompanied by IMF official Vikram Haksar, called on the President at the Rizal Room of Malacañang.

Nolan is due to proceed to the IMF office in Washington before taking up another mission.

Nolan will be assigned as IMF resident representative to Australia and New Zealand.

In their brief conversation, Nolan noted the strong fiscal management undertaken by the administration as well as the reforms being instituted in the bureaucracy, especially in the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

Nolan likewise cited the President’s State of the Nation Address (SONA), where she stressed the need to build a strong republic.

The President, on the other hand, briefed Nolan and Haksar on continuing efforts of her administration to raise revenues in order to finance the wide range of social and developmental programs and projects.

Finance Undersecretary Juanita Amatong was also present during Nolan’s farewell call.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: August 31, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034041/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/aug31.htm>

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- **GDP record boosts gov't growth projections for 2002**
- **GMA sending mission to Malaysia tomorrow**
- **Gov't seeks to build 56,759 homes in Mindanao**
- **Ople debunks 'Policy of Fear'**

GMA issues directives to reduce cost of transport, cargo-handling in ports

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has issued a series of directives that would reduce the cost of transport and cargo handling in Mindanao ports.

The directives, issued during 11th Mindanao Business Conference held at the Capitol Convention Center in Surigao City last Friday, are designed not only to speed up the development of Mindanao but also to make doing business in the island more competitive.

First, the President said, she has directed the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) to adopt a universal rate in collecting government shares from the revenues of cargo handlers.

“Starting next month, I am pegging the rate at 10 percent for the domestic ports and 20 percent for international ports. This is my initial move to mitigate the cost of cargo handling, especially in Davao and Zamboanga,” the President said.

The second move the President announced was the freezing of the 35-percent increase in port and wharfage fees ordered implemented by the previous administration for the next five years.

She said that non-implementation of the 35 percent increase in port and wharfage fees, which are being charged by the PPA, would mean a loss of P200 million a year in government revenues.

The President said she was making the gamble because she believes there will be an increase in logistic efficiency and movement of goods that would be enough to offset the expected loss of P200 million.

“I am taking this gamble to set the stage for Mindanao's growth once again,” the President said.

The President also asked cargo-handling operators to reciprocate the government's sacrifice and said she was happy to learn that Cebu and Cagayan de Oro cargo-handling operators voluntarily offered to freeze their arrastre and stevedoring fees for 24 months.

The cargo handling operators also committed to undertake “aggressive investments” in modernizing their port facilities, the President said.

The President at the same time directed the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) to work closely with the PPA and the private sector to help unbundle all the charges related to the cargo-handling component in the freight charges.

The President also directed the Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza to convene the National Port Advisory Council of the PPA to review the current tariff setting system and formulate a more transparent cost-based and consumer-oriented methodology in defining the rate of cargo-handling services, especially fees charged on port terminal operations.

She asked the participants to the conference, composed of the country's top businessmen, to unite behind her administration in the building of a strong Republic.

"Once again, let us work together. Transform this most successful conference into a most successful effort to make this part of the Republic not just a land of promise but a land of fulfillment," the President said.

GDP record boosts gov't growth projections for 2002

The economy's better-than-expected performance in the second quarter this year has boosted government confidence of meeting its growth forecast of 4.0 to 4.5 percent for the gross domestic product (GDP) and 4.5 to 5.0 percent for the gross national product (GNP) for this year.

Socio-Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas said that given the growth rates of 4.5 percent in real GDP and 5.2 percent in real GNP, respectively, the economy is on track to meet whole year growth projections.

Canlas said the country's 4.5-percent GDP from April to June led the growth performance so far in the Asean region.

In Asia, the Philippines ranked third after China's 8.0 percent and South Korea's 6.3 percent.

Coming after the Philippines were Taiwan at 4.0 percent; Singapore, 3.9 percent; Malaysia, 3.8 percent; Indonesia, 3.5 percent; and Hong Kong's preliminary second quarter growth of 0.8 percent.

The GNP, on the other hand, strengthened with an increase in the country's net income factor from abroad that posted a 16-percent growth.

This was traced to the rising compensation income of overseas Filipino workers at 3.2 percent and lower interest expense on the country's foreign debt.

The GDP is the sum total of the goods and services produced in the country in a given period. The GNP is GDP plus income from abroad.

In the first half of the year, the average growth rates are 4.1 percent for real GDP and 4.7 percent for real GNP.

Canlas noted that the average per capita income of Filipinos rose at 3.0 percent in the second quarter.

He said personal consumption surged by 3.8 percent, as the downtrend in inflation and interest rates drove up demand for consumer durables and food.

The country's growth, he said, was further given a boost by healthier demand in the domestic and foreign markets.

The broad-based nature of the expansion is encouraging, Canlas said.

"Looking at aggregate supply, although agriculture slowed down in the second quarter, industry recovered strongly," he said. Services, meanwhile, continued to gain strength.

On the aggregate-demand side, the decline in investments slowed down in the second quarter, suggesting a bottoming out, he added.

The decline in investments moderated at 3.3 percent, as fixed investments finally registered a positive growth of 4.0 percent, after five consecutive quarters of decline.

The moderation arose from the growth of construction at 2.1 percent and investments in breeding stocks at 3.8 percent. However, investments in durable equipment continued dropping at -2.1 percent.

With the help of Congress, which committed to enact key economic reform bills into laws, such as the Transmission Corporation (Transco) franchise and the Special Purpose Asset Vehicle (SPAV), "investments may hit positive territory in the second half of the year," Canlas said.

"Economic performance as of the second semester indicates that the economic program of the administration is working. The deficit-reduction program will thus continue," he added.

The output-growth figures that the National Statistical Coordination Board just released raised the likelihood that the target deficit-to-GDP ratio of 3.3 percent in 2002 would be realized, Canlas said.

This fiscal stance and a monetary policy rule based on maintaining price stability, plus the commitment to long-term structural reforms, would promote private sector-led growth vital to the economy's continuing expansion, he stressed.

GMA sending mission to Malaysia tomorrow

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is sending a mission to Kuala Lumpur tomorrow to thresh out the details with Malaysian authorities on how best to resolve the issue of illegal Filipinos in Malaysia.

The President, who issued the announcement during the 2002 Ramon Magsaysay Award ceremonies at the Cultural Center of the Philippines last night, also called on everyone to extend whatever assistance they could give to ease the plight of repatriates in Southern Philippines.

"Now is the time for our nation to come together...I call upon each and every one to extend whatever assistance they could give," the President said.

She noted that "Our Muslim brothers and sisters need food, medicine, clothing and shelter— our countrymen, our countrywomen who have less in life, our countrymen and countrywomen whom our beloved President Magsaysay loved so much."

The President made special mention of Dr. Cynthia Maung of Burma, who couldn't come to the ceremonies to receive her award. Maung was responsible for providing humane and fearless response to the urgent medical needs of thousands of refugees and displaced persons along the Thailand-Burma border.

"She's important not only for her message she'd given us but for the unwavering compassion she has shown in ministering to the thousands of refugees," the President said. Maung's taped response to the award was played back during the ceremonies.

In stressing the importance of the Magsaysay Award, the President said she was able to come up with the idea of hybrid rice as a means of agricultural modernization.

Among those present during the rites were former President Corazon Aquino, Sen. Ramon Magsaysay, Jr., members of the Magsaysay family, and members of the diplomatic community and the judiciary.

The President also noted that the awards highlighted Magsaysay's legacy and spirit.

"We mark the 95th birthday of a great Filipino and a great Asian, President Ramon Magsaysay, to celebrate the achievement of Asia's finest citizens," she said.

In a tribute to President Magsaysay, the President recalled that his father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, said Magsaysay was responsible for crushing the communist rebellion and arousing in the masses the ideals of a great leader.

In the awarding rites, the President presented the medallions and the award certificate to this year's laureates: Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Jr., (Philippines) for Government Service; Dr. Ruth Pfau, (Pakistan) for Public Service; Dr. Cynthia Maung (Burma) for Community Leadership; Bharat Koirala (Nepal) for Journalism, Literature and Creative Communications; Venerable Pamnyun Snim (Korea) for Peace and International Understanding; and Sandeep Pandey (India) for Emergent Leadership.

Established in 1957, the Ramon Magsaysay Award honors the memory and leadership example of the third Philippine president. The award is given yearly individuals or organizations in Asia who manifest the same sense of selfless service that ruled the life of the late president.

Since 1958, when the first awards were given, 229 individuals and organizations, regardless of race, creed, sex or nationality, have received the award.

Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation president Carmencita Abella says "This year's six Magsaysay awardees, much like their peers before them, personify selfless leadership that is making a lasting difference towards making Asia a better place to live in."

Gov't seeks to build 56,759 homes in Mindanao

The administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is planning to put up at least 56,759 shelter security units aggregately worth P4.907 billion until 2004 as part of its blueprint for housing projects in Mindanao.

Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Michael Defensor said the National Housing Authority (NHA) would provide the units.

The NHA had been given a quota of 21,121 units; the National Home Mortgage Finance Corp., 14,271 units; and the Pag-IBIG Fund, 21,367 units.

In a speech at the 11th Mindanao Business Conference (Minbizcon) in Surigao City last Friday, Defensor said support for the government's housing programs has also been initiated by the Government Service Insurance System and the Social Security System.

Similar support would also come from the cooperative housing facility opened by the Land Bank of the Philippines, joint venture projects with local government units (LGU), and other private initiatives in which the government would have an equity, he said.

"When we met our 2001 SONA (State of the Nation Address) targets, our response was not to rejoice, nor retain the target, but to raise higher and higher the bar of performance," he added.

He expressed confidence that the targets could be surpassed under the watch of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Defensor pointed out that housing was "the single most daunting challenge" to the government.

"We need to build houses not just for our people's sake, so they can realize the Filipino dream of owning a house, but for our economy's sake, because housing can pump-prime our economy and bring it out of the woods," he said.

To achieve its mission and spur housing development across the land, Defensor said the government has put in place policies and programs to distribute more shelter rights, produce more housing units, process housing permits fast, make the interest on housing loans low, and ensure that housing funds are enough.

Among the areas covered by the housing program in Mindanao are lots in Mauswagon, Kisolon, Sumilao and parts of Central Mindanao University (CMU) campus in Bukidnon; Isla Delta, parts of Camp Evangelista, Upper Mancahan in Cagayan de Oro City; and Banana Village in Lanao del Norte.

In Davao City, covered are the Department of Transportation and Communications property in Malvar, parts of the old Philippine Constabulary barracks, Quimpo-Blvd. site; the 20-hectare Daticor estate in Matiao, Mati, Davao Oriental; and a proposed LGU housing site of 10 hectares in Digos City.

In General Santos, the housing program has expanded to the 5.3- hectare portion of Camp Lira, and two sites proposed by the city government; Banisil Ranch in Tambler; and the undisputed portions of a ranch in Apopong.

Defensor said the Ozamis City government had applied for the issuance of a proclamation that would cover a 17-hectare proposed housing site in Malaubang.

He said the Balindog, Kidapawan property of the Department of Agriculture was also under process while a 27-hectare lot in Lianga is undergoing evaluation.

Ople debunks ‘Policy of Fear’

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople has stressed that the country’s foreign policy is not based on fear, as alleged in some congressional quarters, but on the calm and intelligent appreciation of the national interest and a due regard for the comity of nations as ordained by the Constitution.

The Secretary addressed fears expressed by some senators, particularly his successor as chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, Senator Manuel Villar, that Philippine foreign policy is beset by “fear of other countries.”

Senator Villar was apparently referring to the administration’s handling of the mass deportation of illegal Filipino migrants from Sabah in Malaysia.

“The President and her department of foreign affairs should be credited for decisive action, which has already brought notable improvements in the conditions of the Filipino workers in Sabah,” Ople said.

“This is after all our first and highest priority, the protection of Filipino nationals. The Malaysian government has already acceded to President Macapagal-Arroyo’s request for a moratorium on the arrest of illegal Filipino workers pending a joint review of the deportation procedures,” he said.

“The President’s direct intervention has tapped a sympathetic vein at the highest levels in Malaysia due to the friendship between the two countries who are also close partners in the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN). The moratorium granted by Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir is a privilege granted only to the Filipino workers in Malaysia,” he added.

“This policy is obviously bearing fruit,” Ople noted.

“We do not espouse a gung-ho foreign policy that appeases the rabble in the streets but puts at risk the safety and welfare of the entire nation,” he stressed. “Political bravado cannot substitute for an intelligent and workable foreign policy.”

Ople said the DFA has filed a diplomatic protest which is still under consideration by the Malaysian Cabinet.

He said with the concurrence of Prime Minister Mahathir, a team of doctors and health workers is being sent tomorrow to Kota Kinabalu, Sabah’s capital, to help minister to the needs of the Filipino workers in Sabah.

The Philippine government is also sending an inter-agency team led by Presidential Assistant Nur Jaafar to confer with their Malaysian counterparts on how to improve the deportation process.

Ople stressed that conditions for the returning workers in the reception centers in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, have markedly improved with the local governments pitching in with all possible assistance. "Barangay captains even cook for the deportees. This is an inspiring sight," he said.

Referring to Villar's claim that Malacañang had cautioned him against offending Japan, in connection with his public advocacy for compensation to Filipino comfort women in World War II, Ople pointed out this happened under a previous administration.

He said the Philippine government has supported this advocacy and has campaigned for it through diplomatic channels, even after Japanese courts had ruled against the claim.

Ople pointed out that the issue of comfort women was only one aspect of the broad Philippine-Japanese bilateral relationship and it cannot outrank issues relating to investments which create jobs, official development assistance, trade and security.

The foreign affairs secretary said the Philippine-Malaysian bilateral relationship overall has been resilient and strong.

Malaysia, as a ranking member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and its Committee of Eight, has been championing Philippine sovereignty and territorial integrity in Medano and has lent its good offices to forge a ceasefire agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

This is an important contribution to peace and order in the South.

Malaysia has also repatriated the MNLF chieftain, Nur Misuari, to the Philippines to answer charges of a renewed rebellion in court.

But the foreign secretary said the government was prepared to listen to congressional criticism and would welcome constructive views on how to resolve foreign policy concerns.

"There is no antagonism between us and the leaders of Congress. Misunderstandings can occur and should be corrected," he said.

Ople said that for this purpose, the President has invited all the members of the Senate and House committees on foreign affairs to a comprehensive briefing on foreign policy issues next Thursday morning at Malacañang.

He said he and Labor Secretary Patricia Santo Tomas have been asked to conduct the briefing for the congressional leaders.

In the case of calls by some NGOs for the recall of Philippine Ambassador Jose "Chito" Brillantes to Kuala Lumpur because of alleged negligence, Ople said this was an ill-founded charge.

"I have just been to Kuala Lumpur and have seen for myself the assiduity and diligence with which Ambassador Brillantes is attending to the needs of our Filipino workers," he said.

Brillantes has been reassigned as an Undersecretary in the home office in charge of international migrant affairs.

He is engaged in making farewell calls on Malaysian high officials and will assume his new duties toward the end of September.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 1, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034052/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept01.htm>

The President's Day: September 2, 2002

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- **Ensure safe repatriation of Filipinos from Malaysia, GMA tells 9-man team**
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- **Merit, not politics, will be GMA's yardstick in choosing new AFP Chief, says Palace**
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Ensure safe repatriation of Filipinos from Malaysia, GMA tells 9-man team

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed the nine-member mission to Malaysia to look into the ground conditions of the thousands of Filipino repatriates who are currently being held in various holding centers in Sabah.

The President called the nine-member team led by former Tawi-Tawi Rep. Nur Jaafar to meeting this morning in Malacañang shortly before she left for an inspection visit to the National Food Authority (NFA) site in Cabanatuan City.

In their meeting, the President tasked the Jaafar-led mission to submit recommendations on what further measures should be taken in order to ensure the safety and welfare of the Filipino repatriates.

Jaafar's team is slated to leave at 3:20 p.m. today on board a Malaysian Airlines flight en route to Kota Kinabalu.

Aside from Jaafar, among those who attended the meeting were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Juliano Soliman and the members of the Malaysia-bound mission namely Labor Undersecretary Lucy Lazo, DFA Undersecretary Arturo Brion, Health Undersecretary Mila Fernandez, Undersecretary Abraham Purugganan of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Director Farisya Taradji, Col. Francisco Gudane of the Department of National Defense (DND), Atty. Abdel Gani Papua of the Office of Muslim Affairs (OMA), and Rey Milan of the Office of Presidential Adviser on Regional Development.

The team was constituted upon orders of the President with specific mission to go to Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, and, if necessary, to Tawau which is located in the southern portion of Sabah.

The President said another team from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has already been dispatched for the purpose of documenting the remaining Filipinos in Sabah.

In a briefing with reporters, Jaafar said the focus of the team in going to Malaysia is to find out the actual conditions of the Filipino repatriates being confined at the various holding centers in Sabah.

Jaafar said there are three holding centers in Karamunting near Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan and in Tawau.

“We will appeal to the authorities there to be lenient to allow us a breathing spell to do our diplomatic channeling to negotiate for a better procedure in transporting our Filipino citizens from that area who are due to be deported,” Jaafar said.

If necessary, Jaafar said, they will recommend the establishment of at least three strategic departure areas back to the Philippines to handle Filipino deportees.

Jaafar said his team will also ask the Malaysian authorities in Sabah to allow Filipino social workers to have access to the holding centers and if possible, to negotiate for ample time to process those who intend to work in Sabah or Malaysia.

Meanwhile, Press Secretary Igancio Bunye stressed that the deportation of Filipinos from Malaysia and the Sabah claim are two separate issues that should not be discussed together.

“If we will claim Sabah based on the deportation issue, we might be doing so for the wrong reason. We might be acting out of emotion,” Bunye said.

The press secretary said the President will meet this week with the leaders of both houses of Congress in order to get a consensus on how to resolve the problem.

GMA asks NFA to ensure availability of P16 per kilo rice in market for poor

SAN ISIDRO, Nueva Ecija—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the National Food Authority (NFA) to ensure that regular-milled rice at P16 per kilo will be readily available for the poor in the market.

In her remarks at the 106th anniversary of the “*Unang Sigaw ng Nueva Ecija*,” the President said that everyday she has been nagging NFA Administrator Anthony Abad to see to it that the P16 per kilo regular-milled rice can be bought by ordinary people in the market.

She said she was glad to find out that the regular-milled rice at P16 per kilo is available in the markets of Cabanatuan City and not just at the NFA warehouse where she visited.

“*Para sa mga mahihirap, dapat parating my P16 na regular-milled rice* (The P16 per kilo regular-milled rice should always be available to the poor),” the President said.

“*Ang bigas ng mayayaman, problema na iyon ng mayayaman. Ang bigas ng mahihirap, lahat ng problema ng mahihirap, dapat problema ng pamahalaan* (Rice for the rich is a problem of the rich, but rice for the poor, and all the problems of the poor, should be a problem of the state),” the President said.

The President said that Nueva Ecija is playing a key role in rice production and in agricultural modernization in general, adding that the province has the distinction of being the country’s rice granary.

She said that there should be no reason why cheap rice should not be available in Nueva Ecija.

According to the President, the NFA warehouse in Cabanatuan City has ample stock of unmilled rice. “*Kaya dapat walang dahilan na tataas ang prresyo ng bigas sa Nueva Ecija* (So, there should be no reason why the price of rice in Nueva Ecija should go up),” the President said.

GMA appeals for help from public for repatriation of Filipinos from Malaysia

SAN ISIDRO, Nueva Ecija—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today appealed to the public to help the government in meeting the needs of the thousands of illegal Filipino workers and their families who were deported by Malaysia.

In her remarks at the 106th anniversary of the “*Unang Sigaw ng Nueva Ecija*,” the President said that the government alone could not possibly solve of the problem of these deportees, adding that what is happening is “a great tragedy.”

“Bago ito lumala at magdulot ng malagim pang situwasyon, pagtulongan natin itong harapin at wakasan (Before the situation worsens, I ask for your support in addressing this problem),” the President said.

The President said that donations intended for the deportees could be coursed through the local chapters of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) or through private groups or organizations.

She said that in her visit to Bongao, Tawi-Tawi last week, she had seen for herself the anguish and the difficulties encountered by the thousands of deportees.

The President said that she was thankful that Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had agreed to her request for a moratorium of the deportation after their telephone conversation during the weekend.

She also thanked all the private firms that have pledged to help in ensuring a safe and orderly movement of people from Sabah to Mindanao.

The President particularly cited the WGA shipping company for its willingness to send commercial vessels as well as the Cebu Pacific for its willingness to send its airplanes to help in the transport of the deportees to Mindanao.

According to the President, Mead Johnson has also agreed to donate milk for the deportees and the Metrobank was donating P2 million for the repatriation program of the government.

GMA focuses on economic build up, S.M.E. development, agricultural growth

SAN ISIDRO, Nueva Ecija — The government will continue to focus on developing small and medium enterprises (SME) and boosting agricultural growth to raise domestic demand in the wake of a weakening American export market.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo stressed this today as she noted the role of SME’s in effecting a significant rebound in neighboring Thailand’s economy.

In a speech here where she attended rites marking the *“Unang Sigaw ng (First Cry of) Nueva Ecija”* in commemoration of the province’s participation in the 1896 revolution against Spain, the President took pride in the country’s latest economic gains, a product of her administration’s effective social, economic and fiscal policies.

The President hinted that these gains have prodded her to give more time to maintain, if not further strengthen, the economy.

“Ako ay babalik sa ekonomiya (I will return to the economy),” she said, after lauding the glaring accomplishments of the police, military and other law enforcement agencies in the fight against crimes nationwide.

“Magbabalik tayo sa (We will return to the) road map,” she added, referring to the world economic situation that might not attain positive changes in the coming years.

She noted that the economy of the United States, the world’s top importer, has not yet reached tip-top conditions.

“Kaya hindi pa rin tayo makakaasa sa kanya (We still cannot rely on America)” in terms of exports, she stressed, in spite of recent statistics that showed that the country’s export receipts have been increasing.

“Ngayong tumataas ang export, huwag tayong maging kampante (Even if export figures are rising, let us not be complacent),” she said.

The President said that instead of dwelling too much on exports, the country would go back to the SMEs, an economic sector that could bring about domestic demand and one that could efficiently use capital.

“Iyan ang bibigyan natin ng pansin sa mga susunod na panahon. Sila ang magiging susi ng ating economic recovery (We will give the SMEs due attention. They will provide the key to our economic recovery),” she said.

The President said the government would urge banks to avoid providing credit for less-productive sectors like those on luxurious property and manufacturing firms that still maintained a huge excess capacity. Instead, banks should serve the needs of SMEs.

She further called for lower interest rates for credit given to SMEs.

She noted that this was the very strategy that Thailand Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra hoped to implement to revive his country’s waning economy. Thaksin today presented this strategy to the Thai parliament.

Among Thaksin’s economic plans were grants to villages, a deferral of farm debt repayments and the creation of a national asset management agency to take over bad bank debts.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said Thaksin’s economic formula could also work well in the Philippines.

She said the country’s economic managers have been working on and implementing long-term structural financial and economic policies along these lines, while promoting private sector-led growth.

The same strategy is being done worldwide as a safety net against the serious downtrend of modern living in the US, she added.

“Ang domestic demand sa Asya ay buwang-bibig ngayon sa lahat. Ang mga Asian ay tumatayo ngayon sa sariling sikap at iyon ay kailangan nating gawin (Domestic demand in Asia is being talked about. Asians are standing up to the worldwide economic challenges on their own. We have to also do things ourselves),” she stressed.

The President said the government and the people have shown what could be done to keep the economy on its feet and have made it stronger in the past.

Gov’t raising budget for housing to P27.5 B

To address the housing problem in the country, the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is planning to raise public shelter budget from P20 billion this year to P27.5 billion next year.

This was revealed last week by Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Secretary Michael Defensor in a speech at the 11th Mindanao Business Conference in Surigao City.

Defensor said the government will accelerate the provision of security of tenure for the informal sector by granting to them the lands they are occupying through the issuance of Presidential Proclamations.

According to the HUDCC secretary, the government has already opened a new lending window for end-user financing to cater to the non-formal sector that includes the P500-million lending facility that Land Bank of the Philippines has opened for cooperatives.

“We have made housing loans available and affordable to low-salaried employees by lowering interest rate, providing developmental financing to developers, and by pursuing institutional housing projects for soldiers, overseas Filipino workers, teachers and the like,” he said.

Defensor pointed out that the Pag-IBIG Fund is studying ways on how to make loans as cheap as those prevailing in the market, adding that Pag-IBIG had initially brought down to 12 percent the interest on loans below P500,000 and to 14 percent for loans above that amount.

He added that the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) no longer limit borrowers to set home models and has opened its housing loan windows for any kind of housing.

At the same time, Defensor said both the GSIS and the Social Security System (SSS) shall work with local government units interested in housing ventures.

Last Friday, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Director-General Dante B. Canlas said the administration has proposed to Congress an indexation of excise taxes on cigarettes and liquor to raise revenues that will support the housing program of the government.

He said the proposed plan to raise additional budgetary resources would help subsidize down payments by low-income households and expansion of rent-to-own schemes under socialized housing.

Meanwhile, reforms are under way to address the issue on providing homes to poor Filipinos who according to the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), are now estimated at 3.3 million in urban areas.

These are: the land-titling process which aims to eliminate the proliferation of fake land titles; and coordination with the local government units (LGUs) to reduce the number of signatures required by LGUs for housing and urban development projects.

Moreover, on housing finance, the government is working jointly to strengthen the housing mortgage market via the Securitization Bill which was discussed recently at the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) meeting.

He likewise said the establishment of the proposed Department of Housing is a step to sustain programs of the government.

“The success of the housing program depends on the government, both at the national and local levels, forging new and strong partnerships with business and communities,” Canlas reiterated.

However, Canlas expressed the hope that the policies laid down by the government to provide homes for the poor would elicit the right kind of response from the private sector, such as the banks, property developer, and real estate dealers, to supply the needed housing units of varying hierarchy.

Merit, not politics, will be GMA’s yardstick in choosing new AFP Chief, says Palace

Malacañang today assured the public that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would choose the next Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) based on merit and not for “political reasons”.

“The President will make known her choice on September 4 and all she said is that she will choose the AFP Chief of Staff based on merit and this has nothing to do whatsoever with any alleged relationship with any politician,” Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in his regular press briefing this afternoon.

Bunye was reacting to reports that the President is inclined to appoint Lt. Gen. Benjamin Defensor, Philippine Air Force chief, as AFP chief, vice Gen. Roy Cimatu, whose retirement has been extended to September 10.

Bunye stressed that President Macapagal-Arroyo will just follow her own criteria in choosing the next AFP Chief of Staff.

When asked if the President will give much weight on the seniority aspect for choosing new AFP top leader, Bunye advised the media to just wait for the President's announcement on the matter and stop making speculations on the issue.

"We don't want to preempt the President. Anyway, it's a few days from now. Let's just wait for the President to make her announcement on September 4," Bunye added.

GMA calls for purge of cops, military men in drug rings

SAN ISIDRO, Nueva Ecija — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today underscored the need to weed out active and retired members of the military and police found involved in illegal drug trafficking.

In a speech during the 106th anniversary of the "Unang Sigaw ng Nueva Ecija" (First Cry of Nueva Ecija) at the JF Sports Complex here, the Chief Executive called on Nueva Ecija Governor Tomas Joson to help track down drug syndicates.

"Iyong mga sindikato ng droga, sila rin halos ang sindikato ng ibang mga karumal-dumal na krimen. (These drug syndicates are the same syndicates that commit various heinous crimes), the President said.

She also lauded Joson for the improved peace and order condition in Nueva Ecija. Joson also serves as chairman of the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) in Central Luzon.

She hoped that the RPOC in Central Luzon (Region III), through the stewardship of Joson would help in the government's drive to eliminate drug syndicates and other criminal rings.

In her recent meeting with top officials of the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) and the Philippine Drugs Enforcement Agency (PDEA) at Malacanang, the President launched a "sustained and high-intensity campaign" against illegal drugs in the country as part of her administration's no-letup drive against all forms of criminality and terrorism.

The President said the anti-drug campaign should be given stress following the series of successful hits against kidnap and other criminal gangs.

In a message Saturday (Aug. 31) before law enforcers who attended the two-day PDEA sponsored intelligence workshop in Camp Crame, the President ordered the agency to make sure that a specific unit is assigned to neutralize each identified transnational and local illegal drug ring operating in the country.

The President said these special units should ably pinpoint, monitor the activities of and eliminate the drug syndicates.

She cited PDEA Director General Undersecretary Anselmo Avenido's report that said 11 transnational and 215 local drug groups have been identified to be actively operating in the country.

The report noted that of the 215 local drug groups, 116 are in Luzon, 48 in the Visayas and 15 in Mindanao.

Calls for Camacho's ouster unwarranted – Palace

Malacañang today said that calls for the resignation of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho are "unwarranted" since the secretary has been doing his job in addressing the country's economic problems.

"From our point of view, Secretary Camacho has done a good job," Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye "Toting" said in his regular press briefing this afternoon.

Bunye said that if the reason for the call of Camacho's ouster is his alleged failure to control the fiscal deficit, this was not actually a problem.

He said the problem only arises when one considers the budget deficit in absolute amount, adding that it is true that the budget deficit has breached the P130-billion ceiling for the year.

But when you talk about the percentage of the deficit to the gross domestic product (GDP), then the government is still on target, Bunye said.

Earlier, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas said that the target deficit-to-GDP ratio of 3.3 percent will be realized for this year.

"Economic performance as of the second semester indicates that the economic program of the administration is working. The deficit reduction program will thus continue," Canlas said.

Canlas reported an average growth rate of 4.1 percent for the real GDP and 4.7 percent for the real gross national product (GNP) for the first half of the year.

GDP refers to the value of goods and services produced for a given period while the GNP refers to the GDP plus the country's earnings from abroad.

GMA lauds police for arrest of 3 kidnap suspects

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Philippine National Police for the arrest of three suspected kidnapers who earlier engaged the policemen in a shootout in Intramuros, Manila.

The President motored to the Western Police District (WPD) headquarters on United Nations Avenue immediately upon arrival from a visit in Cabanatuan City for the presentation of the suspects to media.

The arrested suspects were identified as Michael Bautista, Ramil Safra and Boyet Ramos.

A fourth suspect was wounded but in stable condition at the Ospital ng Maynila while a fifth died during the actual gun battle with Manila policemen.

In a brief statement, the President said the arrest of the suspects proves that the police are indeed committed to curbing criminality in the country.

WPD reports showed that a mobile patrol car spotted the suspects' van and tailed it up to Anda Circle in Intramuros.

Sensing that they were being followed, the suspects, with kidnap victim Richard de la Cruz, opened fire at the lawmen.

The victim, a bank employee, was rescued unharmed after the firefight.

De la Cruz said the suspects, who posed as policemen, accosted him in front of the Pasay City Post Office at noon and divested him of cash and valuables.

During the President's visit at the WPD, Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. also presented to the President Victor Mabaldo, 27, a suspect in the fatal ambush of former Manila Third District Councilor Chika Go.

The former Manila city councilor was killed in Binondo three weeks ago.

According to the police report, Mabaldo is a hired killer from Maasin City, Southern Leyte.

The police confiscated from the suspect two firearms with silencers when the latter was arrested Sunday night in Sta. Cruz, Manila.

Aside from Ebdane, those who joined the President at the WPD headquarters were Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza, PNP-National Capital Region Command chief Director Reynaldo Velasco and WPD chief Senior Supt. Pedro Bulaong.

GMA calls on businessmen to help gov't perk up economy, build strong republic

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed that one of the country's major challenges this year "is to continue to build up the economic momentum we achieved in 2001."

In the President's taped statement before the 2002 Mid-Year Economic Briefing at the Dusit Hotel, she invited businessmen "to work with me and my team" to build a strong Republic.

She said the global challenge "remains daunting but in the Philippines we have the environment, the capacity and the political will to perform."

"The transformation of our economy will continue and we will remain focused on the implementation of the Philippine Economic Plan. We are succeeding in pushing reform and we will continue to take steps that provide macro economic growth and stability," she said.

She said the country's bright economic prospects were brought about by "the effective implementation of the Philippine Economic Plan."

"Our program has significantly improved our macro economic environment in the last 20 months. Macro economic stability is indispensable to a strong Republic," she noted.

She took pride in the country's comfortable pace of economic growth accompanied by a generally stable business environment that saw inflation and interest rates at historic lows and relative stability in foreign exchange.

The President said her administration remained committed to fiscal discipline.

"We are embarking on revenue enhancing measures both in the short and long term for the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs," she said.

She disclosed the implementation of changes through specific institutional reforms and the prosecution of erring individuals, while enforcing prudent expenditure management "as we work towards our committed deficit ceiling of 3.3 percent" of the gross domestic product (GDP) for 2002.

The President reiterated her administration's economic policies and strategies for the second half of this year.

These included:

- An economic philosophy of free enterprise appropriate to the 21st century hinged on macro-economic stability and structural reforms;
- Modernized agricultural sector founded on social equity.
- A social bias towards the disadvantaged to ensure that economic growth would bring prosperity to the greatest number; and

- An unwavering commitment to raise the moral standards of government and society that would combine reform initiatives in peace and order and good governance.

The government is likewise focused on addressing investment and productivity concerns such as transparency, peace and order and power costs to create and improve job opportunities, the President noted.

Congress, she said, has been working on passing critical legislation to speed up the pace of much needed reform.

“These are expected to have a direct and positive impact on the level of new foreign direct investment and the jobs that this investment creates,” she said.

She also stressed the government’s aggressive thrust on the issue of peace and order. “

“We have been successful in targeting the kidnap-for-ransom syndicates, the drug lords and smugglers and now we are working on the remaining Abu Sayyaf terrorists,” she said.

The government has been on track in lowering the cost of doing business in the country. She cited cuts in the price of electricity. “And we will continue to do so,” she added.

The Chief Executive also disclosed a price incentive scheme for large industrial users.

“We will continue to carry out macro economic reforms to deal with the long term horizon,” including the passage of the Special Purpose Asset Vehicle Act and the Securitization Act that would facilitate the private sector asset management initiative and enhance the effectiveness of the banking system to further contribute to economic growth, she pointed out.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 2, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034103/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept02.htm>

The President's Day: September 3, 2002

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- **GMA confers gold medallion on 12 top teachers**
- **GMA outlines mid-term strategic directions of administration to create impact on economy**
- **GMA creates 'pool of senior operatives' to track progress in key economic goals**
- **Roxas to lead 'equity road show' in money centers in Hong Kong and Singapore**
- **Gov't looking into allegations of sexual abuse of Filipino women in deportation camps**
- **Days of tax payment diversion over, says GMA**
- **NDCC to help ensure orderly repatriation of Filipinos from Malaysia, Cabinet told**
- **Peso slide not a sign of weakened economy, says Camacho**
- **Economy nowhere near recession, says Camacho**

GMA confers gold medallion on 12 top teachers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has conferred gold medallions of excellence on the 12 winners of this year's Metrobank Foundation Search for Outstanding Teachers.

The Chief Executive, assisted by Metrobank Foundation chairman George Ty, Metrobank Foundation president Placido Mapa, Jr. and Commission on Higher Education Chairperson Ester Garcia, presented the awards to the 12 teachers in ceremonies held last night at Malacañang's Heroes Hall.

The 12 awardees, who were chosen from a field of 222 teachers nominated by public and private schools all over the country, were the following:

- Elementary level: Gloria G. Tutica of the President Manuel A. Roxas Memorial School in Roxas City; Norma B. Ubaldo of the Batangas City East Elementary School in Batangas City; Agapita A. Nery of the Tanauan South Central School in Tanauan City; Ruth A. Larracas of the Isabelo de los Reyes Elementary School in Manila; Victoria M. Francisco of the Zamboanga East Central School in Zamboanga City.
- High School level: Rosanni L. Palma of the Sorsogon National High School in Sorsogon City; Luzminda B. Chan of the Aloran Trade School in Aloran, Misamis Occidental; Maria Jesusa C. Despojo of the Dumaguete City High School in Dumaguete City; and Erlinda D.G. Antaran of the Makati Science High School in Makati City.
- College level: Dr. Leoncio P. Deriada of the University of the Philippines in the Visayas in Miagao, Iloilo; Dr. T. Valentino S. Sitoy, Jr. of the Central Visayas Polytechnic College in Dumaguete City; and Dr. Lita M. Colting of the Benguet State University in La Trinidad, Benguet.

Metrobank Foundation said the winners were chosen for their outstanding contributions to the teaching profession through personal integrity and character, instructional competence, and professional and community involvement.

It further said that the formal awarding ceremonies for the 12 Outstanding Teachers will be held on September 6, 2002 at the Metrobank Plaza, which serve as the highlight of Metrobank's 40th anniversary celebration.

During the formal awarding rites, the outstanding teachers will each receive a trophy and a cash prize of P150,000. Of the total cash prize, P125,000 will go to the awardee while the P25,000 will go to the awardee's school for its faculty development program.

GMA outlines mid-term strategic directions of administration to create impact on economy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed anew the need for the government to identify and focus on key milestone accomplishments that would create an impact on the economy in the next one and a half years.

“With peace and order moving, it is now time to create economic impact,” the President pointed out during this morning’s Cabinet Meeting in Malacañang where she outlined the mid-term strategic directions of her administration.

The President said that the roadmap that her administration will follow is patterned after that of Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra’s “managed asset reflation” that is based on domestic consumption.

The “managed asset reflation,” the President said, should be accompanied by prudent monetary policy, a ban on short-term foreign currency loans, which were the source of trouble during the Asian financial crash, a gradual reduction in public sector debt, and a balanced budget in three to four years.

The President said that under the new economic focus, the banking system will also be encouraged to avoid extending credit to unproductive asset sectors, such as luxury properties and industries that are already saddled with excess capacity.

Daniel Lian, a Singaporean-based economist with Morgan Stanley, has defined “managed asset reflation” as a controlled rise in domestic asset prices to encourage the shift from export dependence to new sources of domestic demand, notably capital-efficient small and medium-sized enterprises.

This is different from the “unproductive asset bubble” driven by excessive money, which characterized the economic overheating and subsequent crash in 1997 and 1998, the President said.

According to the President, Thaksin’s economic model, which is focused on domestic consumption and is veered away from multinational exporters, has helped increase Thailand’s growth from 1.8 percent to 3.9 percent this year.

Skeptics have said that the Thai model would not work, but Thaksin showed that it is possible to make an economic difference in just one year, the President said.

“The domestic demand story in Asia is now everybody’s business. It is now a key response, if not the key response to the calamitous collapse of the US economic model,” the President said.

In her speech in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija Monday, the President said that domestic demand in Asia is now being talked about. “Asians are standing up to the worldwide economic challenges on their own. We also have to do things on our own,” she said.

GMA creates ‘pool of senior operatives’ to track progress in key economic goals

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today created a “pool of senior operatives” who will be directly responsible to her and whose function is to track progress of the implementation of key economic goals that she has set for the next 18 months.

During this morning’s Cabinet Meeting in Malacañang, the President stressed that given the limited time left, Palace operatives must be deployed to “crack the whip” to compensate for bureaucratic red tape and fill in the shortfalls in the State of the Nation Address (SONA) targets.

In the same Cabinet Meeting, the President announced that for the next one and half years, the government would focus in accomplishing key economic milestones that would have an impact on the nation and the people.

These economic goals, the President said, would be accomplished using a road map based on the Thai model that focused more on domestic demand rather on export dependence.

The President has asked Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo and Avelino Cruz, chief presidential legal counsel, to delegate their day-to-day tasks to their senior deputies so that they can concentrate on coordinating the work of the “pool of senior operatives.”

Aside from Romulo and Cruz, the other Palace operatives designated by the President are Angelito Sarmiento, Luis “Chito” Lorenzo, Gabriel Claudio, Tomas Alcantara, Eduardo Ermita, Rene Diaz, and Paul Dominguez.

The President said that the Palace operatives should track the progress on the government’s action on the following areas:

- Power cost.
- Labor sector constraints.
- Land transfer constraints related to the comprehensive agrarian reform program (CARP).
- Anti-Money Laundering Law.
- Housing pump priming through the private sector involvement.

Roxas to lead ‘equity road show’ in money centers in Hong Kong and Singapore

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II today said that he will lead an “equity road show” to generate interest among foreign investors in publicly-listed firms in the local stock exchange.

In a briefing in Malacañang after today’s Cabinet Meeting, Roxas said that the “equity road show” would be conducted in financial centers in Hong Kong and Singapore.

“During the road show, we will inform the investing community that the firms listed in the stock exchange are healthy, what their operations are and why they should be purchased as part of a bigger portfolio,” Roxas said.

According to Roxas, the image of the country’s capital markets suffered because of the Best World Resources scandal during the previous administration and the stigma of the so-called “old boys club.”

But steps and reforms have since been undertaken by the Securities and Exchange Commission under its present chairman, Lilia Bautista, and these will be part of the presentation during the road show, Roxas said.

Aside from Roxas, the equity road show delegation would be composed of Bautista, Philippine Stock Exchange officials Ernest Leung and Vivian Yuchengco and top executives of such big firms as San Miguel Corporation, Meralco, Jollibee, the SM Group, the Ayala Group that includes the Bank of the Philippine Islands, Ayala Land, Ayala Corporation and Globe Communications.

Roxas said that the executives of top Philippine corporations will present the prospects and challenges that their companies are offering to foreign investors.

“It is very important because the mood and attitudes of much of the business community is set by the daily trading and daily experience of the stock exchange. So, the vibrant and buoyant stock market will help invigorate the economy,” Roxas said.

Gov’t looking into allegations of sexual abuse of Filipino women in deportation camps

Malacañang today assured that the government is seriously but quietly looking into allegations of sexual abuse among the detained women in the deportation camps by some police operatives assigned at the Tauao Police Station in Sabah.

“The government, through the Department of Social Welfare and Development, is seriously but quietly looking into reports of sexual abuse in the deportation camps in Sabah,” Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio “Toting” Bunye said during an ambush interview at Malacanang this afternoon.

Bunye said the Palace has not yet received any official report on this matter from the official mission headed by former Congressman Nur Jaafar. He nevertheless asked the media to be more prudent on handling the issue in order to protect the integrity and reputation of the women in the camps.

Jaafar has been designated by the President as the government’s crisis manager on the Sabah situation.

Bunye assured the media that once Malacanang receives the official report from the group of Jaafar which is now in Sabah, the President will immediately call for a press briefing.

“We don’t have any official report yet but the President will have a press briefing on Friday once she receives the mission report from Secretary Jaafar,” Bunye said.

The nine-member Philippine team headed by Jaafar is expected to be back in Manila on Friday. The group left the country yesterday afternoon to go to Kota Kinabalu via Malaysian Airlines to visit the detention camps of Filipinos scheduled for expulsion and to recommend a better procedure for their repatriation.

Bunye also said the President personally thanked individuals and private companies who have contributed to ease the plight of the Filipino deportees from Malaysia by donating food, transportation and medical assistance.

He said the President reiterated her call for everyone to donate in cash and in kind to help the deportees. Any donations can be coursed through the National Disaster and Coordinating Council (NDCC) or DSWD.

Days of tax payment diversion over, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that the days of syndicates diverting huge amounts of tax and duty payments would finally be over.

The Chief Executive made the announcement this afternoon following the report made by Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho on “Measures to Prevent Tax/Money Diversion” in today’s Cabinet Meeting in Malacañang.

The President said the recent discoveries of tax scams involving the Land Bank and the United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB) have strengthened the national government’s resolve “to further its efforts to improve the system of revenue collection,” particularly at the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

She said that the modifications in the present collection are being implemented after an exhaustive review and successful evaluation by the task force composed of members from the Department of Finance (DOF), the Bureau of Treasury (BTr), and the BOC – in close consultation with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Clearing Officers Club, Inc. (COCI), Philippine Clearing House Corp. (PCHC), and Banker’s Association of the Philippines (BAP).

The President also cited Congressman Enrique Garcia of Bataan and BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura who, she said, were also active advisers to the task force.

“The modifications which largely include the proposed changes by Congressman Garcia will be implemented by the BTr, BIR, BOC and BSP upon the approval of the Monetary Board,” the President said.

The President said she expects that these changes in the tax and duty collection procedure will “completely put to stop the payment diversions of the syndicates and their cohorts.”

The President pointed that the Bureau of Treasury, upon Congressman Garcia's recommendations, will open deposit accounts with AABs (Authorized Agent Banks) for all BIR and BOC collections.

She also stressed that the BIR accounts in all the AABs will have the following deposit account number 888-888-888, while the BOC accounts will have 999-999-999.

"The use of the uniform account numbers will allow payors to easily verify if their deposit/payment to BIR/BOC is being credited to the correct account," the President.

The President added that check deposits to the Bureau of Treasury's accounts will be encoded, using a PCHC-prescribed transaction code which will provide the trail for proper monitoring and reconciliation between BTr, BIR/BOC, AABs and the PCHC.

She likewise said that her administration has requested the participation of the PCHC and the drawee banks to provide additional safeguards.

On the other hand, the President said the debit memo as an alternative mode of payment by the BAP shall be allowed to reduce the risk of check diversion.

"Furthermore, over-the-counter cash payments are to be limited to P10,000," she said.

The President said the government is continuing to evaluate all other modes of payment to strike a balance between the taxpayers' convenience and the national government's efficiency in revenue collection.

Specifically, she said that the administration is looking at the possibility of accepting tax and duty payments via ATMs with the BAP.

She said the Monetary Board's approval for the BTr to open deposit accounts with the AABs is expected to be provided in the next two days adding that the BIR and the BOC will be issuing the new guidelines for tax and duty payments immediately thereafter.

NDCC to help ensure orderly repatriation of Filipinos from Malaysia, Cabinet told

The National Disaster and Coordinating Council (NDCC) today told the Cabinet and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that it would help in ensuring an orderly repatriation of Filipinos from Sabah,

In today's Cabinet Meeting in Malacanang, Defense Secretary and NDCC Chairman Angelo Reyes said that the NDCC would also facilitate the return of the repatriates to their places of origin or resettlement and provide them with temporary shelters.

Specifically, Reyes said the NDCC, which is composed of several line agencies of the national government, will assist former Tawi-Tawi Congressman and now Crisis Manager Nur Jaafar in the following two objectives:

- to process, document and provide medical services in Kota Kinabalu and Sandakan to Filipinos for repatriation in coordination with the Malaysian government; and
- to facilitate the safe transport of repatriates from Sandakan to Bongao, Tawi-Tawi and other points of disembarkation, and subsequently to their places of origin or resettlement.

Reyes reported that a total of 2,971 deportees arrived on August 26 and August 29, 2002 in Tawi-Tawi. To date, a total of 84 deportees are left in the Kasulatan Holding Center, waiting for vessels to carry them to their places of origin.

A total of 1,887 were able to return home using kumpits provided by the provincial government of Tawi-Tawi, Reyes said.

Because of a large number of undocumented Filipinos still in Malaysia and scheduled for repatriation, the operations of the NDCC may continue in the coming months.

Records of the Department of Foreign Affairs showed that there were 167,936 undocumented Filipinos in Sabah as of September 2001.

The Malaysian amnesty program was announced in March 2002 and had been extended in the 2nd quarter of this year to allow foreign nationals to voluntary return to their countries of origin.

The amnesty program was terminated when the Malaysian Immigration Act of 2002 was enacted into law.

According to DFA, the deportation of Filipinos has been suspended by the Malaysian government following the call of the President to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

In response to concerns raised on maltreatment, abuse and inhuman conditions of deportees in Sabah detention centers, the President sent a nine-man mission to Malaysia headed by Jaafar to look into these concerns and propose a more systematic and humane deportation process.

Peso slide not a sign of weakened economy, says Camacho

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho today said that the slight decline in the value of the peso vis-a-vis the US dollar is not indicative of a weakening economy but was caused by a number of reasons.

In a press briefing this afternoon in Malacañang after today's Cabinet Meeting, Camacho said one of the reasons for the slide in value of the peso is what he termed as "seasonality" since there is a bigger demand for US dollars during the months of July, August and September.

"This is usually the season for importation and preparation for the Christmas buying season," Camacho said.

These are also the months when remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are low, Camacho said, adding that normally remittances from OFWs go up before enrolment in May or June, and again before the Christmas season.

Camacho said that the Philippine peso has also been affected by the weakening of the other regional currencies, like the Thai baht and the Japanese yen.

But Camacho said he is confident that the peso would strengthen in the next few days. "If you look at the forecast or projections of many financial institutions, especially the foreign banks, most of them are forecasting an appreciation of the peso," Camacho said.

On the new round of oil price increase, Camacho said that this would bring us back to the oil price levels in November last year.

Camacho expressed the hope that the new increase in the price of oil products would not necessarily lead to increases in other services, especially transportation fares.

He said that Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza has actually started discussions with the leaders of the transport industry to forestall any increase in transportation fares.

Economy nowhere near recession, says Camacho

The Philippines is nowhere near recession and the economy is growing faster compared to this time last year when things were already looking good for the country.

This was the assessment given by Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho during a briefing for Malacañang reporters yesterday afternoon after a Cabinet meeting presided over by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Citing the growth rates of 4.5 percent in real gross domestic product and 5.2 percent in real gross national product from April to June this year, Camacho said “this is the fastest growth for a quarter that we had since year 2000.”

Camacho also said concern over the budget deficit seems to have been blown out of proportion, adding that the government is committed to fiscal discipline and is sticking to a target that is keeping everybody on their toes.

He also said the Cabinet also made a policy decision to denominate deficit targeting as a percentage of GDP, which is practiced by many countries.

For this year for example, he said, the target is 3.3 percent deficit-to-GDP ratio.

“It is a policy objective that will allow us to achieve both economic growth and fiscal discipline at the same time, without one necessarily being sacrificed for the other,” Camacho said.

The finance secretary also said the cost of borrowings as reflected in domestic interest rates remains at historical lows.

“It is quite surprising that as we saw interest rates drop from about 15 percent maybe 15 months ago or so, when we saw it break 10 we were very happy. When we saw it break 8, we were even happier. When we saw it break 6, we were quite ecstatic. And when we saw it break 5, it was likely we were in dreamland,” Camacho said.

“And yet when the rate went up yesterday from about 4.9 percent, almost 5 percent to 5.2 percent, all of a sudden everybody is feeling a little panic about it,” he added. “It just goes to show we are not putting things into context.”

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 3, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034122/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept03.htm>

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TESDA team assists Filipinos in Sabah

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) has sent a team to Sabah to assist Filipinos, mainly Muslim migrants who have entered Malaysia through the so-called "southern backdoor" in Mindanao.

Labor Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas earlier pushed for the training or retraining of disadvantaged people returning from Malaysia through the TESDA office in the Zamboanga Peninsula.

TESDA Director General Dante V. Liban said the TESDA team would be on-site to assist migrants avail themselves of its assessment and certification processes needed to work legally abroad.

TESDA is the main agency of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) with the mandate and authority to train, assess and certify workers.

Liban was with the recent mission of Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople to Kuala Lumpur, which successfully met with Malaysian counterparts to thresh out issues affecting Filipinos in Malaysia.

"I'm confident we were able to craft an agreement that would be most acceptable and would bolster the friendly cooperation between the two countries," Liban said.

Earlier, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo sent a nine-man mission to Sabah headed by Presidential Adviser on Muslim Community Nur Jaafar to work for the orderly repatriation of undocumented Filipinos in Malaysia.

According to Liban, Ople's mission stimulated a positive atmosphere between the two countries amid the Malaysian government's earlier order requiring all illegal migrants to leave the country.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), meanwhile, said that Malaysia is one of the Asian countries that hosts skilled and documented overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

POEA Administrator Rosalinda D. Baldoz said that Malaysia has absorbed 3,414 documented OFWs from January to June this year.

Last year, employers in Malaysia hired or re-hired 6,228 Filipino workers, or an increase of 14.3 percent compared to the 5,450 OFWs legally deployed to that country in 2000, according to Baldoz.

GMA names Defensor as new AFP Chief

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today named Philippine Air Force chief Lt. Gen. Benjamin Defensor as the new Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The appointment of Defensor came six days before the retirement of Gen. Roy Cimatu, whose term as AFP chief of staff has been extended by the President until September 10.

In a press briefing, Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio "Toting" Bunye said that the President announced her choice of the next AFP chief during a meeting this morning with the Bicol governors in Malacañang.

Defensor is set to retire on September 12 but Bunye explained that his term has been automatically extended by two months and four days.

Bunye added that President based her choice of Defensor on seniority after she found out that all the six-star generals, who are contenders for the top AFP post, are highly qualified.

"All of them have the same qualifications and the President went for seniority. And the most senior is Lt. Gen. Defensor," Bunye said.

Bunye also clarified that the decision of the President to appoint Defensor as the new AFP Chief of Staff has nothing to do with his relationship to former Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago, the general's sister.

Defensor, an alumnus of the Philippine Military Academy, Class 1969, has been a consistent scholar and topnotcher in all his academic activities.

After earning his wings from the Philippine Air Force Flying School in 1971, Defensor rose to prominence by seeing action with the 205th Helicopter Wing as combat pilot during the government's counterinsurgency and anti-secessionist campaign.

In 1974, Defensor made history by earning two Gold Cross Medals (highest PAF combat award at that time) within 24 hours of continuous operations in Jolo, Sulu. To date, Defensor has 40 awards and decorations, including three Distinguished Service Stars and three Gold Crosses.

Defensor completed his general staff course at the Air Command and Staff College, Air University in Alabama, U.S.A., and had flying training courses in the United States and Europe.

He has a Master's Degree in Mass Communications from the University of the Philippines, a Master in Public and Business Management from the De la Salle University, and Air Transport Course from the Asian Institute of Management. He is at present working for his Doctorate in Management from the University of London.

Defensor is married to Margaret Soliman Defensor of Tarlac, the first woman president of the Philippine Aviation Corporation. The couple has three children, all professionals.

All Bicol governors pledge support to GMA

All six governors in the Bicol region today pledged their support to the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and vowed to stand beside her in pursuit of their aspirations for the Filipino people and the country.

"Since the air in the Philippines is full of recriminations, rancor and bickering, we in the Bicol region would like to start something that will ease the tension," Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Villafuerte, speaking for all the governors, told reporters after their meeting with the President in Malacañang.

During their meeting, the political leaders of Bicol presented to the President a Pledge of Support, urging her to continue to exercise firmness in her dealings with the affairs of the state, and to maintain her adherence to the principle of leadership by example.

The one-page statement was read by Villafuerte and was signed in front of the President by the governors — Albay Gov. Al Francis Bichara, Masbate Gov. Antonio Kho, Sorsogon Gov. Raul Lee, Camarines Norte Gov. Jesus Typoco, Jr., Catanduanes Gov. Leandro Verceles, Jr. and Villafuerte.

“We do solemnly pledge support to the Arroyo administration that exercises good governance and subscribe to the vision of a Filipino people who are God-fearing, self-reliant and free,” they said.

The governors assured the President that they will even encourage the governors in other regions of the country, through the League of Governors, to join them in order that they will have a common agenda and collectively fight poverty, criminality and oppression.

The Bicol officials also said they recognize that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration has exercised its moral ascendancy in protecting the welfare of the Filipino people, her directly addressing the fight against poverty, criminality and injustice.

Villafuerte noted that the President has been calling for the easing up of all the recriminations in the country’s political environment and they have come to realize that the country cannot move forward unless they all agree to support her.

“And so we in the Bicol region, all of us governors, after consultations with our own leaders at the grassroots, have decided to come together and see the President and give our support,” Villafuerte said.

Villafuerte cited in particular the efforts of the President to have a political summit and an economic summit aimed at arriving at an agreement on the mutually agreeable programs.

During the regional Cabinet meeting in Bicol recently, Villafuerte said, the President found out for herself that in terms of poverty, Bicol is the second poorest region in the country.

“We are only a little ahead of the ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao). Underemployment is also very high in the region,” he said, adding that Bicol has been left behind among all the regions in Luzon.

“We are confident that the President can do something about it,” the Camarines Sur governor said.

While they did not discuss with the President the issue involving former Education Secretary Raul Roco who incidentally hails from the Bicol region, Villafuerte said: “I know him very well. I don’t think he can be an effective executive. He may have been a good legislator but that is beside the point with respect to our pledge to the President.”

Villafuerte assured that all the governors in their region will support her “without exception.”

Villafuerte explained that the Bicol governors have varying political affiliations, three of them belonging to Lakas-NUCD, two from Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) and one from Reporma.

“But irrespective of our political parties, we have been discussing among ourselves what we believe is best for the Bicol region,” the governor said.

In their Pledge of Support to the President, the Bicol provincial and local officials said “we support the Arroyo administration, in upholding equal playing field, in managing the country’s economy.”

“We pledge our commitment and support as the President puts herself above her personal self, attending to the duties and responsibilities of the highest office of the land,” they said.

Camacho welcomes Moody's reaffirmation of Philippines' stable rating

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho today said that he welcomed the reaffirmation of Moody's Investors Service of the country's stable rating and its continued confidence that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration can solve its financial problems.

"We appreciate Moody's recognition of our current macroeconomic environment being supportive of our fiscal program. I am pleased that they have affirmed the government's position that indeed the deficit issue has been blown out of proportion in recent weeks," Camacho said in a statement.

Camacho said that the government is committed to pursuing reforms at the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to improve revenue collections.

"We would like to reassure them (Moody's) that this year's trend at the BIR merely reflects a lag in realizing the benefits of our administrative reforms and not a reversal of our direction. We will forge ahead and our confidence is bolstered by the entry of Commissioner Guillermo Parayno," Camacho said.

According to Camacho, the mandate of the new BIR Commissioner is to ensure the effective implementation and further enhancement of these measures "with the least amount of resistance from the bureaucracy."

The BIR is currently implementing reform measures such as the VAT Relief System, VAT and Internal Audit System, and the E-Filing and Payment System, which have already resulted in exposing many anomalies.

In its review of the Philippine fiscal situation, Moody's noted that it is not focused on this year's headline deficit number, but rather on the implications of a relapse on the BIR's performance on fiscal consolidation and sustainability over the medium term.

Moody's also reaffirmed its stable rating for the Philippines, and confirmed that there is no immediate threat to this rating.

Moody's sovereign analyst for the Philippines, Tom Byrne said: "We discussed rating issues concerning the Philippines today. We concluded that we don't see any immediate threat to the ratings. We will wait and see how the administration's economic program evolves."

In its comments, Moody's mentioned that there are several reassuring factors in the economy such as the historically low levels of interest rates, pre-funding of much of the 2002 deficit, the average maturity structure of domestic debt is a fairly comfortable five years, and the healthy external payments position.

With these, Moody's noted that despite the slippage this year, the deficit of GDP ratio may only be 0.5-1.0 percentage points higher than programmed, placing the 2002 deficit broadly in line with the 2001 deficit, that is somewhere around 4 percent of GDP.

Moody's Investors Service, a leading global credit rating, employs more than 800 analysts and has more than 1,700 associates located around the world. It has offices in 17 countries.

The firm provides ratings and information on governmental and commercial entities in 100 countries.

GMA to open GenSan fiberglass fishing boat plant

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — President Gloria-Macapagal Arroyo is set to inaugurate the P300-million fiberglass long line fishing boat manufacturing project in Sitio Talisay, Barangay Tambler here on Thursday (September 5).

The President, together with other members of the Cabinet, will also be given a plant tour and briefing by officials of project proponents StoneWorks Specialist International Corp. (SSIC) and the GenSan Aquatraders.

The project calls for SSIC to build 100 long line fiberglass fishing boats that would transform 100 marginal fisherfolk into entrepreneurs, generating 2,000 jobs.

The fishermen will amortize the payment for the boats out of the proceeds of their catch. With this approach, they are developed into being entrepreneurs and owners of business they know very well.

Long line fishing has been one of the major sectors of Mindanao's fishing industry, producing chilled tuna and tuna fillet for exports. This has given direct jobs to some 15,000 fisherfolk hired as crew of long line fishing vessels.

Lately, the survival of the industry has been threatened by the shortage of wood used in making pumpboats. The high costs of wood and the difficulty of sourcing it prompted pumpboat owners and operators to look into alternative materials and fiberglass.

Fiberglass usage, however, has increased over time due to its light weight and durability. Though it cost about 30 percent higher than wooden boats, the advantages has offset the high production cost.

Fiberglass has been considered as more seaworthy and longer lasting than the wooden boats. The use of fiberglass on fishing vessels has also reduced pressures on the country's dwindling forest resources.

This is the President's fourth visit to this city as Chief Executive. She will also keynote the 4th National Tuna Congress at the Family Country Hotel and convention Center.

She will also join the locals in commemorating the city's 34th inaugural anniversary highlighted by the week-long Tuna Festival that showcased the city's rich tuna and marine resources. The city received its charter, as provided under Republic Act 5412, on July 8, 1968.

Tuna stakeholders expect GMA to bring up tariff issue

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — Tuna industry stakeholders expect President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to expound on the government's stand on moves of the United States granting preferential tariffs on Andean pouched tuna to the detriment of canned tuna exports from the Philippines.

The President is set to visit, the fourth in her term, this city tomorrow (September 5). She will grace and keynote the 4th National Tuna Congress at the Family Country Hotel and Convention Center.

She will also join the locals in commemorating the city's 34th inaugural anniversary highlighted by the week-long Tuna Festival that showcased the city's rich tuna and marine resources. The city received its charter, as provided under Republic Act 5412, on July 8, 1968.

The local tuna industry practically transformed the city into one of the country's fastest growing economy and one of the world's sources of high quality tuna products. Seven of the country's nine tuna canning factories are sited here.

Some 200,000 people are involved in the local tuna industry. Mindanao's major employer is the canned tuna industry.

The President is expected to arrive here from Zamboanga del Sur shortly before noon.

She will deliver her keynote speech before some 300 domestic and foreign delegates to the tuna congress.

Marfin Tan, one of the bigger fishing operators in this city, said they would ask President Macapagal-Arroyo to intervene on the matter.

The President earlier raised the issue of Philippine tuna exports to the US with US Secretary of State Colin Powell, saying she hoped that moves in the US favoring “pouched tuna” would not affect the preferential treatment for canned tuna from the Philippines.

Recently, the US Congress passed a law allowing the duty-free entry of tuna from the countries that constitute the Andes mountain ranges in Latin America.

The President said her administration has been waging a campaign to protect the country’s tuna industry and keep its preferential treatment in the US market.

The President noted it was important for her administration to keep the preferential treatment of the tuna exports to the US since the industry is the lifeblood of Muslims, Christian and Lumads in Mindanao.

She said thousands of workers in the tuna industry in Mindanao have been battling for the access of Philippine canned tuna in the US market.

It could also be recalled that in late May, the President expressed her appreciation to American Senators Ted Stevens and Daniel Inouye for protecting the Philippine share of the canned tuna market in the US.

The Andean trade preference expansion, the two senators noted, would put the canneries in Mindanao out of business.

“If the major employer in the area is not able to maintain economic stability which has tenuously existed for several years and declares bankruptcy, most experts predict that the chaos in Mindanao will become monumental,” Senators Stevens and Inouye said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 4, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034132/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept04.htm>

The President's Day: September 5, 2002

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Palace clarifies where \$100 M in proposed deal with Fraport would go

Malacañang today clarified that the \$100 million that some administration detractors have described as “kickback” on the proposed government takeover of the NAIA Terminal 3 is actually reserved to pay for obligations to other project shareholders and creditors.

Presidential Adviser for Strategic Projects Gloria Tan-Climaco said that Fraport AG of Germany has confirmed that it had agreed to raise \$400 million that the government would use to pay all of the NAIA Terminal 3 contractors, creditors and shareholders, including Fraport and the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (PIATCO).

Tan-Climaco said that of the amount, \$300 million will go to Fraport. Of the remaining \$100 million, \$53 million will go to Takenaka, the contractor that continued with the project although it had not been paid, as well as to some other creditors and PIATCO shareholders, including the Cheng Group, Nissho Iwai and SB Airports.

In a letter to Tan-Climaco last Tuesday, Peter Henkel, Fraport's nominee director in PIATCO, confirmed the amount of \$400 million and its willingness to raise the money for the government.

“Fraport's exposure to the project as of several months ago was \$375 million. Nevertheless, after many months of negotiations, Fraport is willing to accept only \$300 million, should the proposed amicable settlement be approved by the relevant parties,” Henkel said.

Henkel said that aside from the \$300 million, additional funds are required to satisfy the other shareholders and creditors, in particular the EPC contractors.

“It was therefore discussed to reserve another \$100 million for this purpose, therefore, bringing the total amount to be financed to \$400 million,” Henkel said.

Henkel said his company is willing to take the loss of \$75 million since its investment in the project has already reached \$375 million.

He also said that Fraport understands that the proposal should be subject to the consent of PIATCO and all relevant Philippine government authorities, as well as the audit requirements of the Commission on Audit.

Earlier, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo created a Cabinet committee headed by Justice Secretary Hernando Perez to review the PIATCO contract. Members of the committee are Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Director General Dante Canlas of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and Tan-Climaco.

Tan-Climaco said that Fraport would likely be the only shareholder that would lose in the plan to terminate the PIATCO contract in favor of the government.

She said that the \$400 million that it agreed to raise for the government would be payable over 15 years and would carry interest rates that are much lower than what the government gets for its foreign borrowings.

“Under the proposal, the government will not pay a single centavo in the first five years,” Tan-Climaco said.

But even before the five years is completed, the government would have bid out the airport terminal to new owners to raise the money to pay off the \$400 million loan from Fraport, Tan-Climaco said.

“Fraport is offering us a deal that would protect the government and the public,” Tan-Climaco said.

According to Tan-Climaco, the government would benefit from the Fraport offer since it would be getting back the project not at \$657 million that PIATCO has reportedly spent for it but at price closer to the original project cost of \$350 million.

“This would also allow the government to bring down the terminal fee to P600 from the \$20 or P1,000 which PIATCO wants to charge,” Tan-Climaco said.

Tan-Climaco said that if the deal is approved, the onerous contract with PIATCO would no longer be in effect.

Gov’t wants trade barriers to tuna removed, says Montemayor

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — The government has exerted aggressive efforts in its campaign against artificial trade barriers and unfair trade practices imposed by some wealthy countries.

Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor today said the country had been asking the World Trade Organization (WTO) to do something about the unfair treatment the Philippines has been getting from big nations in relation to tuna exports.

“The European Union (EU) has granted preferential zero tariff or duty- free status on tuna coming from former EU colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific at the expense of Thai and Philippine tuna,” Montemayor said in a speech before the 4th National Tuna Congress here.

He said Philippine and Thai tuna have been slapped with a 24-percent tariff.

“Because certain European countries have their own tuna industries to protect, they justify their discrimination against Philippine tuna by pointing out that the United State, not Spain, was actually the last colonizer of the Philippines,” he added.

The Philippines and Thailand have urged the WTO to act with expediency on this issue that had become detrimental to both countries’ tuna industries.

“After three bilateral talks, all failing to give ASEAN tuna producers the same zero tariff privilege enjoyed by the former EU colonies, we have elevated the case to the WTO for mediation,” he said.

On the other hand, the US Congress passed the Andean Trade Preferential Expansion Act last May, allowing duty-free entry of Andean countries’ tuna exports to wean the economies of these South American countries from the illicit drug trade.

Montemayor projects better times for RP tuna industry

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — The country's tuna industry is in for better times.

Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor today made this fearless forecast in light of positive local and international developments that "have reinforced our confidence in the sector's ability to overcome barriers and restrictions to expansion and development."

In a speech before some 300 local and foreign delegates to the 4th National Tuna Congress at the Family Country Hotel and Convention Center here, Montemayor attributed his projections to three reasons.

He said the industry has drawn inspiration from the significant increases in tuna production, which averaged 3.2 percent in the last two years and by 5.4 percent from January to June, 2002 alone.

He added that the tuna world prices have risen, easing the effects of export volume reduction due to uneven tariff regimes imposed by Philippine traditional markets in the United States and European Union.

Further, the government had gained headway in expanding fishing areas.

Montemayor said the Philippines and Indonesia signed early this year a bilateral agreement granting fishing access to Philippine tuna fishing operators in designated areas of the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zones of the Sulawesi Sea.

The pact allowed 75 catcher vessels and 450 support vessels from the Philippines to operate in Indonesia. The same privilege would be accorded to 10 single seines and 20 fishing vessels using long line fishing methods for tuna.

The agreement could create 20,000 new jobs for Filipinos, 15,000 in fishing and 5,000 in the processing and allied industries. Indonesian officials have started evaluating applications for fishing licenses, he said.

He said the expansion of fishing grounds for Filipinos continued to be one of the eight major policies of the Department of Agriculture concerning the tuna industry.

The other seven approaches included further growth in tuna production, the rationalization of licensing and other regulatory requirements, the modernization of the country's fishing fleet, the implementation of the full duty drawback privilege, building more and better fish ports and cold storage facilities, the re-establishment of an old arrangement with suppliers on purchasing tuna purse seines and other needed fishing vessels, and the fight against artificial trade barriers and unfair trade practices imposed by some wealthy countries.

Montemayor, in his speech, also commended the Soccsargen (South Cotabato-Sultan Kudarat-Sarangani-General Santos) Federation of Fishing and Allied Industries and the National Confederation of the Philippine Tuna Industry.

He said the organization had worked for the meaningful resolution of various issues that affected the survival and sustainability of the tuna business.

Gov't taking steps to curb activities of big-time smuggling syndicates

The Macapagal-Arroyo administration has lined up several measures to zero in on the country's big-time smuggling syndicates and tax evaders whose activities have deprived the government of much-needed resources.

In a report on the status of smuggling and tax evasion cases to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and members of the Cabinet during its meeting last Tuesday in Malacañang, Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo said that specific steps are now being taken to streamline coordination between the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) in prosecuting cases against violators of Customs laws.

Saludo said that the government has already deputized officials of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) to assist the BOC in enforcing tariff and Customs laws especially against rice and sugar smugglers.

“These enforcement agencies are authorized to effect searches, seizures and arrests within the BOC jurisdiction,” Saludo said.

Saludo also said a bill on anti-smuggling is being drafted to provide clearer basis for prosecution and imposition of heavier penalties on smugglers. The bill would be an administration measure and will be certified as urgent by the President.

According to Saludo, the BOC-Technical Working Group met last August 28 to discuss the legal aspects of the proposed legislation.

To help ensure the President’s pledge in her Second State of the Nation Address (SONA) to track down criminals and smugglers in the country, Saludo said the administration has been holding continuous meetings with intelligence units of various agencies to compile, validate and analyze intelligence information on persons suspected to be involved in smuggling preparatory to drawing up specific plans against each of them.

Other activities undertaken by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to track down and eliminate smugglers in the country were the following:

- Met with the Philippine Coast Guard last August 28, 2002 to discuss the inventory of ports/wharves nationwide especially those unmanned by government authorities;
- Confiscated another 7,000 bags of Vietnamese rice with an estimated value of P3.5 million at the Port of Zamboanga on August 23, 2002, bringing the total of confiscated bags of rice to 36,005 bags since June 13, 2002;
- Gathered evidence against persons suspected of involvement in smuggling not only for violations of Customs laws but for violations of other laws such as tax evasion and money laundering, among others, to support cases to be filed against them; and
- Reviewed pending cases against violators of Customs laws, in coordination with the DOJ, to expedite resolution of said cases.

Saludo stressed that a total of eight criminal cases were filed before the DOJ for violations of Customs and tariff laws.

He also said that the administration has been consistent in the implementation of the VAT Reconciliation Listings for Enforcement (RELIEF) System wherein 592 firms were found to have underdeclared their sales, 11 of which have been referred to the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC) for prosecution.

The Cabinet Secretary also informed the Cabinet about the number of big-time smugglers who have been charged with economic sabotage by the DOJ as follows: 34 smuggling cases received from law enforcement agencies acted upon by the DOJ from December 2001 to August 30, 2002; 10 cases filed in court; three cases submitted for resolution; 19 cases under preliminary investigation; one case dismissed; and one case remanded to BOC for further investigation.

GMA lauds Zamboanga Del Sur officials for uniting various tribes in province

LAKESWOOD, Zamboanga del Sur — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the provincial officials of Zamboanga del Sur for their efforts in uniting the different tribes in the province.

In her remarks at the Megayon (Unity) Festival held at the Baganian Cultural and Trade Center, the President said in fluent Cebuano that she was aware that 70 percent of the people in the province are Subanons.

But the President said that whether you belong to the indigenous tribe like the Subanons, you are still a Filipino.

“Ang akong prinsipyo alang sa Mindanao mao nga kinahanglan nga maila sa tanan nga ang Pilipinas usa ka nasod, usa ka society nga adunay lainlaing kultura (One of my principles in Mindanao is that everybody should understand that the Philippines is a nation or society composed of different cultures),” the President said.

The President said that whether you are a Cebuano or Tagalog, or a lumad, Muslim or Christian, or Chinese mestizo, you are still Filipino and you should be proud of the diversity of our culture.

The President arrived here early this morning on the first leg of her whirlwind one-day swing that also brought her to Mount Diwalwal in Monkayo, Compostela Valley, and General Santos City.

She was welcomed here by local officials led by Zamboanga del Sur Governor Aurora Cerilles, Vice Governor Roseller Ariosa, First District Representative Isidoro Real, Second District Representative Filomena San Juan, and Lakewood Mayor Domingo Mirrar.

The President also called on the farmers of the province to shift to hybrid rice so that they can double their income.

She said that the national government would support the projects of the local government, especially in promoting the province as a tourist destination.

According to the President it would not be difficult to promote the province as a tourist spot because it is known for its exotic fruits like durian and lanzones.

During her visit, a Subanon welcome dance was performed for the presidential party.

GMA releases P10 million for agri modernization program in Zamboanga Del Sur

LAKWOOD, Zamboanga del Sur — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today released the initial amount of P10 million for the agricultural modernization program in the province, particularly for the construction of farm-to-market roads.

In her remarks at the Megayon (Unity) Festival held at the Baganian Cultural and Trade Center, the President said in fluent Cebuano that eventually, each of the towns of Zamboanga del Sur would get P1 million for their farm-to-market roads.

The President recalled that last year, she released P1 million for the road-to-market road in this town.

She said that if the initial P10 million would be depleted, she asked Provincial Director Alex Fernandez of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to remind her so that she can release another P10 million until all the towns will have P1 million each.

The President arrived here this morning on the first leg of her whirlwind one-day swing that also brought her to Mount Diwalwal in Compostela Valley, and General Santos City.

In her speech, the President also called on each of the towns in the province to specialize in one product. *“Unta matag lungsod, adunay usa ka produkto (I hope one town would have one product),”* she said.

These products, the President said, can be propagated in each town with the help and financial support of the Department of Agriculture.

According to the President, Lakewood is a beautiful town and should be developed as an eco-tourism destination, adding that it has an added advantage because of the abundance in exotic fruits in the area.

“Ang kauswagan sa bukid nga lugar sa Lakewood kauswagan usab sa tibuok probinsiya sa Zamboanga del Sur (The development of the hinterlands of Lakewood would also contribute to the overall development of the province of Zamboanga del Sur),” the President said.

Gov’t to earn P18.7M with signing of 17 service contracts with Diwalwal miners

MONKAYO, Davao del Norte — The government is slated to earn a total of P18.72 million beginning September 16, 2002 up to March 16, 2003, following the signing of 17 service contracts between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the small-scale miners here at Mt. Diwalwal.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the income that would be generated in this new scheme will be able to help the government with its current deficit problem

The President arrived here this afternoon for an inspection visit and attended a briefing conducted by Bureau of Mines Director Horacio Ramos regarding problems at Mt. Diwalwal.

During the briefing, the President directed the DENR to study whether past schemes could be applicable to other mining areas in the country.

After the briefing, the President went to the municipal covered court here to interact with the residents who are composed mostly of miners and their families.

In her speech, the President said it’s about time that the local folk of Mt. Diwalwal helped the government in solving the issues affecting their community, particularly in protecting the environment.

Also, the President donated P1 million to the municipality of Monkayo for the development of a jewelry-making project in their place.

She also announced that on October 11, she will declare a portion of Mt. Diwalwal as a National Mining and Mineral Preservation.

Among those who joined the President in her visit here were US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, PNP Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, former DOTC Secretary and Region 11 CORD Pantaleon Alvarez, Presidential Adviser on 1 Million Job Luis Lorenzo, Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, Compostela Valley Gov. Jose Caballero, USAID Director Michael Yates and Congressman Manuel Zamora.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 5, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034145/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept05.htm>

The President's Day: September 6, 2002

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- **GMA inaugurates fiberglass fishing boat plant**
- **GMA signs exec order reconstituting bipartisan LEDAC on Sabah issue**
- **Malaysian gov't to probe reports of abuses, including alleged rape of 13-year-old Filipina**
- **RP hopeful K.L. will allow setting up of more documentation centers in Sabah**
- **British group to invest \$150 million, move regional hub to Philippines**
- **Sabah claim was never relinquished or dropped — Ople**
- **Malaysian employers to rehire Filipino workers if they are documented — Ople**

GMA inaugurates fiberglass fishing boat plant

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo poured champagne on a fiberglass long-line fishing boat as she launched yesterday the P300-million fiberglass fishing boat making plant in Sitio Talisay, Barangay Tumbler in this city.

The President noted a partnership of the government and private sector in modernizing water vessels for use in business, tourism, transport and public service endeavors.

During the inauguration, the President was accompanied by Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor, Stoneworks Specialist International Corp. (SSIC) president and chief operating officer Marilyn Ong and other officials.

In a briefing and tour of the project, the President took cognizance of the vital role SSIC, its partner GenSan Aquatraders and the people here would play in giving the tuna industry and other marine-based businesses in Mindanao a big boost.

SSIC officials said the newly-opened facility would build 100 long line fiberglass fishing boats that would transform 100 marginal fisherfolk into entrepreneurs, generating 2,000 jobs with 10,000 dependents.

The fishermen would amortize the payment for the boats out of the proceeds of their catch. With this approach, they would be developed into being entrepreneurs and owners of business they know of very well.

Long line fishing has been one of the major sectors of Mindanao's fishing industry, producing chilled tuna and tuna fillet for exports. This has given direct jobs to some 15,000 fisherfolk hired as crew of long line fishing vessels.

The survival of the industry has been threatened by the shortage of wood used in making pumpboats.

The high cost of wood and the difficulty of sourcing it prompted pumpboat owners and operators to look into alternative materials and fiberglass.

Fiberglass usage, however, has increased over time due to its light weight and durability. Though it cost about 30 percent higher than wooden boats, the advantages has offset the high production cost.

Fiberglass has been considered as more seaworthy and longer lasting than the wooden boats. The use of fiberglass on fishing vessels has also reduced pressures on the country's dwindling forest resources, Stoneworks officials said.

The Makati city-based Stoneworks was incorporated in April 1977 and is the flagship company of the Eastern Group of Companies.

With boat fabrication facilities in Santa Rosa, Laguna and Roxas City in Panay, Stoneworks has become the fastest-growing builders of fiberglass-hulled boats in the country, using Filipino composite engineers, naval architects and in-house trained skilled labor.

It has built over 110 watercraft of various types since 2000. Most of the boats are for the use of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Stoneworks are undertaking talks with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, resort operators and coastal transport operators for the building of speedboats, pleasure boats and ferry boats.

GMA signs exec order reconstituting bipartisan LEDAC on Sabah issue

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today signed an Executive Order reconstituting the Bipartisan Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) on the Sabah issue.

The Chief Executive signed the order during a briefing for the members of the Senate and House of Representatives on the Sabah deportees and the Philippine Policy on RP Claim held this morning at Malacanang's Heroes Hall.

Also present were former President Fidel V. Ramos and some members of the Cabinet, including Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano Soliman, Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, National Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable, Jr., Governor Parouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Presidential Adviser for Muslim Communities Nur Jaafar, and Press Secretary Ignacio "Toting" Bunye.

The President announced that under the EO, the LEDAC on the Sabah issue will be composed of five Cabinet members to be headed by Ople, five senators including one from the minority, and five congressmen including one minority member to be nominated by the Senate and the House respectively, and three private sector members.

Press Secretary Bunye said the President saw it to be more prudent to reconstitute the LEDAC for Sabah in order to unify the country's position on the issue and have representatives from both houses of Congress and from the private sector.

President Macapagal-Arroyo thanked the legislators from both chambers who attended the briefing and expressed the hope that "we can continue to work on both the short-term, medium-term, and long-term issues regarding Sabah and look at it in a micro framework, a macro-framework."

"I'd like to thank all of you because of what I consider very, very sober suggestions and recommendations. We are affirmed that we can indeed come up with a national unified position on the Sabah issue at this time," she said.

For his part, Ople said that after the legislators were briefed on the Philippine Policy on RP Claim to Sabah and its options, the President is beginning a series of consultations with leaders of Congress, particularly with members of the foreign relation committees of the Senate and the House, "so that we may correct gaps in our understanding of common problems."

"Perhaps, if lucky, form a certain concessions on issues that help us unite instead of divide in a period of crisis characterized by many problems involving the dignity of our people and of our countrymen," he added.

Other legislators who attended the briefing were House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Senator Manuel Villar, Jr, who is the chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Senators Ramon Magsaysay, Jr., Ralph Recto, Rodolfo Biazon, and Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., and Representatives Apolinario Lozada, Jr., Roseller Barinaga, Etta Rosales, Abdullah Dimaporo, Joel Mayo Almario, and Imee Marcos.

Malaysian gov't to probe reports of abuses, including alleged rape of 13-year-old Filipina

The Malaysian government has agreed to start an immediate investigation on reports of maltreatment and other abuses perpetrated against Filipino deportees by Malaysian authorities, including the reported rape of a 13-year-old Filipina.

A joint statement signed by Sabah Chief Minister Yab Datuk Chong Kah Kiat and Secretary Nur Jaafar, Presidential Adviser for Muslim Communities, released to the media today, said that the Sabah chief minister immediately ordered the investigation after being apprised of the reports by the Philippine delegation led by Jaafar.

Jaafar led the nine-man Philippine mission sent by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to Sabah to look into the conditions of the thousands of illegal Filipino migrants who have been ordered to leave the country and to reports of abuses and inhuman treatment that they received while in detention.

The delegation visited various detention centers in Sabah during their four-day visit from September 2-5, 2002.

The Philippine delegation thanked the Sabah chief minister for his personal commitment "to impose appropriate penalties to erring Malaysian officials or employees should penalties be called for."

The investigation ordered conducted by Malaysian authorities would include the alleged rape of a 13-year-old Filipina during her detention in Kota Kinabalu, in Sabah.

In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad also pledged swift action on the reported rape of the young Filipina deportee.

"I would like to assure the government and the people of the Philippines that appropriate action will be taken against those responsible in accordance with Malaysian laws," Mahathir said.

Mahathir made his pledge in response to a strongly-worded letter from President Macapagal-Arroyo that expressed her "personal outrage and that of the Filipino people" over the alleged rape.

The joint statement said that after visits to the various detention centers and after conducting its own investigation, the Philippine delegation "on the whole" finds that the Malaysian government, particularly Sabah state officials, have exerted "all efforts to ease the hardships of the Filipino detainees/deportees."

"The Philippine delegation is satisfied that these efforts meet Philippine expectations," the joint statement said.

The statement said that the Malaysian and Philippine authorities would continue "to respond to each other's concerns in the mature and responsible manner and in the spirit of amity and cooperation that have always characterized their relationship."

The concerns raised by the Philippine delegation during their four-day mission are the following:

- Permission for the visit by Filipino social workers and medical personnel of the detention centers for purposes of counseling, profiling, first-aid medical services and monitoring to ensure that the welfare and the well-being of Filipino detainees are better addressed;
- Special attention and priority, facilities and services for women (especially pregnant women), children and elderly detainees/deportees;
- Permission for the Philippine Embassy at Kuala Lumpur to conduct an information campaign within the Filipino communities in Malaysia for their cooperation in complying with Malaysian immigration laws;

- Additional embarkation points in order to ease congestion at the holding centers, to lessen holding time and travel time, and generally, to ease Malaysian administrative burdens in holding and transporting the returnees/deportees; and
- Enhanced coordination at consular levels in the communication of arrests of Filipinos under Malaysian immigration laws and in speeding up the process of investigation and documentation for the purpose of deportation.

For its part, the Malaysian government also called for the following:

- Setting up of multiple processing centers in the Philippines for the returning Filipinos;
- Establishment of more passport offices in southern Philippines;
- Enhanced presence of Philippine Embassy officials in Sabah to expedite the processing of documentation of illegally staying Filipinos; and
- Information dissemination to returning Filipinos on the Philippine reintegration program.

The statement said that the two parties recognized that actions on the above concerned would have to be confirmed at the highest levels of both governments.

RP hopeful K.L. will allow setting up of more documentation centers in Sabah

The Philippine government is trying to persuade Malaysian authorities to allow the setting up of documentation centers in Sabah that will speed up the processing of illegal Filipino workers so that they can return to their country as soon as possible.

In a press briefing in Malaccañang, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople said there is a good window of opportunity during the period of moratorium earlier issued by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad regarding the deportation of thousands of illegal Filipino workers.

“The moratorium on the arrest and possible deportation will hold until the two sides have worked out the improved procedures for carrying out a smoother and a risk-free deportation,” Ople said.

Ople added that the moratorium would also make it possible for those who want to go back to Malaysia to do so with proper documentation so that they will no longer be considered as illegal workers subject to penal sanctions imposed by the Malaysian government such as fines, six months’ detention and caning.

Following the briefing with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacanang, Ople stressed that all the agencies of government dealing with the deportation problem have agreed to speed up the entire process on both sides so that there will be greater safety and comfort and peace of mind for the Filipino deportees, especially those who are arriving in Bongao and in Zamboanga City.

Aside from Ople, among those who attended the meeting with the President where top Senate and congressional officials led by Sen. Manuel Villar, chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; House Speaker Jose De Venecia, Jr., Rep. Apolinario Lozada, chairman of the House committee on Foreign Relations; Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas; Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Juliano Soliman; Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes; Presidential Adviser on Muslim Communities Nur Jaafar; Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo; National Security Adviser Roilo Golez; and former President Fidel V. Ramos.

In his press briefing, Ople also noted the report submitted by Jaafar to the President, saying that there are “improved conditions” that are visible especially in the detention centers in Sabah where illegal Filipino workers are currently being held.

“In general, there is an improvement in conditions that is to say reckoning from the time that a moratorium was ordered by Mahathir, and that these improvements were visible for example in detention center in Kota Kinabalu. They saw 14 buildings in one compound and noted the cleanliness of the surroundings,” Ople said.

He said the policy of friendship being pursued by President Macapagal-Arroyo has changed the behaviour of the Malaysian government and society overnight with regards to the treatment of Filipinos currently detained in Sabah.

Ople said that the Jaafar report takes note of certain abuses that the mission has checked, adding that there is still room for improvement.

“The facilities that they saw tended to be looking clean, looking fit for human habitation and it is not true that the mission reported everything was excellent. No, they checked some abuses and found them corroborated by some of the detainees,” Ople noted.

With regards to the reported rape of a 13-year-old Filipina detainee, Ople said the government’s immediate concern is to fully utilize the bilateral channels for the correction of mistakes and of abuses.

The Department of Justice (DOJ), he said, is now putting into an acceptable legal package all the testimonies that are necessary to back the allegations with evidence with the collaborative effort of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

The DOJ, he said, is now processing all the testimonies and affidavits from deportees and other witnesses and will turn them over to the DFA “so that we can transmit them to the Malaysian government, especially to Mahathir, for their information.”

The foreign affairs secretary said there will also be major efforts to improve the conditions in the receiving centers in Bongao, Taiw-Tawi.

Ople said he just received pledges from both the United States and Canadian ambassadors to help the Philippine government regarding the deficiencies in terms of water, food and medicines and any other forms of relief for the returning Filipino deportees.

British group to invest \$150 million, move regional hub to Philippines

Top executives of the British group, P&O Ports and Asian Terminals Inc., port operators of South Harbor, today informed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that they are transferring their regional operating headquarters to Manila from Sydney, Australia.

In a courtesy call in Malacañang P&O Chief Operating Officer Alistair Baillie said that over the medium term, another \$150 million worth of investments in Philippine port business will be coming into the Philippines.

“That’s very good,” the President said, stressing that the additional investments will generate a lot of economic activity in the country.

Richard Barclay, who is the chairman of the Asian Terminals Inc., congratulated the President for her efforts in improving the peace and order situation in the Philippines.

The President said that the port investors’ increased investment and their decision to transfer their headquarters to Manila is an affirmation of the investors continued confidence in the Philippines.

The President, who is an economist, said her spending a lot of time with the law enforcement agencies like the Philippine National Police has paid off. She said that PNP Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. just informed him that a long-wanted murderer has been captured by the police.

The British companies, which have been investing in the Philippines for quite sometime, will be supervising their operations of ports in countries in the Pacific coast, including Russia, from their proposed regional hub in Philippines.

During the call, Baillie handed the President a check worth P1 million which she said she will use for the people of BASECO, a depressed community in the Port Area.

Sabah claim was never relinquished or dropped — Ople

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople today stressed that the Philippine claim on Sabah was never relinquished or dropped.

During a press briefing in Malacañang, Ople said: “When you speak of reviving a Sabah claim, this is actually superfluous language because there is nothing to revive.”

He said the government is not renouncing its claim over Sabah, saying the issue is merely kept within the strong and responsible framework of an advisory council of the President of the Philippines

During the briefing, Ople said the President had just signed an executive order reconstituting the Legislative and Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) on the Sabah claim in order to form a united front to face the said issue.

The LEDAC on Sabah issue will be composed of five Cabinet members to be headed by Ople, five senators including one from the minority, and five congressmen including one minority member to be nominated by the Senate and the House respectively, and three from the private sector.

The DFA secretary said the advisory council was created during the time of former President Fidel Ramos.

With the reconstitution of the council, Ople said “I expect a quiet, intensive, and sustained study on the Sabah claim by the responsible leaders of this country so that the President can be advised on how to go about this matter of national policy.”

Ople also explained that the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (Asean) is strong enough to withstand operational distresses between two very close partners like the Philippines and Malaysia.

“There will be no permanent harm done to Asean solidarity,” Ople said.

With regards to the claims of the heirs of the Sultan of Sulu, Ople pointed out that the Malaysian government is open to discussion on the private claims.

“They have always said so on the political claim. They said there is no claim, that they are not even willing to discuss it. But on the matter of the private claims they have always been open,” the foreign affairs secretary said.

For his part, Rep. Apolinario Lozada, chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Relations, said reviving the Sabah claim at this time following the same approach that was done during the time of former President Ramos will be to the advantage of the Philippines.

Lozada narrated that during the Ramos administration, the government had long-range negotiations with the Malaysians on the proprietary rights or the rights of the heir of the Sultan of Sulu as well as on the sovereignty right that the Philippines claims over Sabah.

He said they have worked with the nine heirs of the Sultan of Sulu wherein they agreed to form a corporation with seed capital coming from the Malaysian and Philippine government under a 70-30 arrangement.

Lozada explained that 70 percent of the corporation's seed capital would be provided by the Malaysian government in terms of financial capital while 30 percent will be provided by the Philippine government in terms of facilities and all the other necessities for putting up the corporation.

Furthermore, he said the corporation will have its own board of directors where the nine heirs will be sitting as members of the board.

Lozada added that one board seat will be given to those whose claim to being part of the family is not yet verified and another board seat will be occupied by the Philippine government.

Lozada said that what the heirs agreed to during the Ramos administration was for the Philippine government to pursue the claim and for the heirs to just claim financial or monetary benefits from the time that Malaysia annexed Sabah in 1962 to the present.

"After which, they (heirs) are willing to make the corporation work under the auspices of both governments and see to it that they are financially and economically given what is due them," Lozada said.

Malaysian employers to rehire Filipino workers if they are documented — Ople

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople today said the Malaysian employers and manufacturers, as well as the plantation owners in Sabah, are very keen to rehire their Filipino workers as soon as they are fully documented by the Philippine government.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Ople said the Philippine government is coordinating with the Malaysian government to set up documentation centers in Sabah in order to hasten the documentation of the illegal Filipino workers.

"All these measures should be accelerated including the need to speed up the documentation of the Filipino deportees who want to go back to Malaysia so that they can re-enter this time as legal workers," Ople said.

Ople explained that the Philippine government is trying to persuade the Malaysians to allow on-site documentation so that Filipinos do not have to be expelled from Malaysia in order to be passported and documented.

The process, according to Ople, will also mean a lot of savings in time, energy and financial cost for both sides.

Ople said they got an assurance from the authorities in Sabah that they are willing to implement such policy if there is a signal from their government in Kuala Lumpur.

The DFA secretary said the process will be a significant measure since there are still about 120,000 illegal Filipinos who are hiding in Sabah.

In view of this, Ople said the government is considering to conduct a widespread information campaign in Sabah to make the rest of illegal Filipino workers in Malaysia to come out and be properly documented.

He said the proposal of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) is for the government to conduct an information campaign in the different "kampong" or barangays in Sabah to make the Filipinos come out during the moratorium period issued by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad.

The campaign is aimed to convince the illegal Filipino workers that they will not be arrested as soon as they present themselves to authorities.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 6, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034202/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept06.htm>

The President's Day: September 7, 2002

07 SEPTEMBER 2002

- **GMA outlines 8-point strategy to address problem of Filipino returnees from Sabah**
- **Domestic demand, not export market, should stimulate economic growth, GMA says**
- **LGUs okay cash flow management scheme related to 2002 I.R.A.**
- **GMA orders all-out war not only against lawlessness but also against poverty**
- **KALAHI concept now institutionalized in all gov't agencies**

GMA outlines 8-point strategy to address problem of Filipino returnees from Sabah

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today outlined an eight-point strategy to address the problem of thousands of Filipino returnees from Sabah even as she continued to appeal for donations from the public to help various government agencies in attending to the needs of these returning Filipinos.

In her weekly radio program aired nationwide, the President said that the comprehensive strategy to protect the returnees and reintegrate them into the mainstream of Philippine society was adopted in a meeting held in Malacañang last Friday.

The meeting was attended by Cabinet officials and leaders of the two houses of Congress.

The President said that the strong Republic that we are striving to build must create more jobs for the jobless, especially for the thousands of people from Mindanao who have lost their livelihood.

“We need to find jobs for them. We need to comfort them in their despair. And we need to help provide them with food, medicine and temporary shelter,” the President said.

The President said that donations for the returnees, either in cash or in kind, could be sent to the local chapters of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

First in the eight-point strategy for the Filipino returnees calls for the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to continue in lodging complaints with Malaysian authorities about alleged abuses perpetrated against Filipinos who are being deported from Sabah.

Second, the government would continue to work for the speedy processing of documents for the remaining Filipinos in Sabah before they will be deported.

Third, the Philippine embassy in Kuala Lumpur should conduct an information drive to convince Filipinos to return to the country through the ships of the Philippine Navy and the Philippine Coast Guard.

Fourth, the DFA and the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) to coordinate in working out labor agreements with Malaysia that would be beneficial to Filipino workers in Sabah. The DFA would continue to extend assistance to Filipinos for the required documents that they would need in order to get work permits that would allow them to return to Sabah and work there legally.

Fifth, the Philippine embassy in Kuala Lumpur should exert more efforts in giving assistance to Filipinos in Malaysia, and this would include providing legal assistance and visitation.

Sixth, the Philippine embassy should ask permission from the Malaysian authorities so that our Consular teams can visit the various detention centers to provide legal assistance to the returnees.

Seventh, the DFA should see to it that conditions in the various detention centers in Sabah be improved, especially in neatness and the provision of adequate food.

Eighth, that all concerned government agencies should cooperate in speeding up the reintegration of the returnees into the Philippine society.

The President said that the government would ensure that the remaining Filipino returnees in Sabah would be protected, and this would include the seeking of justice for abuses and inhuman treatment that they have suffered while in detention.

She recalled that two weeks ago, she went to Bongao, Tawi-Tawi to personally look into the condition of the Filipino returnees.

“Doon nakita ko ang paghihirap ng libu-libo nating mga kababayang pinabalik mula sa Sabah (There I saw the misery suffered by thousands of our countrymen who were deported from Sabah),” the President said.

The President said that after her visit to Bongao, she immediately called up Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to complain and the latter agreed to a moratorium on the deportation.

When she was informed about the alleged sexual molestation of a 13-year-old Filipina in the hands of Malaysian authorities, the President said she also immediately wrote a strongly worded letter to Mahathir.

“I express my personal outrage and that of the Filipino people and which I am sure you will also condemn in the strongest terms,” the President said in her letter to Mahathir.

In his response to the President’s letter, Mahathir pledged to conduct an immediate investigation and promised swift action against those responsible in accordance with Malaysian laws.

Domestic demand, not export market, should stimulate economic growth, GMA says

In the bid to power up the economy, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the nation to take an active part in stimulating the domestic demand, rather than relying solely on the export market.

The President noted in her regular radio address that this was the same formula adopted by Thailand in reinvigorating its economy.

“Sa halip na umasa tayo sa export market, pasisiglahin natin ang domestic demand o lokal na merkado (Instead of relying on the export market, we will enliven the domestic market),” the President said.

The President said that to stir up domestic consumption more capital should be poured into small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

She said she would convince banks to lend money to small and medium scale industries, which are very effective in using credit, instead of lending money to luxury properties and industries, which have excess capacities.

“Loans should not go to luxury and unproductive sectors. Loans should go to SMEs which are the best users of capital,” the President said.

The President said that in her meeting with the Cabinet last Tuesday, she has laid out the government program that would offer more loans to SMEs.

During the Cabinet meeting, the President said she also stressed the government's stepped-up efforts to increase revenues from taxes, create more jobs and further invigorate the economy.

The President earlier said that with peace and order moving, it is now timely to create economic impact in the next one and a half years.

She said that the new economic strategy should be accompanied by prudent monetary policy, a ban on short-term foreign currency loans, which were the source of trouble during the 1997 Asian financial crunch, a gradual reduction in public sector debt, and a balanced budget in three to four years.

"The domestic demand story in Asia is now everybody's business. It is now a key response, if not the key response to the calamitous collapse of the US economic model," the president said.

LGUs okay cash flow management scheme related to 2002 I.R.A.

The Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP), the body which represents the member leagues of local government units nationwide, today manifested its intention to help President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo implement fiscal discipline by taking part in a cash-flow management scheme with concerned government agencies.

The ULAP's support for the President's policy of fiscal discipline is contained in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed by the ULAP, Department of Finance, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Interior and Local Government at the Heroes Hall in Malacanang this afternoon.

In the MOA, the ULAP has agreed that from September to December this year, the DBM would release to LGUs only 80 percent of its monthly Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) release.

The DBM would defer the remaining 20 percent of the LGUs' development fund and would be released beginning January to June next year on top of the regular P141 billion due to LGUs for next year.

According to the MOA, this would effect a temporary reduction of about 6.7 percent of the P134.4 billion IRA level for 2002 vis à vis the 25 percent withheld by DBM from the budget of the national government agencies this year.

Meanwhile, the DOF and the DBM would open a credit line facility or window for LGUs to loan the equivalent amount of their deferred IRA from Development Bank of the Philippines and the Land Bank of the Philippines within this year.

This is to coincide with the scheduled monthly release of the IRA to LGUs while the national government assumes the full payment to include the interest and all other related expenses.

With this, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina said in effect, the LGUs would still get their 100 percent share for 2002.

The DBM and the DOF would also include in the credit facility the P3 billion unreleased portion of the 2001 Local Government Service Equalization Fund (LGSEF) due all provinces, cities, municipalities and barangays.

According to the MOA, the DBM must consider and find ways of exempting the fourth and sixth class municipalities from this scheme.

The signatories to the MOU were Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina and ULAP president Gov. Rodolfo Del Rosario.

The total IRA of LGUs for 2002 is P134.4 billion, representing 40 percent of the National Internal Revenues collected in 1999, of which P89.628 billion, or 66.67 percent, has already been released every 5th day of the month by DBM to cover the period from January to August 2002.

According to the MOA, the credit facility given will not affect the debt cap of such LGUs.

All cost related to the facility shall be shouldered by the national government and not by the LGUs.

GMA orders all-out war not only against lawlessness but also against poverty

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered all concerned government agencies, including the military and the police, to wage a “total war” not only against terrorism and lawlessness but also against poverty.

“Ours is a total effort, meaning it is not only an all-out war against the enemies of the state but also an all-out war against poverty. So that’s why I want to call it a total effort,” the President said in her remarks at the Joint AFP-PNP Command Conference held today in Malacanang.

The President also thanked the local government units (LGUs), the military, the police and “everybody involved” for their contribution to this “total effort.”

She also witnessed the signing of the implementing guidelines to the General Order No. 2 and Memorandum Order No. 61 related to the realignment of elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) in maintaining peace and order in Mindanao and in securing the citizens from terrorist attacks.

Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Secretary Jose Lina of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) signed the implementing guidelines for their respective departments.

In a briefing, Brig. Gen. Samuel Bagasin, AFP deputy chief of staff for operations, said that the implementing guidelines call for the DND and the DILG to formulate policies and necessary actions to ensure coordination and integration of government efforts in their campaign against terrorism and lawless violence.

Under the guidelines, Bagasin said, an informer reward system will also be created to facilitate apprehension of those responsible for bombings and other acts of terrorism.

Bagasin said that the signing of the joint implementing guidelines “is a bold step taken by the DND and the DILG to stir up the AFP and the PNP in decisively addressing the lawless violence and terrorism in Mindanao.”

“The said guidelines would give direction to the operative forces to attain the very elusive peace in Mindanao,” Bagasin said.

M.O. 61 was signed by the President in mid-May to quell acts of violence and terrorism in some parts of Mindanao and to speed up the rehabilitation of conflict-affected areas.

In signing M.O. 61, the President said the rash of bombings and lawless violence in Mindanao, particularly in General Santos City and Cotabato City, necessitated an immediate, effective and adequate government response to avert further loss of innocent lives and destruction of property.

Under MO 61, the DND and the DILG were directed to organize all their personnel in Mindanao into Joint Task Forces (JTFs).

The DND secretary, according to the MO, shall have direct supervision and authority over the JTF in Western Mindanao, to include the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Region 9 or the Zamboanga Peninsula and Region 12 or the SOCCSKSARGEN Area, composed of South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and General Santos City.

The DILG secretary will exercise authority and responsibility over the JTF in Eastern Mindanao, to include Region 10 or Northern Mindanao, Region 11 or the Davao provinces, and Region 13 or the Caraga Region.

The MO also called on both the DND and DILG secretaries “to ensure that there is close coordination, mutual support and cooperation at all times among the officers and men of the AFP and the PNP.”

The Philippine National Police (PNP) is a component branch of the DILG.

The PNP and the Intelligence Service of the AFP were also directed to jointly step up and focus their intelligence operations against individuals or groups responsible for committing and conspiring in the commission of acts of terrorism and lawless violence.

Under the MO, the DILG, along with the PNP, shall immediately establish an “informer rewards program” to help in the apprehension of those responsible for acts of terrorism and lawless violence.

“The PNP, when warranted, shall arrest all persons responsible for committing or conspiring in the commission of acts of terrorism and lawless violence, with due regard to their constitutional rights,” the MO said.

Other salient provisions of the MO:

- The Department of Justice to closely coordinate with the PNP in the immediate prosecution of all individuals or groups responsible for committing or conspiring in the commission of acts of terrorism and lawless violence;
- The DILG and the DND to enhance coordination with local authorities and intensify community and barangay defense and anti-terrorist action plans, including the imposition of necessary security measures in Mindanao;
- The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to extend emergency relief assistance to the victims of bombings in General Santos City and Cotabato City and other acts of terrorism and lawless violence; and
- The Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the Presidential Adviser for Special Concerns to strengthen existing back channeling efforts by enlisting the full support of all stakeholders to prevent and suppress acts of terrorism and lawless violence in Mindanao.

The MO also directed the Presidential Human Rights Committee to continuously assess and monitor the human rights situation in Mindanao to ensure that the constitutional and statutory rights of every individual are respected.

KALAHI concept now institutionalized in all gov’t agencies

The government continues to strengthen the *Kabit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan* (KALAHI) program, institutionalizing it in all government agencies to further improve the anti-poverty efforts of the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Under the convergence policy, all government agencies are enjoined to observe and institutionalize KALAHI in their respective systems and processes and participate actively in the implementation of KALAHI in the national and sub-national levels.

National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) lead Convenor Teresita Quintos Deles today briefed the President and members of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) at the Heroes Hall in Malacañang on the gains of KALAHÍ in the poor communities around the nation.

KALAHÍ is the President's arm for a focused, accelerated convergent and expanded strategy to reduce poverty. Under the law, NAPC serves as the coordinating and oversight body in making KALAHÍ work.

ULAP, on the other hand, is the body that represents the member leagues of local government units nationwide.

Deles reported on the status of nationwide KALAHÍ projects such as irrigation systems, footbridges, farm-to-market roads, day-care centers, electrification projects, breakwater construction, flood control and several livelihood projects.

"We are ensuring that the poorest of the poor get special assistance," Deles said.

The President, meanwhile, stressed the importance of having concerted government effort against poverty. "Ours is a total effort – meaning it is an all out war not only against the enemies of the state but also against poverty," the President said.

Ongoing KALAHÍ projects are being undertaken in Abra, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, Mt. Province, Albay, Camarines Sur, Aklan, Negros Occidental, Bohol, Southern Leyte, Western Samar, Zamboanga del Norte, Lanao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Maguindanao and Sulu.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 7, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034214/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept07.htm>

The President's Day: September 8, 2002

08 SEPTEMBER 2002

- **Stay cool, relatives of OFWs in Mideast told: Gov't monitoring Iraq situation; contingency plans in place**
- **3 KFR gangs down: PNP bolsters anti-kidnap efforts**
- **Military involvement in gov't anti-drug efforts fruitful**

Stay cool, relatives of OFWs in Mideast told: Gov't monitoring Iraq situation; contingency plans in place

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople urged the nation to "stay cool and collected," assuring that the government is closely monitoring the situation in Iraq and has in place contingency plans of evacuating Filipinos in the Middle East if the situation there worsens.

"The families of the country's overseas workers in the region should not panic. On a signal from the Department of Foreign Affairs, all the Philippine embassies and consular posts will activate the contingency plans for the safety and protection of all Filipino nationals in the Middle East," Ople said in a statement posted at the DFA website.

Ople said what is in place right now are contingency plans for the Middle East that are being reviewed almost everyday.

The DFA secretary made this statement amid news reports that coalition aircrafts from the United States and Great Britain have attacked targets on an Iraqi airbase located southwest of Baghdad last Thursday.

These contingency plans, he said, have been updated by an inter-agency committee in Manila and in the individual diplomatic posts throughout the Middle East.

Ople said the government is in firm control and will not be caught flat-footed for new emergencies in the Middle East.

Last Friday, Ople told Malacañang reporters that the government is already aware of the number of Filipinos in each of the country that may be affected by a possible attack in Iraq, saying that the plan also includes the designation of holding areas for any evacuees.

"We know where to put them in terms of holding area, if there is a sudden eruption of war there in the Middle East," Ople said.

He said those in Israel and Lebanon, for example, will be transported immediately and quickly to Cyprus while those in Iraq and Kuwait will be moved to Amman, Jordan.

Ople added that the Philippine ambassador to Saudi Arabia had told him that it will not be necessary to relocate the Filipinos there to another country but instead to another area of the Saudi kingdom which is beyond the range of the Scud missiles that may come from Iraq.

He explained that the Scud missiles were unable to travel farther than Riyadh in 1991 but Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has been improving his Iraq's arsenals and has reportedly acquired long-range missiles from North Korea which has a range of 3,000 kilometers.

Should war break out in the Middle East, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez assured that the Philippines has a 63-day buffer supply of oil.

3 KFR gangs down: PNP bolsters anti-kidnap efforts

Three down, 18 more to go.

The government's bid to wipe out 21 kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gangs in a year's time has gained headway with the neutralization of at least three big notorious KFR groups operating in Mindanao and Luzon.

In a month after the Philippine National Police (PNP) created its Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (PACER) on July 15 this year, the police had killed Mindanao-based Pentagon KFR leader Muhamad Faisal Marohombsar and arrested key heads of the Fajardo and Bucala KFR gangs operating in Central Luzon.

A report on achievements of targets set by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) dated September 3 noted that the successes were brought about by the cooperation given by civilian informants who told on the KFR groups.

The President, in several instances, cited the speed by which the PNP had been solving recent KFR cases. She also noted that all of the victims were safely recovered.

She likewise gave credit to several civilians who helped police track down and get kidnap groups.

The SONA report said the government has moved to give rewards to informants to bolster its information gathering thrusts on suspected KFR groups. This has resulted in an updated KFR database.

But even with the reward system, the government continued to receive the unconditional cooperation of peace-loving citizens who believed in getting rid of crimes as a means to gain peace and development.

The PNP has also conducted various training programs to discourage or respond to kidnapping incidents.

Last July 16 to 20, at least 27 policemen finished a workshop-seminar on hostage negotiation. Later, PACER tracker teams completed a training program on case operations management.

Side by side, the PNP conducted seminars on community awareness and security against abductions.

Military involvement in gov't anti-drug efforts fruitful

The government has thrown in the full weight of its military's resources to augment police efforts to keep illegal drugs away from Filipino hands.

A report citing the achievements against targets set in the second State of the Nation Address of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo showed that the Armed Forces of the Philippines Anti-Crime Task Force (AFP-ACTAF) has proven itself very potent in anti-drug operations.

Since its formation in March this year, the AFP-ACTAF has actively involved itself in numerous raids of illegal drug laboratories and arrests of suspected members of drug rings.

Philippine Air Force (PAF) operatives and elements of the National Bureau of Investigation in General Santos City have recently swooped down on a marijuana plantation and uprooted the plants along the boundaries of Kiblawan, Davao del Sur and Malungon, Sarangani.

During this operation, codenamed "Oplan Caterpillar," the joint team uprooted some 20,000 marijuana plants valued at about P60 million.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, in one of her most recent trips to General Santos City, even led in the burning of the marijuana plants.

In the remote villages of Bayabas and Dalipay sited in the tri-boundary of Ilocos Sur, Benguet and La Union, PAF operatives also raided a marijuana plantation.

Elsewhere, the AFP had been joining the police recover and seize shabu and marijuana in Davao del Sur, Maguindanao, Ilocos Sur, Zambales and Camarines Sur.

With all these operations, some 520,000 full-grown marijuana plants worth P180 million had been destroyed. At the same time, about 1,117.5 grams of shabu worth P2.4 million were also confiscated.

The involvement of the military in the country's anti-drug campaign followed the creation of the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA).

The President named Miguel Coronel as the DDB executive director and Anselmo Avenido as PDEA director-general, both last July 29.

The Board is formulating the implementing rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of Republic Act 6425.

On the other hand, the staff of the former National Drug Enforcement Coordinating Committee had been providing technical support to the PDEA.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 8, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034227/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept08.htm>

The President's Day: September 9, 2002

09 SEPTEMBER 2002

- **GMA presents arrested computer hackers members of Veloso kidnap-robbery gang**
- **GMA leads celebration of Anniversary of Canonical Coronation of Marian Image**
- **Bunye: Gov't seeks better tax take, not create text tax**
- **No truth to Enrile's allegations against first gentleman, says Palace**
- **GMA lauds Nestle's P2 B investment expansion**
- **Boncodin asks agency heads to shun unneeded expense**
- **No plans to shut down 3 gov't hospitals, says Malacanang**
- **GMA cites AMKOR Philippines' contribution to economy**
- **GMA urges export sector help in strengthening SMEs**
- **GMA presents arrested computer hackers members of Veloso kidnap-robbery gang**

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Philippine Air Force (PAF) and the Bureau of Immigration (BI) for the arrest of two Jordanians and their Filipino cohort for hacking into telecommunications systems and members of the Veloso Gang, one of the most notorious kidnap-for-ransom and robbery/holdup groups in the country.

The Chief Executive personally congratulated PNP Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane and Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo after presenting to the media three alleged computer hackers this morning at Camp Crame in Quezon City and their paraphernalia and equipment used in the commission of their crime.

The President said the arrest of the computer hackers — identified as Mahmoud Nuseir, alias Yusef Shaban and Ivan Mahmoud, his brother Mohamad Nuseir both Jordanians, and their Filipino accomplice Marlon Laquindanum, alias Blue Magic — was the “first” big strike against violators of the E-Commerce Act.

“Itong sindikatong ito, ang namumuno niyan ay isang dayuhan. Kaya nakapasok ang Immigration dito. Ito ay nahuli dahil sa request ni BI Commissioner Domingo at ito ay violation of E-Commerce Law. (This syndicate is led by a foreigner. That’s why the Bureau of Immigration came into the picture. The computer syndicate was arrested due to the request of Commissioner Domingo for violation of E-Commerce Law),” the President said.

Domingo informed the President that almost P100 million was stolen by the group from hacking since last year and the first six months.

The arrest of the three computer hackers involved in hi-tech “call selling” costing telecommunications companies millions of pesos in losses, was the result of joint operations by elements of the National Capital Regional Police Office (NCRPO), Eastern Police District, Muntinlupa Police Office, Makati Police Office, the Philippine Air Force 300th Air Intelligence Security Group and the Bureau of Immigration.

The operations of the three computer hackers were uncovered by government operatives in a series of raids in the cities of Muntinlupa and Makati.

Ebdane said the cooperation between the private business group and the PNP resulted in the arrest of “high-tech computer crimes.”

“These arrests are the result of the partnerships we are building between people or business and the police to stop such crimes from doing any further damage to the companies and to their customers,” Ebdane said.

The President also presented to the media the Veloso Gang, one of the most notorious kidnapping-for-ransom and robbery/holdup groups.

Ebdane briefed the President on the operations of the Veloso Gang based on the report submitted by PNP Intelligence Group Director, Chief Superintendent Robert Delfin.

The report said that during the September 4 operations, the apprehending elements of the PNP were only aware of the suspects' carnapping activities, and not of the group's involvement in kidnapping and robbery.

In last Wednesday's encounter between the elements of police and the Veloso Group, the report said, five group members were killed and one was wounded.

Eugenio Abana alias Roger Avalle sustained gunshot wounds while those killed were identified as follows: Rosendo Veloso alias Viloy, dismissed member of the Philippine Army, alleged leader of the group; Aurelio Pacitas, Jr. a dismissed member of the Philippine Army; Pablito Salubod alias Big Boy; a certain Pabling; and a certain Sgt. Junio Doctor.

The Veloso group has been the subject of manhunt operations by the police for involvement in at least two kidnapping incidents in 2001, three bank robberies from 1998-2002, three robbery/holdups in Metro Manila, Batangas and Laguna, and various carnapping incidents. The group's area of operations covers the NCR, Regions 3 and 4.

Recovered from the suspects were one white Toyota Corolla with plate number XCM-425; three cal. 45 pistols with serial numbers 764189, 764180 and 112449; two cal. 38 revolvers (paltik) with serial numbers 38661 and 04937; one flashlight; two improvised licensed plates; one pair of handcuff; and one fan knife.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said she had instructed Ebdane to hunt down "rascals in uniform" whether they still in the service, out of the service or AWOL (absent without official leave).s

GMA leads celebration of Anniversary of Canonical Coronation of Marian Image

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night led the celebration of the anniversary of the canonical crowning of the Nuestra Senora del Buen Suceso (Our Lady of Good Events) during the Feast of the Nativity of Mary.

The President, who arrived at the St. Andrew Parish Church in Paranaque City at around 6:00 p.m., also read the prayers for the Act of Consecration in honor of the second anniversary of the canonical coronation of the centuries-old image of the Nuestra Senora del Buen Suceso.

Among those who welcomed the President were Paranaque City Mayor Joey Marquez, Rep. Ed Zialcita, St. Andrew parish priest Msgr. Bayani Valenzuela and Bishop Jesse Mercado of the Archdiocese of Pasay, Paranaque, Las Pinas and Muntinlupa.

The St. Andrew Parish Church was packed with devotees of the blessed image coming from the 20 barangays in Paranaque.

In her prayers to the Nuestra Senora del Buen Suceso, the President sought the help of the Virgin Mary to "inspire us to proclaim the love of God, His truth and justice by living a life of faith, perseverance, respect and concern for others."

In her prayers for the Philippines and world, the President said: "I consecrate to you myself, my brothers and sisters, my country – the Philippines and the world. Reign over us and teach us how to make the heart of Jesus reign and triumph in us and around us as it has reigned and triumphed in you."

The story of Nuestra Senora del Buen Suceso came from the accounts written by Fr. Nicolas de San Pedro, parish priest of Paranaque from 1699-1704.

The Image was brought by the Augustinian missionaries from Spain and found its first home in the church of St. Andrew in 1580, the year when the parish was established.

Nuestra Senora del Buen Suceso is one of the few remaining images that remained intact to this date.

It was then Vice-President Arroyo who crowned the Nuestra Senora del Buen Suceso on September 8, 2000, about five months before she became President of the Republic.

Bunye: Gov't seeks better tax take, not create text tax

The government seeks to efficiently collect taxes, not to create taxes.

This Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today stressed as he denied reports that the government planned to levy taxes on cellular phone texting.

In a radio interview, Bunye said the Cabinet, during its past meetings, had never even discussed the matter.

“*Walang ganyang official move. Kung merong ganito*, this is a major policy proposal. *Dini-discuss sa Cabinet ‘yan* (There is no official move on taxing text messages. If there was such, it is a major policy proposal and should be discussed in the Cabinet level),” he said.

He recalled that a proposal to tax text messages was raised during the 11th Congress “*pero hindi naman ito nakalusot* (but this did not prosper).”

“*Alam naman natin na ito ay magbibigay ng dagdag na pasanin sa ating mga mamamayan* (We know only too well that this will create another unnecessary burden on our people),” he added.

The emphasis of government “is more efficient collection of taxes, not new taxes,” Bunye said.

Meanwhile, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin averred today that the government has some P300 billion in receivables.

In a separate radio interview, Boncodin said this was reflected in the books of the Commission on Audit.

But she clarified that public receivables were very different from receivables applied by private companies.

Private firms usually term as receivables the payment for goods or services sold or rendered, respectively, due for collection, she said.

On the other hand, the governments term as receivables e.g. the payment for services rendered by one agency to another. But this is not collectible as applied in private firms, she added.

Boncodin said she would look into the government receivables to have these properly explained to the public.

No truth to Enrile’s allegations against first gentleman, says Palace

Malacañang today flatly denied the allegations of former Senator Juan Ponce Enrile that First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo was involved in the illegal activities of a supposed public relations consultant of the Philippine International Air Terminals Co (PIATCO).

In his regular press briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio “Toting” Bunye said there is no truth to the allegations made by Enrile, adding that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will never allow any member of her family to get involved in any government activity.

“We would like to deny the allegation of Senator Enrile. The President herself has announced that if any person would use the name of the First Gentleman or any member of her family this should be reported and that person would be arrested immediately,” Bunye said.

Bunye said that only last month, a certain Manuel Tolentino, an architect, who claimed that he was connected with the Office of the President and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), was arrested by the police.

Tolentino was later presented to the media by the President in Malacañang.

Earlier, a certain Anthony Deslate, who also used the name of the First Gentleman in trying to gyp a Japanese trader of P3 million, was arrested by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

Bunye said that PIATCO president Cheng Yong himself, in his testimony at the Senate hearing, said Alfonso Liongson, the firm’s public relations consultant, never claimed that he has influence over the First Gentleman or any other member of the President’s family.

As he challenged Enrile to support his allegations with proofs, Bunye said that the fact that the President has ordered a review of the PIATCO contract belies any possible involvement of the First Gentleman in the transaction.

“Dahil bakit ipinare-review ng ating Pangulo ang kontrata kung na-involve si First Gentleman? (Because why would the President order a review of the contract if the First Gentleman was involved?),” Bunye said.

GMA lauds Nestle’s P2 B investment expansion

CABUYAO, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the management of Nestle Philippines Inc. for their additional P2 billion investment to further expand and upgrade their facilities in the country and their commitment to provide jobs to the Filipinos.

“Congratulations and thank you,” President said in her brief remarks during her visit to the Nestle ASEAN Supply Center here this morning.

The President made a plant tour and inspected the state-of-the art facilities for milk powder production during her 40-minute visit to the Nestle export facilities. She was also given a briefing by Juan B. Santos, chairman and chief executive officer of Nestle Philippines Inc., regarding the company’s expansion efforts in the Philippines.

“Our investments, exports, and expansion concretely demonstrate our continued confidence in doing business in the Philippines. Nestle is here to stay and we are here to continue to invest and to produce,” Santos told the President.

The President also led the ceremonial switch-on of Nestle’s P2 billion investment expansion program.

According to Santos, the bulk of the new investment will go to the continuing expansion and upgrading of Nestle’s Cabuyao facilities to increase production.

The new P2 billion investment program is in addition to the P3 billion investments Nestle put up last year to cater to the growing export market for the infant nutrition products.

The Nestle Cabuyao factory is the Nestle Group’s ASEAN Supply Center for infant nutrition products, exporting infant formula to Nestle companies in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

Santos explained that the company expects to complete the export of about 20,000 metric tons of infant milk powder valued at \$50 million to ASEAN by the end of the year.

He further said that the company's expansion efforts in Cabuyao have also fueled the local economy, providing jobs to thousands more in downstream industries that supply the factory with raw materials and services.

Santos also informed the President that the Nestle Cabuyao factory is among the top taxpayer-companies in Laguna province. Santos said Nestle paid P37.6 million in taxes to the province of Laguna and a total of P5.2 billion to the national government in 2001.

"We are happy that in our own way, we help support the growth of our economy and uplift the lives of people in the communities where we operate," Santos told the President.

Nestle has been operating in the country for over a hundred years now. It produces and market products under some of the country's well-known brands.

Boncodin asks agency heads to shun unneeded expense

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin today urged officials of state agencies to rightfully declare their available funds so that the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) could also make correct assessments in its ongoing budget performance review that started last month.

In a radio interview, Boncodin noted that in the fourth quarter, some agencies have made it a habit to report that they no longer had money and that they had no savings.

"Pagdating ng November at December, biglang naglalabasan ang savings na ginagamit sa bonus, nagse-seminar, nagta-travel at kung anu-ano (Then when November and December come, savings appear and these are used for bonuses, seminars, travels and others)," she said.

"Mukhang hindi yata tama 'yan (This does not seem right)," she said.

Boncodin denied the government had cut the allocations for agencies by 25 percent.

She clarified that the DBM had released 75 percent of the budgets of agencies in February as soon as the whole national budget was approved. The other 25 percent would be given as soon as the DBM has completed its budget performance review.

She denied that the government was broke or had no money. *"Hindi totoo 'yan (It is untrue),"* she stressed.

But she explained that measures were being done to correct the situation.

A case in point, she said, was the discovery of and the punitive action taken against private firms that underdeclared their value-added tax payments and robbed the state of millions of pesos.

Another move was to undertake effective systems that would efficiently facilitate tax collection.

Boncodin further tagged as a lie a report that the government would withhold the internal revenue allotments (IRA) of local government units.

She said that last Saturday, officials of the leagues of governors, city and municipal mayors, councilors, board members and vice governors reiterated their support to the government and cooperation to push the programs and projects of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

The local officials agreed to an arrangement with the national government whereby 80 percent of their IRA would not be touched and that the IRA would be provided first by the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and the Land Bank of the Philippines (Landbank), she added.

“Utang ng local government ‘yun sa Landbank at DBP, pero kami ang magbabayad sa susunod na taon (The LGUs owe the Landbank and DBP, but we will pay it next year), she said, adding that the government did not want LGUs to be burdened.

Boncodin noted the LGUs’ ability to shy away from loans, although highly-urbanized areas could open a big credit line.

The national government has called on LGUs not to fear anything as long as their performance was satisfactory, she said. She also asked LGUs not to be too dependent on their IRAs and that they should look for ways on how to raise money for their local fund.

No plans to shut down 3 gov’t hospitals, says Malacanang

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has no plans to close down or privatize the three government hospitals in Manila that are primarily serving the poor, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye today said.

In his regular press briefing, Bunye denied reports quoting Sen. Luisa Estrada that the government is planning to sell, “due to lack of funds,” the Philippine General Hospital, Jose Reyes Memorial Hospital and San Lazaro Hospital, three of the biggest public hospitals serving the poor.

“These three hospitals are serving the poorest of the poor and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo does not intend to let down the poor,” Bunye said.

Bunye wondered where the deposed President’s wife got such information.

“We don’t really know where she got this information. As far as I know, and we checked with the Department of Health, there is no plan to close any of the three major hospitals,” he said.

At the same time, DOH Head Executive Assistant Consorcia Lim-Quizon said there are no plans to privatize the government hospitals although “corporatization” is being considered by some hospitals for better financial management.

Quizon said, however, that corporatization of hospitals requires an act of Congress.

So far, she noted, only the Ilocos Training and Regional medical Center and Quirino Memorial Medical Center are up for such consideration.

She added that the Department of Budget and Management has approved about P10.8 billion for 2002, which is more or less the same budget the department had in 2002, when all DOH-retained hospitals were able to deliver services year-around.

GMA cites AMKOR Philipines’ contribution to economy

STA. ROSA, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the management of Amkor Technology Philipines at the Laguna Technopark here for its significant contribution to the Philippine economy.

In his welcome speech, Mike Petrucci, president of Amkor, informed the President that his firm is determined to continue with its partnership with the Philippine government and their Filipino employees.

“We believe that by working together, we can achieve a win-win objective: meeting the financial goals of the company, improving the socio-economic status of our employees and their families, and contributing to the overall economic growth and strength of the Philippine economy,” Petrucci told the President.

The President toured the facilities of the company. Earlier, the President also toured the facilities of Nestle Philippines in Cabuyao and the Ford Motor Philippines in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. At Nestle, the President led in the ceremonial switch-on of the firm’s new P2-billion facility for the production of powdered milk.

Petrucci explained that the reason why he invited the President to visit Amkor’s facilities was to present the level of accomplishments of their company, and of its Filipino employees.

“We wanted to show to you the results of our close working relationship among the company, the Philippine government, and the people of the Philippines, which together, form the backbone of Amkor’s operations here,” Petrucci said.

In her brief tour of the plant, the President received a warm welcome from key officials and employees of the company.

In her tour of the facilities, the President observed first hand the skills demonstrated by the Filipino workers in assembling and testing delicate microchips and other computer products.

Hundred of employees, who gathered at the canteen, greeted the President and waved placards reading “*Gloria Mahal ka ng Amkor Employees or GMA.*”

The President then shook hands with the employees and thanked them for their support.

Amkor, as one of the largest employers in the country, is presently employing some 10,000 Filipinos in its four plants in Metro Manila.

Amkor is the world’s largest provider of contract micro-electronic assembly and test solutions. For more than 30 years, Amkor has been a strategic manufacturing partner of the world’s leading semi-conductor companies.

The company started its operations in the Philippines in 1989. Aside from the Philippines, Amkor has also assembly and test manufacturing sites in Korea, Taiwan, China and Japan.

In addition to its two plants at the Laguna Technopark, Amkor has two more similar state-of-the-art factories in Muntinlupa City.

GMA urges export sector help in strengthening SMEs

STA. ROSA, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited Ford Motor Company Philippines and other big export groups for placing the Philippines back in the international business road map, as she asked them to help empower small and medium enterprises (SME).

The President said focus should go to expanding the domestic market under what economists called as the domestic consumption-based managed-asset replacement strategy, whereby domestic consumption “complements multinational exports as a source of growth.”

In a speech during the launching of this year’s Ford’s export program at Ford’s plant here, the Chief Executive said the focus shift has become more imperative with the “continuing uncertainties in the United States’ economy, which is the Philippines’ business market.”

“We want to ensure that Ford and other manufacturers have a good domestic market to sell their products to,” she said.

To bring this about, she sought to strengthen SMEs, as she hoped that “Ford will continue to be our largest buyer of local auto parts and components.”

She said that part of the strategy is the implementation of a one town-one product program whereby municipal and city governments are given P1 million each for loans to small entrepreneurs.

Last Thursday, she gave to Mayor Pedro Acharon, Jr. a check for P1 million to jumpstart the one town-one product program during the Fourth National Tuna Congress in General Santos City.

In her Ford speech, the President ordered the Department of Trade and Industry regional head to “look for a deserving (autoparts) supplier who should be able to expand his business and we will give a loan of P1 million to that chosen supplier.”

She also announced that the Board of Investments “is working with the Department of Finance to have tailor-made incentives for the automobile industry.”

“Our government policies are geared towards supporting the manufacturing sector,” she said, noting that the country’s source of growth has recently “switched back to export and to manufacturing.”

She lauded Ford “for boosting the country’s image in the automotive export industry” and “for its support to our economy, particularly its contribution to foreign exchange earnings for this year.”

The President also recalled that Ford had been in the country a long time ago. But it left for a while during the dark days of martial law and resumed operations in the Philippines in 1997.

She added that Ford’s expansion in the country could be traced to a memorandum of agreement the President signed with Ford executives during her trip to the US last year.

She said her trip today to Laguna — where she also visited the Nestle Philippines plant in Cabuyao and the Amkor Technology Philippines line assembly at the Laguna Technopark in Santa Rosa, was a call for celebration in honor of an expanding manufacturing sector.

“Let the whole world know that the Philippines is a good place to manufacture products in. Thank you for making the Philippines a good place for investment,” she said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 9, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034242/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept09.htm>

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No mandatory 25 percent cut on gov't agencies' budget for 2002, says Palace

Malacañang today belied reports that the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has imposed a mandatory 25 percent cut of the budget of all national agencies for the current fiscal year as a result of the tight financial condition of the government.

In an interview, Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin said that it is not true that the DBM is withholding the remaining 25 percent of the budget of state offices.

She said that at the start of the current fiscal year, it was already agreed that only 75 percent of the budget for all agencies would be released and the remaining 25 percent, which is for the fourth quarter of this year, would be given after the completion of a budget performance review of the agency concerned.

Boncodin also explained that the 25 percent is not mandated as reserve since it will be released to an agency after a performance review, thus the agency would eventually get its full budget for the year.

She said that the agency performance review started on August 16, adding that the release of the remaining 25 percent may be deferred if the agency's budget performance is below par.

Boncodin said that in the past, when the DBM releases the whole amount to an agency, some agencies would say that they have already spent all their money but when November or December comes, they would declare a saving and then spend it for other purposes, like increasing the allowances or yearend bonuses of their employees.

"So as early as February, we have already notified all departments and agencies that we will only release 75 percent of their budget and the remainder of 25 percent would be released after they have passed the performance review," Boncodin said.

The budget chief also belied reports that the budget of some departments for fiscal year 2003, particularly that of the Department of Health (DOH), have been slashed, thus endangering basic services, especially for the poor.

Boncodin said that the DBM has not reduced the budget for government hospitals or the DOH. "*Hindi po totoo iyon at hindi namin gagawin iyon* (That is not true, and we will never do that)," she said.

According to Boncodin the DOH has two foreign-assisted projects (FAP) that would end soon. It was the government counterpart fund for these FAP that was taken out from the DOH 2003 budget, thus making the DOH budget appear as smaller than the preceding year.

"There is no reason for our people to be alarmed by this cut in the DOH budget because it will not entail a reduction of the appropriations for state-owned hospitals," Boncodin said.

Boncodin said that another reason for the apparent decrease in the budget of some agencies as shown in the proposed P804 billion budget for 2003 is the creation of a separate lump sum item, known as the Pension and Retirement Gratuity Fund, amounting to P28 billion.

She said that the amount intended for pension and retirement benefits of individual agencies have been removed from their budgets and included in the separate item in the 2003 General Appropriations Act, which is the P28 billion fund.

PNP, AFP on high alert since September 11 last year to secure installations, embassies in country — Golez

National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez said today the Philippine National Police, assisted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, has maintained a high level of alert since September 11 last year in compliance with the directive of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to secure all vital installations and establishments in the country.

Golez said the security measures cover foreign embassies in the country, particularly the embassies of the United States, Israel and the United Kingdom which requested them.

“Said embassies have been provided formidable perimeter and internal security,” Golez said, referring to the US, Israeli and British missions.

The National Security Adviser said the supposed Al-Qaeda plot to bomb the US and Israeli embassies, which was reported by the Cable News Network (CNN), is “an old unverified story that came out early this year.”

“So far, in spite of relentless domestic intelligence effort and coordination with counterpart intelligence organizations abroad, there has been no confirmation or more solid evidence that there is really such bomb plot,” Golez said.

“Nonetheless, the security group does not take anything for granted,” Golez said.

Golez said the CNN report is a feature story, not news, on international terrorism.

“I note that the CNN has been running a series on Al-Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiya, and other international terrorist organizations operating in the Asian region,” he said.

Golez said this has been inplemented months ago in the current security program.

GMA directs new AFP chief to modernize country’s military doctrine

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the new Armed Forces of Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff, Gen. Benjamin Defensor, Jr., to modernize the country’s military doctrine, saying the Philippines has enough great battles to inspire and serve as models and lessons for the Filipino soldiers.

The President gave this directive at the turnover ceremonies of the 30th AFP Chief of Staff in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City at 10 a.m. today.

Defensor, former chief of the Philippine Air Force (PAF), succeeded Gen. Roy Cimatu, who retires after 36 years in the military service.

The Commander-in-Chief said her guidance to modernize the doctrine was also given to Defensor’s predecessors, now Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Gen. Diomedio Villanueva, and Gen. Cimatu.

All of these AFP chiefs observed the continuity of following the guidance of the Commander-in-Chief with internalized convictions belied the critics' charge that short terms in the Office of the Chief of Staff are anathema to stability in the leadership of the armed forces, the President said.

The President pointed out that groups who criticize the AFP chief's short tenure are wrong because they do not appreciate the principle of professional continuity in the military command, the command as an institution and not the command as persons.

"These critics are wrong because they presume that leadership in the armed forces is politicized," the President said.

"Leadership in the armed forces is not politicized, it is a professional," the President stressed, saying that the critics were wrong because they underestimate the loyalty and professionalism of the men in uniform.

The President pointed out that it is of no great consequence how long a Chief of Staff serves his tenure. "What is important and indispensable is the permanence of values, standards and norms in the armed forces," she said.

While guidance of modernizing the military doctrine has been internalized by the leadership of the armed forces through three commanders, the President expressed the belief that now is the time to institutionalize the doctrine throughout the organization.

She said the modernization of the military doctrine should take into account what is called "the post-military affairs revolution thinking" regarding the changing military mission brought about by the growth in the power of the criminal terrorists and other armed non-state organizations that now challenge traditional nation states in many parts of the globe.

She said the 20th century US model of civil military relations and task allocation in which the military looks outward and law enforcement agencies do the domestic chores is breaking down everywhere.

The last revolution in military affairs occurred in the 1980's consisting of high-tech warfare as in Desert Storm, but this revolution, started 20 years ago and more, is over now and a new paradigm is prevailing, the President said.

The President said the country is being confronted today by creatively organized enemies, employing behaviors and technologies ranging from the Stone Age to those at the Imagination's Age.

"This model, as I said, is breaking down everywhere, criminal terrorists and other armed non-state organizations have grown too powerful and adept in extreme cases, we have seen the emergence of enterprise armies. And we have seen that in the Philippines," the President said.

The President said that the modernization of the country's armed forces will allow us to possess the material tools for the job in fighting the emerging wars against criminal ghost states, para-states and criminal enterprise armies.

"But even if we modernize the material tools of our armed forces, we would still lack innovative methodologies and adequately contemporary laws unless we modernize doctrine," she said.

To address the broad range of emerging threats, the President admitted the military needs new weapons. "But we also need new rules of engagements," she said.

The President expressed elation that the military has begun to do the new doctrines. "Now we must manualize them," she said.

GMA pays tribute to Defensor, Cimat

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed the belief that the new Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff, Gen. Benjamin Defensor, Jr., will uphold the Constitutional mandate and sustain the unity of purpose and singularity of direction that now drive the country's armed forces.

Speaking at the Change of Command ceremony when Gen. Defensor, Jr., former chief of the Philippine Air Force (PAF), took over from outgoing Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu, the President said that Defensor has consistently been known for his "innovative spirit and strategic finesse."

The President said Defensor's First Force strategy for the Philippine Air Force which was developed in response to her call for a definition of AFP doctrines, is among the solid testaments of the general's high quality of leadership and talent.

The President described Defensor, the First Ilonggo to become Chief of Staff, as an "innovator, a pioneer and a trailblazer."

Defensor is only the second PAF chief in AFP's history to make it to the top post. General Arnulfo Acedera made it in 1995 during the time of President Fidel Ramos. Lt. Gen. Pelagio Cruz, the other AFP chief widely regarded to have come from the Air Force, actually rose from the Philippine Constabulary.

The President also congratulated General Cimatu for a mission "magnificently accomplished."

Among Cimatu's biggest accomplishments were the capture of most of the 46 camps of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) during the Central Mindanao War in the summer of the 2000, and the crippling 1,200-man Abu Sayyaf terrorists, reducing the extremists group to about 200.

As commander of the Southern Command, the President said Cimatu continued to impress both Philippine foot soldiers and American top brass with his excellent and aggressive campaign plans against the Abu Sayyaf.

"I remember the Commander-in-Chief of the (US) Pacific (Forces) telling me that in my Southern Commander, Roy Cimatu, I had one of the best generals in the whole world," the President said.

GMA launches 'K4' national prayer movement

GUIGUINTO, Bulacan — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the launching of the *Kilusang Kwatro* (K4), the national prayer movement focused on institutionalizing prayer in daily Filipino life.

The launching, held at Café Valenzuela in Barangay Tabang, was set up by the leadership of the Philippine Ministerial Fellowship Network, one of the members of the organizing committee in the last National Day of Prayer called by the President herself.

K4 seeks to make every Filipino pray for government leaders for four times a day, the first is after one wakes up in the morning and the rest is the saying of grace before the three meals.

The movement is specifically focused on the strategic executives of land – the President, the Governors, the Mayors and barangay captains.

In her brief remarks, the President lauded the efforts of the Philippine Ministerial Fellowship Network for making prayer a daily part of the Filipino lives.

She recalled that she asked the group during a meeting with them at Malacañang to pray against the evil spirits hounding the Filipinos now – skepticism and hopelessness.

The President said the efforts to institutionalize prayer in our daily lives are very laudable.

She said she has always believed that the most powerful arsenal in any war is prayer.

“*Sa mga panahong ito, hindi sapat ang modernong sandata. Kailangan din natin ng modernong pag-iisip at mga istrategiya. At sa ating paglalaban, ang sandata na hindi naman bagay na materyal, lalo na sa giyera sa pamamagitan ng katiwalian, ang pinakaimportateng sandata ay yung sandata ng panalangin* (In these times, it is not enough to have modern weapons. We also need modern thinking and strategy. And in our fight against corruption, the most effective warfare is prayer),” the President said.

K4 also stands for *Kalusugan, Kaligtasan, Karunungan, Katuwiran*, four qualities that are being prayed for.

The President said that she hopes to be like David in the Bible, whose prayers were granted by God.

She added that she prays to have King Solomon’s wisdom.

Accompanying the President to the event were Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., Presidential Assistant for Cooperatives Roberto Pagdanganan and Presidential Assistant for Religious and Ecclesiastical Affairs Conrado Limcaoco, Jr.

Welcoming the President at the venue were Bulacan Gov. Josefina de la Cruz, Representatives Wilfredo Villarama and Joel Villanueva, Guiguinto Mayor Ambrosio Cruz, Jr., Bishops Eddie Villanueva, Efren Tindero, Romero Corpuz, Reverend Jonel Milan and Benjie Gatchalian, PNP Regional Director Oscar Calderon and North Luzon Command chief Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia.

During the ceremonies, the audience prayed over the safety and success of the President and the rest of the executive family.

GMA releases P10 M to Bulacan provincial gov’t for use as loan for town SMEs

GUIGUINTO, Bulacan — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today released the amount of P10 million to the provincial government of Bulacan.

The amount, according to the President, would be given as loan by the Land Bank of the Philippines to the first ten towns of Bulacan that would be able to come up with project proposals on how to develop a certain product.

The President, who made the announcement in her speech before Bulacan barangay officials at the *Bulwagang Bayan* Covered Court here, said the P10 million is the first of many loans that the government would be granting to small towns in the bid to further develop the domestic market.

“This is what we call One Town, One Product, One Million Peso enterprise,” the President said.

The President noted her earlier call on the Filipino people to concentrate efforts in the development the domestic market through small and medium enterprises.

She noted that the Filipino people must rely more on the domestic demand to prop up the economy, rather than depend on the export market.

Aside from this, the President called on the new Bulacan barangay officials to practice “new politics” by being true to their responsibilities.

She noted that barangay officials are the “frontliners” in the administration’s bid to build a strong republic.

Earlier, the President officiated the oathtaking of barangay officials to the Lakas party.

She was also presented a copy of the signed Memorandum of Agreement entered into by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, San Jose del Monte City Water District (SJDMCWD), Bulacan provincial government and Local Water Utilities Authority for the supply of raw water by MWSS to the SJDMCWD.

The President also distributed 340 peacekeeping kits, consisting of gadgets such as whistles, flashlights and night sticks to 245 barangay officials.

The President was accompanied to the event by Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., Presidential Assistant for Northern Luzon Renato Diaz, Representatives Wilfredo Villarama, Wilhelmino Sy-Alvarado, Lorna Silverio and Reylina Nicolas, Gov. Josefina de la Cruz, Vice Gov. aurelio Plamenco and Guiguinto Mayor Ambrosio Cruz, Jr.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 10, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034251/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept10.htm>

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Malacañang Museum asks for citizens help in accumulating Presidential mementos

The Presidential Museum in Malacañang is asking generous citizens to lend or donate their memorabilia items about former Presidents for display at the museum.

Presidential Museum Director Missy Reyes said the museum is looking for mementos and souvenir items of the former occupants of the historic palace to be featured in the exhibit honoring all the Presidents.

“No other place could be more appropriate to hold the treasures and memories of the Philippines’ seat of power,” Reyes said.

The museum will also showcase the antiques and artworks collected in the Palace over the years, making all the Palace treasures accessible for viewing by the Filipino public.

There will also be a Presidential Library, which will hold all the book collections — both antique and new — which have belonged to the former residents of the Palace.

The museum will also exhibit memorabilia of former First Ladies.

Last May 2002, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered that the historic building adjacent to Malacañang Palace be transformed into the Presidential Museum and Library.

Named Kalayaan Hall during the administration of President Corazon Aquino, this beautiful building with neo-classical architecture was once the Maharlika Hall during the Marcos era.

Previously, it was the Executive Building where the American Governor-Generals held office in the 1920s.

For more information, please contact Director Missy Reyes or Evelyn Franco of the Presidential Museum Office at telephone Nos. 736-8639 or 736-8617.

GMA praises kidnap victim for courage, determination in pursuing case

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today praised kidnap victim Agnes Guirindola for her courage and determination in pursuing the case against two men who abducted her in 1994 and were sentenced to death by lethal injection.

The President personally relayed her message to Guirindola during her visit to the kidnap victim's house in Marikina City this morning.

During their conversation, Guirindola presented to the President a letter requesting her not to grant a parole to her convicted kidnapers, Venancio Roxas and Roberto Gungon.

President Macapagal-Arroyo arrived at the Guirindola residence at around 10:30 a.m. together with Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. and Marikina City Mayor Marides Fernando.

She was welcomed by the victim's parents, Francisco and Elvira Guirindola.

Guirindola was kidnapped, shot in the face and left for dead in a grassy lot in Batangas in January 1994.

While in the custody of her abductors, Guirindola told the President that she was unable to identify a third suspect who was then in the company of Roxas and Gungon.

Last week, Quezon City Regional Trial Court Judge Demetrio Macapagal, Sr. sentenced Roxas to death for kidnapping and serious illegal detention with frustrated murder.

Roxas was also ordered to pay Guirindola the amount of P1.5 million in moral and exemplary damages and more than P300,000 in actual damages.

Gungon was meted the death penalty by Quezon City Regional Trial Court Judge Luca Bersamin in February 1995. Both are now detained at the National Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa City.

Records showed that Guirindola, then a 20-year-old student taking up engineering at De La Salle University, was abducted by Roxas and Gungon while she was driving along Panay Avenue in Quezon City at about 3:30 p.m. on January 12, 1994.

The two men brought her to Batangas where she was forced to drink laced soda which caused her to feel dizzy and lapse into a coma.

When Guirindola woke up at about 10 p.m., the men had already taken the money from her wallet as well as the jewelry she was wearing.

Guirindola then said she needed to answer a call of nature, and Gungon led her to a grassy area. She had just finished relieving herself when she saw "white sparks," fell down and lost consciousness.

The victim did not realize she had been shot until after she regained consciousness and found blood oozing from her face and neck.

She narrated to the President that she even walked for about a kilometer and followed a light that led her to a small house where she sought help.

DOJ files cases against errant judges, prosecutor

Government efforts to send hoodlums in robes to jail are paying off, with the Department of Justice (DOJ) filing administrative and criminal cases against errant judges and court personnel.

A report, reflecting achievements against targets set in the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, said the DOJ had recently filed graft cases against two judges and a prosecutor.

Charged were judges Pedro Gutierrez and Rodrigo Lorenzo and First Assistant Chief Prosecutor Oscar Corpus.

The report said Gutierrez was charged administratively before the Office of the Court Administrator, Supreme Court for giving, on March 1 this year, the accused unwarranted benefit, advantage or preference with the discharge of judicial function through manifest partiality or gross inexcusable negligence.

He was also charged criminally before the Office of the Ombudsman for violation of Republic Act 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

Despite strong evidence of prosecution, he was alleged to have granted the accused's demurrer to evidence involving 986.5 grams of shabu in an order dated August 29, 2002.

On the other hand, Lorenzo was charged administratively before the Office of the Court Administrator, Supreme Court for grave misconduct.

The report noted that Lorenzo rendered an unjust judgment — while committing gross ignorance of the law of procedure and bias and partiality — for ordering on August 15, 2002 the release on bail of five Chinese nationals before all prosecution witnesses could be presented.

The Chinese were arrested while mixing 13,978.5 grams of shabu components and while possessing another 4,606.1 grams of the illegal drug. They were later released on bail at P500,000 each.

He was also criminally charged with violation of RA 3019 before the Office of the Ombudsman.

Meanwhile, Corpus was charged with gross neglect of duty and inefficiency and incompetence in the performance of official duties.

The initial hearing of Corpus's case was conducted on August 22.

Gov't pursues criminal raps against big-time smugglers

Criminals involved in big-time smuggling will soon find themselves behind bars.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has filed at least 10 smuggling cases in court, from the 34 cases it received from law enforcement agencies from December 2001 to August 30, 2002.

An update of SONA accomplishments prepared by the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) said that three of the 34 cases were already submitted for resolution, 19 under preliminary investigation, one remanded to the Bureau of Customs for further investigation and one dismissed.

It said the customs bureau has filed eight criminal cases before the DOJ for violations of customs and tariff laws.

The PMS update showed the attainments against targets set in the July State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The PMS report also noted that government had seized some 36,005 bags of smuggled rice since June 2002.

The most recent confiscation involved about 7,000 bags of Vietnam rice worth some P3.5 million at the Zamboanga Port last August 23.

This has prompted Philippine Coast Guard and other officials to meet on August 28 and make an inventory of ports and wharves nationwide unmanned by state authorities.

Meanwhile, officials have implemented measures to carry out the order of President Macapagal-Arroyo to seize smuggled goods, crush smuggling syndicates and get big-time smugglers.

Among the measures made were the:

- Streamlining of coordination between the DOJ and the customs bureau in prosecuting cases against violators of customs laws;
- Drafting of an anti-smuggling bill to provide clearer basis for prosecuting and imposing heavier penalties on smugglers, for certification of the President as urgent;
- Deputation of the military and the police to help the customs bureau in enforcing tariff and customs laws, particularly against rice and sugar smuggling;

Strengthening of the intelligence network to compile, validate and analyze information on persons suspected to be involved in smuggling.

GMA names Cimatu to head Middle East crisis committee

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today designated former Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Roy Cimatu to head a crisis committee that would oversee the evacuation of Filipinos in Iraq.

In her regular luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said the committee would also assess when and how Filipinos in the Middle East would be bailed out, in case the United States made good its threat to attack Iraq.

The US had threatened to use military force against Iraq if the latter continued to refuse international inspectors access to sites suspected of being used for building nuclear and biological weapons.

The President said the committee, whose members would be composed of officials from the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Labor and Employment, would further study the consequences on Filipinos resulting from a US attack on Iraq.

“One of them, for instance, is the supply of oil,” she said.

The President called Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople in New York to inform him of the creation of the Middle East crisis committee.

“It’s a splendid idea,” she quoted Ople as saying.

The President, who would still have to inform the recently retired AFP Chief of Staff of his new designation, noted Cimatu’s superb operational record, having “captured 46 (Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebel) camps.”

She believed that Cimatu could handle the job.

“I’d like to have strong people,” the President said of Cimatu, who retired after 36 years in the military service.

Cimatu was also credited for crippling the 1,200-man Abu Sayyaf terrorists and reducing the notorious kidnap-for-ransom group to less than 200.

GMA names Santillan as new PAF Chief

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the appointment of Major General Nestor Santillan as Commanding General of the Philippine Air Force (PAF).

Santillan replaced former PAF chief, Gen. Benjamin Defensor, Jr., who was appointed by the President as the new Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The Chief Executive made the announcement during her regular luncheon meeting this afternoon with members of the Malacañang Press Corps.

Prior to his appointment, Santillan, 54, was vice commander of the PAF, a position he held since Nov. 9, 2001.

A native of Manila, Santillan is a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, class 1970.

Santillan served as commander of Tactical Operations Command of the Mactan-Benito Air Base; Wing Commander of the PAF's 220th Air Wing and the 410th Maintenance Wing, at the Mactan-Benito Air Base and at Clark Air Base.

He also served as Battalion Commander of the First Security Battalion of the Presidential Security Group from Feb. 1, 1985 to March 20, 1986.

Santillan received numerous awards and decorations, among them the PAF Aeronautical Badge (Basic Plot Training), PAF Aeronautical Badge (Senior Pilot Training), Commanding General Award, Military Merit Medal, Golden Aviator Award for Command and Leadership for Performance as Commander of the Tactical Operations Command, Golden Aviator Award for Research and Development, and the Anti-Dissidence Campaign Medal.

He is married to Enya Santillan with four children, two boys and two daughters.

GMA to ask Taipans to go into housing

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she would ask the country's top Chinese businessmen, or *taipans*, to help the government in its mass housing program.

In her luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President recalled that during the term of former President Fidel Ramos, he also asked the *taipans* to help the government put up a world-class international airport.

"This time I will not ask them to put up an airport. I'll ask them to go into housing," the President said, adding that he would ask Chairman Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) to organize a meeting with the *taipans*.

According to the President, the *taipans* do not even have to form a corporation, or participate in a public bidding that would be challenged by other groups. "It would be a private sector initiative," the President said.

The President said she had directed Defensor and other concerned officials to remove the bottlenecks that have caused the delay in the implementation of the government's housing program.

She said that the Pag-IBIG Fund as an institution does not seem to be able to absorb the 100,000 housing units that she had ordered built for one year.

The President said that the government policy on housing, including that of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), should be geared toward removing these bottlenecks,

GMA commends NBI, PSG operatives for apprehension of smuggled rice shipment

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and members her own Presidential Security Guard (PSG) who were directed to secure a private warehouse in Antipolo City where smuggled rice worth P1.8 billion was reported to be stashed.

The President said she went to the site of the warehouse “to let them know that we appreciate their work.”

The President said that a warrant of seizure and detention was expected to be obtained from the court anytime today.

The President said that since she was already in the neighborhood, she decided to personally extend her congratulations to the NBI agents and her PSG’s special reaction unit, or “her men in black,” to commend them for doing a good job.

Later in his press briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said the warehouse has been effectively cordoned off for about a week and there is no way that the smuggled rice would be spirited out.

The President said that the law enforcers, whose main job should be “sleuthing,” have been forced to stay within the vicinity of the warehouse because the warrant has not been seized up yet.

The premium smuggled rice reportedly arrived at the Port of Manila in May and June from Vietnam and were shipped through several container vans.

According to the Intelligence and Enforcement Group of the Bureau of Customs, the rice shipment did not have the proper importation permit from the National Food Authority (NFA).

The 23,460 cavans of rice were reportedly declared as raw materials for the making of “sotanghon” by the manufacturer for re-exportation.

GMA ensures SME participation in economic growth

Small and medium enterprises (SME) nationwide are looking forward to getting a P1-million loan with easy payback terms and to reaping gains from the government’s one-town, one-product program.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today identified areas where the one-town, one-product strategy, an effective global economic formula that aimed to raise domestic supply and consumption, would be carried out.

She said she would look into the loaning portfolio for SMEs and where the loans are being made to “make sure that every town has at least P1 million of SME loans.”

In her regular luncheon with the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said she launched the strategy, hoping to develop SMEs, early this month in a visit to Lakewood, Zamboanga del Sur.

Lakewood would get the P1 million loan with a four-year payback term for fruit production. She said nine other Zamboanga del Sur towns would get the loan for the production of hybrid rice seeds.

“The PSF (Presidential Social Fund) has money in the Landbank for lending out,” she added.

In Laguna, the President picked on Cabuyao town to receive the P1 million loan for a SME involved in the recycling of soft packs of Nestle Philippines into construction materials.

She said the money would come from the Small Business Guarantee Fund with counterparts from Nestle and Rep. Joaquin Chipeco, Jr.

Still in Laguna, she ordered regional officials of the Department of Trade and Industry to identify SMEs involved in autoparts supply in Sta. Rosa, where multinational car-making plants are located, to get the loan.

She also hinted at the grant of a similar loan to an electronics SME in Sta. Rosa, Laguna to help raise the local value added of Amkor Technology Philippines, a semi-conductor producer, “which suffered last year because of the decline in the market for computers and chips.”

The President had given P1 million each to the town of Monkayo in Compostela Valley for a SME into gold jewelry production and to Mayor Pedro Acharon, Jr. of General Santos City for a SME into tuna production.

In Davao del Norte, she was informed by Governor Rodolfo del Rosario that many SMEs in various towns of the province produced picnic bags and other products from cogon grass.

“They have the market and they have the technology,” she said, while nodding to extending the towns the loan.

Davao Oriental Governor Ma. Elena Palma Gil also told the President that SMEs in the coastal towns of the province produced agar-agar marketed to the FMC in Cebu.

The President also noted that the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center would pick up some proposals from SMEs in Bulacan and Quezon.

GMA orders evacuation of Filipinos from Iraq to Jordan

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the immediate evacuation of 118 Filipino workers, including non-essential embassy personnel and their dependents from Baghdad in Iraq to Amman, Jordan.

The Chief Executive made the announcement during a luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corp at Malacañang Palace.

In his press briefing later, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President ordered the immediate evacuation of Filipino workers in Baghdad after conferring with Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople, who is now in New York City.

Bunye also said that before her conversation with Ople, the President received a recommendation from Philippine Ambassador to the United States Albert del Rosario for the Philippines to evacuate its citizens from Baghdad. Del Rosario, Bunye said, earlier met with United States Assistant Secretary of State for Asia and the Pacific James Kelly.

“The US representative noted that any evacuation at this point would be a very sound judgment,” Bunye quoted Kelly as saying.

In a memorandum for the President, Ople said that while the Philippine government has no final information that a US attack on Iraq is imminent, “our judgment is well-based and reasonable and we would err on the side of prudence.”

The DFA has also ordered non-essential embassy personnel and their dependents to join the Filipino workers in moving out of Iraq.

He stressed that the order applies only to Filipinos there, adding that the Filipinos in other Middle East countries are not immediately affected.

“We have not yet reached a critical mass of information with respect to other Middle East posts,” Ople said.

Ople also said that the contingency plans for other Middle East posts will be activated only when necessary. “Each of these posts has been authorized additional spending money — aside from their existing embassy funds — which may be used for emergency evacuation,” he added.

He noted that the evacuation of the Filipino workers in Iraq is just a first step, saying that “this is not yet the major movement that we have planned for.”

Based on the DFA report, there are only 118 Filipinos in Iraq, which include some 10 overseas workers and 30 Filipino technicians that form part of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Northern Iraq.

GMA to open new food plant in Batangas Thursday

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will likely stress the importance of fresh capital pumped into the economy that would create hundreds of new jobs, when she leads officials in opening Thursday the RFM President Enterprises Corp. (RPEC), a P500-million state-of-the-art food manufacturing plant at the Philtown Industrial Estate in Tanauan City, Batangas.

The President earlier announced that the Philippines remained an attractive investment destination.

“The strategic synergy of the strengths of RFM Corporation of the Philippines and the Uni-President Group of Taiwan highlights the attractiveness of business partnerships between local and foreign firms that continue to draw investors to our shores,” she said.

The President is expected to unveil the plant marker and later tour the RPEC plant while inspecting its modern facilities and interacting with Filipino employees of the firm.

She will also receive a briefing from RFM president and chief executive officer Jose A. Concepcion III and Uni-President Enterprises Corp. business unit group president Alex Lo.

The President will be joined by other national and local officials.

Uni-President is Taiwan’s largest food and beverage company while RFM Corporation is one of the country’s top producers of food and beverage. RPEC is the two firms’ joint venture signed last March 1.

The President witnessed the signing ceremonies in Malacañang.

Concepcion III said “the new food plant represents the realization of our joint venture’s commitment to produce superior and value-for-money noodles and noodle products for the Filipino.”

He said Thursday’s event would see the unveiling of noodle products under the “Saucy Mi” and the “Nooda Crunch” brands.

Uni-President group president Jason Lin said “Uni-President has long desired to be a part of the Philippines business community because it believed in the country’s future and in its people.

“Our exposure to your culture and to some of your business organizations has further confirmed our corporation’s vision of establishing a strong presence in this market,” Lin said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

The President's Day: September 12, 2002

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- **GMA cites investors for helping RP sustain economic growth**
- **Golez says GMA order to evacuate Filipinos in Iraq a precautionary step**
- **Filipino-Chinese Federation responds to GMA appeal for help for returning Filipinos**
- **GMA lauds Sykes Asia for making RP hub of call center operations in Asia-Pacific Rim**
- **RP has ample supply of crude, oil sharing arrangement with Asean if Iraq war erupts**
- **No links whatsoever between First Gentleman and PIATCO, Palace stresses**
- **GMA leads law enforcers in smuggled rice seizure**

Gov't looks into Payatas land expropriation disposition

The Chief Presidential Legal Counsel is reviewing a proposed executive order that will direct the expropriation and disposition of the Payatas estate to qualified informal settlers and its actual occupants.

A Presidential Management staff (PMS) update on achievements against targets set in the State of the Nation Address of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo showed the continuing identification of properties in the estate.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it sought to identify which parts of the estate had valid titles, spurious titles or were untitled at all.

The DENR said Payatas land with valid titles would be expropriated by the government and would be disposed through direct sale or the Insular Government Property Sales Application to beneficiaries.

Later, the government would issue the corresponding certificates of actual occupancy, orders of awards and deeds of sale.

Areas with fake titles would be cancelled and the land reverted to government. A presidential proclamation would then be issued for land disposition.

Untitled lands would be disposed, following the issuance of a proclamation, through a miscellaneous sales application.

The President had been visiting Payatas to see how it could be transformed into a model community and how the lives of the area's people could be made better.

Payatas used to be the dumping site of Metro Manila's tons and tons of garbage. The people there used to get income by digging into mountains of garbage dumped in the area.

GMA cites investors for helping RP sustain economic growth

TANAUAN CITY, Batangas — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited domestic and foreign investors for showing confidence in the country's healthy business atmosphere and for pumping the economy with fresh capital that result in the creation of more jobs.

The President noted the growing partnership between the government and business enterprises, as she led officials in inaugurating the P500 million state-of-the-art food plant of RFM President Enterprises Corporation (RPEC) at the Philtown Industrial Estate here.

“Congratulations and thank you for showing your confidence in investing in the Philippines,” the President told Jose Concepcion III, chief executive officer of RFM Corp., and Alex Lo, chief executive officer of Uni-President Enterprises.

Uni-President is Taiwan’s largest food and beverage company while RFM Corporation is one of the country’s top producers of food and beverage.

RPEC is a joint venture of the two firms. The President witnessed the signing of the joint venture in Malacañang last March 1.

The President earlier announced that the Philippines remained an attractive investment destination.

“The strategic synergy of the strengths of RFM Corporation of the Philippines and the Uni-President Group of Taiwan highlights the attractiveness of business partnerships between local and foreign firms that continue to draw investors to our shores,” she said.

In a program, the President unveiled the marker of the newly-built RPEC plant, after which she was given a tour of the facility and inspected the automated instant noodle-making machine and viewed the processing of noodles, RPEC’s main product line.

She also received a briefing from Concepcion and Lo on plant operations and the history of each other’s companies.

The two businessmen told the President that the formidable union of RFM and Uni-President was a perfect match, since both firms started as flour mills and later evolved as among the largest branded food and beverage companies in the Philippines and Taiwan.

The President joined RPEC officials and officials in tasting “Saucy Mi” instant noodles inside the plant.

They said RPEC hoped to revolutionize the country’s food industry and market.

They expressed optimism that Filipinos would welcome their new, exciting and innovative products.

Following her visit to RPEC, the President made a surprise inspection of a rice store at the Tanauan public market to see for herself the constant P16 price per kilo of National Food Authority rice being sold to the public.

Golez says GMA order to evacuate Filipinos in Iraq a precautionary step

The order of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for the immediate evacuation of Filipino overseas workers in Iraq was only a precautionary measure, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez today said.

“*Iyan po ay isang pag-iingat lamang* (That was only a precautionary measure),” Golez said in a radio interview this morning.

Golez stressed that there were still no clear indications of hostilities erupting in Iraq, although the Philippine government continued to monitor the developments in the Middle East region.

“*Wala pa talagang implikasyon na maaring magsimula ang kaguluhan sa Iraq, bagamat mino-monitor natin ng husto iyan* (There are no indications yet that hostilities might erupt in Iraq although we continue to monitor the development),” he said.

Golez noted that the President’s evacuation order was based on the recommendation of Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople.

Golez added that the Philippines, like other nations around the world, looked forward to the address of United States President George W. Bush before the United Nations General Assembly on Friday (September 13).

There are only 118 Filipinos in Iraq, to include some 10 overseas workers and 30 Filipino technicians who form part of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Northern Iraq.

Aside from OFWs, the order to evacuate also includes non-essential embassy personnel and their dependents from Baghdad in Iraq to Amman, Jordan.

In his memorandum for the President, Ople (in New York) said that while the Philippine government had no final information that a US attack on Iraq was imminent, "our judgment is well-based and reasonable and we would err on the side of prudence."

Filipino-Chinese Federation responds to GMA appeal for help for returning Filipinos

In response to the appeal of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for the public to help the thousands of returning Filipinos from Malaysia and Sabah, the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (FFCCCII) has launched a campaign to mobilize resources to address the pressing needs of the returnees.

Dubbed as "Paglingap 2002," FFCCCII Secretary General Joaquin Sy said the federation has mobilized its nationwide network and facilities to generate more support for the Filipinos expelled by Malaysia.

In a letter sent to Malacañang, Sy informed the President that on the first day of their solicitation campaign alone, the federation gathered nearly P1 million worth of cash and goods from Filipino-Chinese businessmen and individuals based in Binondo, Manila.

Only recently, the FFCCCII was cited by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) as one of the first private sector organizations to help the Filipino returnees.

As soon as the first batch of returnees landed in the Southern Philippines, the FFCCCII, through its Welfare Committee, mobilized its local chambers in Zamboanga and Tawi-Tawi to provide noodles, canned goods, drinking water and other necessities.

"Our local chambers continue to work closely with local chief executives and local social welfare officers for the proper distribution of donations," Sy assured the President in a letter.

In a radio address last Sept. 8, President Macapagal-Arroyo appealed for donations from the public to help the returning Filipinos.

"We need to find jobs for them. We need to comfort them in their despair. And we need to help provide them with food, medicine and temporary shelter," the President said.

The President said that donations for the returnees, either in cash or in kind, could be sent to the local chapters of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

GMA lauds Sykes Asia for making RP hub of call center operations in Asia-Pacific Rim

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded officials of Sykes Asia for their decision to make its call center facility in Makati City as the hub for its operations not only in the Asia Pacific Rim but elsewhere in the world.

During her visit to the facility this morning, the President also personally thanked Michael John Henderson, Sykes' managing director for Asia and Pacific Rim, for its P200 million new investment in the facility.

The P200 million investments represent a continued expansion of Syke's already well-established operations in the Philippines and reinforced its position as the leading outsource call center provider in the country.

The President said that Sykes' newly-opened call center is a testimony to the competitive advantage of the Philippines in the information and communications technology (ICT). "It is the wave of the 21st century," she said.

Henderson pointed out that the "pro-active" involvement of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration in the development of the ICT industry was a significant factor in their decision to expand their investment in the Philippines.

"The Board of Investments (BOI) has provided an open forum for discussion," Henderson said, stressing the essentially of operating in an economic and political environment that supports their business doctrine and corresponding methodology that is based on continuous performance improvement.

Housed on the six floors of the Robinson's Summit Center at the Ayala Avenue in Makati City, the new Sykes Asia facility provides 1,132 fully-fitted call center seats and complements the existing 674 seats in its facility in the Ortigas business district.

The company currently employs around 1,500 people, with this figure expected to reach 2,000 by the end of the year.

"This is a best-in-class facility," Henderson informed the President, saying that the Sykes facility in Makati City is the primary hub for its unique Asynchronous Transfer Model (ATM) global communications network.

"This allows for unrivaled quality, flexibility and availability when handling customer calls from throughout the world," Henderson said.

Henderson said that its Philippine operation is not so much an offshore location, but rather a critical hub for their integrated global services.

As the regional headquarters for Sykes Asia and Pacific Rim operations, the new facility in Makati City supports three other centers in the region.

Sykes Asia provides customer support for 21 clients, handling calls in different languages from throughout Asia and the United States.

Clients include Microsoft, Kodak, Emerson Electric, Macromedia, American Express, Apple and Adobe Systems.

Earlier, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) said that the country's growing call center industry is expected to generate some 24,000 jobs for skilled workers in the next two years.

In its Labor Market Intelligence Report (LMIR), TESDA said the availability of highly-skilled Filipino workers fluent in English had continued to boost the country's bid to become the global "call center capital" and a major international e-services hub.

On several occasions, the President had stressed the country's vital role as a center of quality, world-class ICT services.

The President pointed to ICT as the "strategic tool that would propel the Philippines to its proper niche in the global village in the 21st century."

The Department of Labor and Employment has described the call center business as the country's "latest sunshine industry."

It noted the "vast growth potential and bright job prospects" in the field, as the Philippines has so far filled up only 10,000 "seats."

The round-the-clock call center operations are handled by "seats" composed of two or three personnel – or customer service representatives – who manage telephone lines in work shifts.

"Customer services" handle client queries and complaints and provide solutions through telemarketing, computer product help desks, financial services, and assistance in transport and freight, insurance, hotels, and information technology.

Government experts have predicted that the country, with its English-speaking workforce and capacity to provide premium, multilingual, and multimedia services in wide-ranging ICT applications, could clinch the "call center capital of the world" status in this decade.

Citing Department of Trade and Industry projections, TESDA also expected local call center revenues to increase from US\$173 million to US\$864 million in 2004, following the industry's growth by more than 200 percent from 2000 to 2001.

There are 16 industry players comprising the Call Center Association of the Philippines.

The giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company has also announced a \$5.5-million investment in a 500-seat venture with Parlance Systems, Inc. and in other industry agreements.

The Reese Brothers in the US also bared plans to invest in a call center project at the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, which would open an additional 2,000 jobs.

RP has ample supply of crude, oil sharing arrangement with Asean if Iraq war erupts

Malacañang today assured that the Philippines has an ample supply of petroleum on top of an existing oil-sharing agreement with its neighbor countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in the event of a war in Iraq.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio "Toting" Bunye stressed that based on the previous statements provided by the Department of Energy (DOE), the Philippines has a petroleum supply which could last for 69 to 70 days.

"The fact is no actual hostilities have started which could actually constrict our oil supply," Bunye said.

The Philippine, he said, may rely on the petroleum security arrangement with its fellow members in the Asean in circumstances of both shortage and oversupply of petroleum.

The said agreement was signed by the foreign ministers of Asean member-countries during a meeting held in Manila on June 24, 1986.

Under a shortage situation, the agreement provides that the oil-exporting members of Asean commit to supply crude oil and petroleum products provided these would be for domestic consumption in the distressed Asean member-countries.

The term “shortage” refers to an emergency situation in which at least one Asean member-country suffers extreme petroleum shortage, due to unexpected natural calamity such as earthquake or other calamity such as an explosion of production facilities or an abrupt stoppage of import due to war or other similar crisis.

In the event of a shortage or oversupply, the member-country in distress shall give notice to the Asean Economic Ministers on Energy Cooperation, which, in turn, would decide within three weeks to put the emergency petroleum-sharing scheme into operation.

The agreement was signed in consideration of the establishment of a petroleum security arrangement among Asean member-countries towards the strengthening of the economic resilience of the individual member-country as well as to the economic resilience and solidarity of Asean.

No links whatsoever between First Gentleman and PIATCO, Palace stresses

Malacañang today reiterated that the First Gentleman, Jose Miguel Arroyo, has no involvement whatsoever in the flawed contract with the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (PIATCO) for the construction of Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

“There is absolutely no link between the First Gentleman and PIATCO,” Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said this afternoon in his daily press briefing in Malacañang.

Bunye said that the review of the contract with PIATCO was ordered by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo herself and such action would be contradictory to a situation where the First Gentleman is linked to PIATCO or any of its officers.

Earlier, the President charged former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile with spreading “unverified and malicious” statement about the First Gentleman.

The press secretary also brushed aside suggestions that the First Gentleman should appear at the Senate inquiry about the PIATCO contract.

“That is very speculative at this time because we see no basis as of now for the Senate to invite the First Gentleman,” Bunye said.

Senate President Franklin Drilon has already said that the First Gentleman has nothing to do with the activities of PIATCO public relations consultant Alfonso Liongson.

GMA leads law enforcers in smuggled rice seizure

ANTIPOLO CITY — To prove that authorities were out to seize suspected smuggled rice in a warehouse here, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today returned to this city, leading officials and law enforcers confiscate the illegal goods in favor of government.

“I was not *kuryente* yesterday,” the President said, referring to media reports that she was a victim of a bum steer.

In an interview with reporters in front of stacks of sacks of rice in Sitio Pagumbong, Barangay Mayamot, Lower Antipolo City, the President clarified that she never intended to enter the warehouse when she made a surprise visit to the area yesterday.

“I came here knowing that Tony’s (BOC Commissioner Antonio Bernardo) warrant is still to come but I was not intending to enter,” she said.

She noted that if the warehouse operators had nothing to hide, they should have allowed her, being the President of the Republic, to enter the warehouse premises.

She pointed out that she was there because she wanted to praise the NBI agents who were keeping watch over the warehouse.

Today, a combined team from the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Bureau of Customs (BOC), the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Presidential Security Group (PSG) seized some P1.8 billion worth of smuggled rice in a raid before the President's appearance.

The President personally saw the contents of more than 80 container vans in the warehouse. The rice was said to have been shipped from Thailand and Vietnam in May and June of this year.

The imported rice shipment was reportedly consigned to Dynamic Logistics and Trucking Services.

The President, together with Bernardo and other government operatives, also visited another bonded warehouse in Marikina City where tons of high-grade imported rice were also stocked.

Bernardo said the P23-million worth of rice were imported by Export Supply, Inc.

He said the rice shipments were deemed illegal due to lack of necessary import permits and would be seized in favor of the government.

The President said the rice would be given to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 12, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034333/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept12.htm>

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GMA leads observance of 102nd anniversary of 'Battle of Pulang Lupa' in Marinduque

TORRIJOS, Marinduque — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the commemoration of the 102nd anniversary of the Battle of Pulang Lupa in Barangay Bolo here, a mountainous part of the province overlooking Tayabas Bay, Mongpong Pass and Tablas Strait.

The President was accorded foyer honors immediately after she arrived here by a helicopter, including a 21-gun salute. Afterwards, she led the flag-raising ceremony.

Shortly after, the President led in the lowering of the flag to half-mast to honor those who lost their lives in the battle.

According to history, there are only five battles that the Filipinos won in the Filipino-American war, one of which was the Battle of Pulang Lupa.

The leader of the Filipino guerilla group was Colonel Maximo Abad. In her brief remarks, the President noted the heroism shown by the native Marinduquenos in the battle against the American soldiers.

The President said that Filipinos were able to overpower the many American soldiers, including Capt. Devereau Shields of the then 29th Infantry of the United States Army.

She noted that the Americans were our enemies then but now, they are our allies. "*Sa kasalukuyan, kaibigan natin sila* (Now, they are our friends)," the President said.

In entreating the Marinduquenos to continue remembering the heroism shown by their forefathers, the President called on the people to support her efforts to build a strong Republic.

The President said the war this time is not against foreign enemies but against poverty.

She urged the local folk to resist the communist rebels who come to their areas but rally behind the government.

During the commemoration, the President was accorded a "puton," a traditional welcome ritual, steeped in color and mirth, done through song and dance. It is indigenous only to the province.

The President was turned into a queen (if only for a while) by placing her on a throne, crowning her and showering her with flowers and butterflies so that her wishes, as they say, would come true.

In her brief remarks, the President cited this rich tradition, saying that Marinduquenos are noted for their hospitality to visitors.

She also announced that she will be giving out P6 million to the province to be distributed to the six towns under her “One-Product, One-Town, One Million Peso Enterprise” program.

The President suggested that the province should continue to develop its butterfly culture while considering the ban of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on endangered species.

SPEED program to give discounts to 756 big power users

At least 219 big power users stand to benefit, starting this month, from the Special Package to Enhance Electricity Demand (SPEED), a program that gives discounts to large end-users for energy consumed above the customer’s baseline load.

The SPEED program will be expanded to cover another 437 customers in October, said a report from the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) outlining achievements made against targets set in the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The report said beneficiaries could avail themselves of a fixed discount of P0.92 per kilowatthour from the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) and P0.80 per kilowatthour from the National Power Corp. (Napocor) for their respective customers from one month up to 24 months.

The SPEED’s program implementors are the Departments of Energy (DOE) and of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The adoption of SPEED is in response to the President’s directive in her Second SONA “to work together to give price incentives to large users so that excess power can be utilized, economic activity can be encouraged, and jobs can be created.”

Large power users, usually manufacturing firms, would be able to reduce their electricity costs. Generated savings could be channeled to more benefits for their workers.

Meanwhile, the DOE and the Departments of Finance (DOF) and of Justice (DOJ) and the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) are working on concrete courses of action stemming from results of recent reviews of state contracts with Independent Power Producers (IPP).

The four agencies hoped to complete their tasks in three months.

On one hand, the DOJ and the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (PSALM) would be formulating an action plan on five IPP contracts with legal and financial issues.

Both agencies would also prepare and file actions against contracting parties and officials responsible for terms unfavorable to government.

On the other hand, the DOE and PSALM would take steps to arrive at an acceptable solution on 22 IPP contracts requiring further study and clarification of financial terms.

Further, the NEDA and the DOJ would enhance terms on two IPP contracts with remedial policy issues and would undertake administrative measures, as necessary.

The PMS report further noted government gains in strengthening of the operations of electric cooperatives (EC) nationwide.

It said the National Electrification Administration (NEA) had met with EC officials last July 25 and August 6.

In the meetings, it was agreed that a “people’s criteria,” or the parameters by which ECs would be judged by customers, would be set up. The parameters included efficiency and reliable delivery of power, prompt services, affordability and reasonableness of power rates.

It was also agreed that ECs belonging to categories A+, A and B would submit their performance improvement plans (PIP) while those in categories C, D and E would submit their rehabilitation plans (RP).

Recent reports showed that of the 119 ECs, 30 have submitted their PIPs while 22 gave their RPs.

Besides this, the ECs have continued to carry out Task Force Kapatid whereby they voluntarily assist each other in energizing critical areas.

To enhance the operations of ECs, Executive Order 119 was issued on August 28 to restructure electric cooperatives.

GMA orders probe, suspension of Lung Center Executive Director

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the preventive suspension of Lung Center of the Philippines (LCP) Executive Director Dr. Fernando A. Melendres over allegations of corruption and abuse of authority.

Through Administrative Order No. 39, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, by authority of the President, directed the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) to conduct a formal investigation on Melendres, ordering his preventive suspension for 90 days pending the formal investigation and authorizing the Secretary of Health to appoint an interim officer-in-charge of the LCP.

Melendres, according to A.O. No. 39, is the subject of a complaint filed by the members and non-members of the medical staff of the LCP for procurement of presentation banner without public bidding.

The group also charged Melendres with falsification of public documents in the hiring of an architectural consultant, violation of auditing rules on the drawing of petty cash advances to circumvent the law on public bidding of infrastructure projects, and unauthorized implementation of the reorganization plan unapproved by the Board of Trustees of the LCP.

The fact-finding committee created by the LCP Board of Trustees submitted a report finding a prima facie case against Melendres and recommending the filing of formal charges against him.

As a result, the Board of Trustees transmitted the report and the records of the case to the Office of the President and further recommended the preventive suspension against Melendres during the pendency of the investigation against him.

The President also instructed Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, in his capacity as ex-officio Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the LCP, to appoint an officer-in-charge of the LCP, to ensure continuity of its operations.

The LCP officer-in-charge shall perform all the functions and discharge the responsibilities of an Executive Director throughout the effectivity of the period of preventive suspension of Melendres.

Gov’t unveils sustainable logistics development plan

The government unveiled today a plan to reduce the cost of moving cargoes from Mindanao to Manila and thus bring down the cost of basic goods.

Following the presentation of the three-stage “Sustainable Logistics Development Program” (SLDP) by Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) Chairman Vitaliano Nañagas in Malacañang, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo lauded the DBP for its commitment to support the administration’s regional development program.

Nañagas said the SLDP, the first working draft of a comprehensive regional development plan, is expected to drastically reduce the price of basic commodities in line with the government’s poverty alleviation program and the attainment of food sufficiency at the local, regional and national levels.

The DBP chairman informed the President that the state-owned bank will help catalyze private sector participation in the SLDP, which is a basic infrastructure for the efficient movement of basic commodities through the introduction of modern storage handling and transport system under proper quality control management.

The SLDP has three components: the establishment of a grains highway, a road-ro-ro (roll-on, roll-off) ferry network, and a cold chain.

Nañagas pointed out that what the DBP will try to do is to work with the private sector and with the rest of the government in order to have investments in areas of the logistics plan that will connect the Philippines in terms of the three components.

The grains highway will provide better transporting of grains from where it is produced to where it is consumed.

Nañagas said the road-ro-ro network will take care of the cargo requirements of the entire country, moving it from producer to end-user in a more efficient way.

The cold chain will provide the transport of goods that includes fruits, vegetables, fish, chicken and other perishable items.

Nañagas explained that based on a study undertaken by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), waste and spoilage in transporting fruits and vegetables from farmlands to end-users is about 40 percent valued at roughly P30 billion annually.

“That 40 percent is a little bit too much and so we want to put a transport system that will reduce that number to a more manageable 20 percent,” Nañagas told reporters in a press briefing in Malacañang.

In the case of transporting corn, spillage loss is about 20 percent of national production, amounting to P4.5 billion annually.

The program, the President said, is work in progress, as it covers a lot of areas and more studies and coordination with agencies concerned.

“We would finance for example private sector investors who would want to buy or operate ro-ro,” Nañagas said.

According to Nañagas, the DBP has had experience in doing such project since they have identified specific areas in the country where improvements can be made.

He emphasized the need for the strong collaboration between the government and the private sector since the SLDP is a vital program for addressing critical and priority development concerns of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, including the efforts towards global competitiveness.

GMA to Cimatu: ensure safety of Filipinos in Iraq

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed newly appointed special envoy to Iraq and former Armed Forces Chief of Staff retired General Roy Cimatu to ensure the protection of all Filipinos in Iraq once the United States launches an attack in that country

Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the President and Cimatu met this afternoon to discuss the matter at Malacañang.

During his regular press briefing, Bunye said the President and Cimatu agreed on the evacuation of Filipinos in Iraq, particularly the overseas Filipino workers.

“The instruction given to the special envoy, of course, is to ensure the safety and the protection of our countrymen,” he said.

He added that the President asked Cimatu to submit, on a regular basis, an assessment of the situation in Iraq. This would be the basis for any further action by the Philippine government.

Bunye said he did not know when Cimatu would leave for Iraq and other neighboring Middle East countries where Filipinos stayed.

“I am sure he will be going to more than one country because our countrymen or the Filipinos are located in several places. The smallest concentration of Filipinos actually is in Baghdad, but there are many more in surrounding countries,” he said.

The Press Secretary also reiterated the government’s position of not joining the conflict between the United States and Iraq. Instead, the government would seek peaceful and diplomatic means to end the rift, he said.

Joint statement of Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Malaysian Defense Minister Najib Bin Abdul Razak

1. Both the government of Malaysia and the Philippines wish to reaffirm their close and warm relationships as portrayed by the excellent rapport between Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir and President Arroyo. Their close ties is very much valued by both countries and would be continued and further strengthened.
2. In response to the concern raised by the Philippines vis-à-vis the deportation of Filipinos, Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir had acted expeditiously by directing the full investigation on the matter. Malaysia will take the necessary actions against those who are found to have breached the law based on the investigation currently being conducted. Meanwhile, both Malaysia and the Philippines would like to see that this issue should not be sensationalized to the extent that it would jeopardize the existing good relationship between both countries.
3. Both countries wish to also express resolute commitment to pursue the fight against terrorism not only in their own individual countries but also in the region. Malaysia and the Philippines are committed to operationalize the trilateral agreement signed together with Indonesia in the war against terrorism. Towards this end, the Malaysian and the Philippine Armed Forces will continue to build the existing close cooperation, particularly in the border areas in order to eliminate all forms of terrorism.
4. The Philippines appreciates the continuing cooperation and initiative being extended by Malaysia in pursuing the peace in Muslim Mindanao. The Philippines particularly values the concurrence of Malaysia to stop any attempt at promoting violence and separatism among various Muslim communities in Southern Philippines.
5. Consistent with the common concept of security and development in the region being pursued by both countries, Malaysia and the Philippines are committed to assist each other in the attainment of peace, security and development in Southern Philippines and the border areas.

RP views with concern issues raised by Bush — Ople

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople said today the Philippines views with concern the issues raised by the U.S. President George W. Bush before the United Nations General Assembly yesterday, and expressed the hope that a peaceful solution could be found to forestall the conflict.

“I do not want to speculate on what is going to happen but I hope the UN can find a solution that would be mutually acceptable to the US, Iraq and the larger community of nations,” he said.

“The US demands are serious and should be immediately discussed by the UN Security Council with the end in view of preventing war and seeing to it that the most urgent concerns mentioned by President Bush are addressed,” he said.

Ople reiterated that all diplomatic initiatives, especially within the framework of the UN Security Council, should be exhausted before any attack is staged on Iraq.

He added that the most important concern of the Philippines was to get its nationals out of harm’s way and ensuring the stability of the domestic oil supply.

“We are focusing on these two items and corresponding contingency measures have been set up,” he said.

“There are also collateral economic and security problems such as the effect on the exchange rate and a possible upsurge in terrorist activities which require our constant vigilance and preparedness,” he said.

On efforts to protect Filipinos in the Middle East, Secretary Ople met in New York with Kenzo Oshima, United Nations Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Robert Palve, New York Chief of Mission, International organization for Migration; and, Eric Morris, Director, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, to discuss the issue of Filipino deportees in Sabah and Filipinos in the Middle East.

Secretary Ople was able to obtain the commitment of these agencies to include Filipinos in their contingency should the US attack Iraq.

Secretary Ople is also scheduled to meet separately with Foreign Ministers of several Middle East states to discuss the safety and welfare of Filipino workers.

On the diplomatic front, while in New York for the UN General Assembly, Secretary Ople will be meeting separately with Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri and US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Mark Grossman to discuss, among other matters, the desire of the Philippines to find a peaceful solution to the current situation.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 13, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034351/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept13.htm>

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- **GMA urges private sector to join in gov't housing program**
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Some 700,000 Filipino workers deployed overseas from January to September, 2002, DOLE reports

A total of 638,875 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), or an average of 2,618 daily, were deployed abroad from Jan. 1 to Sept. 1, 2002, indicating that many Filipinos continue to choose to work overseas.

In a report to Malacañang, Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas of the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) said that the deployment of documented Filipino workers abroad could reach one million this year due to global demand and preference for their services and skills.

Sto. Tomas stressed that the continued absorption of OFWs by foreign-based employers mirrored the global competitiveness of Filipino workers and the country's human resource edge.

Aside from their highly rated skills, reliability, and productivity, Filipinos are culturally adaptable and can clearly and fluently communicate in English, the accepted international language, Sto. Tomas said.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) said of the 638,875 OFWs deployed overseas for the eight-month period 497,577 are land-based workers and 141,298 are seafarers.

The POEA said 309,538 of the 497,577 land-based workers were rehires, while the remainder, or 188,039, were newly hired OFWs.

Meanwhile, data from the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP) showed that OFW remittances from the Americas have increased even after the September 11 tragedy.

OFW remittances from the Americas rose by 54.0 percent in the first four months of 2002 alone, reaching US\$1.580 billion as against US\$1.026 billion for the same period last year.

POEA Administrator Rosalinda D. Baldoz said OFW deployment to the European continent posted a 17 percent increase to 27,816 from January to June 2002 compared to 23,768 for the same period in 2001.

The deployment of OFWs in the Americas also grew by 22.3 percent to 6,618 from 5,410; in the Middle East by 3.9 percent to 171,260 from 164,838; and in Asia by 0.5 percent to 158,538 from 157,769, Baldoz said.

Datumanong wants foreign-assisted projects in Mindanao completed on time

Finish all ongoing foreign-assisted road construction and rehabilitation projects in Mindanao within their loan periods.

This Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon A. Datumanong stressed, as he ordered regional and district engineers to see to it that delays in project implementation are discouraged and avoided.

Datumanong noted that some contractors have been slipping on their contracted construction time.

He said delays in project completion would negatively affect the process of social and economic growth in the project area.

He added that the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) should help push a bustling economy in Mindanao, even as the agency should provide infrastructure support to programs on improving law and order, tourism, the delivery of basic services to the people, and others.

He had earlier ordered the termination of the contract to build the Bayugan-Awa-San Francisco (Prosperidad) Road Section. Its contractor, L.S. Sarmiento/Conception Basic/J&P Builders, incurred slippages.

In a recent inspection of the ongoing rehabilitation of the Tabon-tabon-Sibagat-Bayugan section of the Surigao-Agusan-Davao Road, Datumanong directed Danilo Trajano, project director of the DPWH-Philippine Japan Highway Loan-Project Management Office, to ensure the on-time completion of the priority project.

He also instructed Trajano to guarantee the smooth implementation of the 23rd Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) loan-funded Mindanao Section Rehabilitation Projects, Phase II.

The package included the construction of the 22.9 kilometer Alegria-Santiago section, 69.7-kilometer San Francisco-Langkilaan section, and 63 kilometer Monkayo-Tagum section, all from Surigao del Norte to Davao del Norte.

Civil works by contractor China State Construction Engineering Corp. for the P477.041 million Alegria-Santiago section is due to start in November. The two other projects, worth P2.434 billion, are under the pre-construction stage and are scheduled for bidding in October.

Datumanong said projects being implemented in Western Mindanao included the Zamboanga City-Pagadian City road, Basilan circumferential road, Aurora-Monte Alegre-Molave road, Tukuran-Dobliston road, Liloy-Siocon-Zamboanga or Zamboanga West road and the Iligan-Aurora road.

Projects in Northern Mindanao included the Tagoloan Parallel bridge along the Iligan City-Cagayan de Oro City-Butuan road and the Cagayan De Oro third bridge in Cagayan De Oro City; Camiguin circumferential road; Iligan-Bukidnon road; Gingoog Claveria-Villanueva road in Misamis Oriental; and the Lumbia-Talakag road linking Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon.

To be started in the same region is the construction of the Kapatagan-Dobliston road, Alabang-Sultan Gumander-Dobliston-Tukuran road, Tubod-Ganassi road and the Sta. Filomena-Ticalaan section of the Mindanao East-West lateral road.

In Southern Mindanao, DPWH pipeline projects are the roads connecting Davao to Agusan, Bukidnon, and Surigao; Davao coastal road, Peninsula coastal road, and the Davao City diversion road.

For Central Mindanao, DPWH will pursue the Awang-Upi-Lebak-Kalamansig-Palimbang to South Cotabato road and Midsayap-Dulawan-Marbel road in Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat; Libungan-Alamada-Guiling-Banisilan road, Dualing-New Panay-Midsayap road, Kabacan-Maramag road, Matalam-Lampayan-New Alimodian-Antipas road, and Paco-Kidapawan-President Roxas-Arakan Valley roads in North Cotabato.

Also up for implementation are the Dualing-Baliki-Silik road, Kidapawan-Magpet road, Kidapawan-Ilomavis road, and Kidapawan-Calunasan-M'lang road.

Road projects in the Caraga region include the Surigao-Davao coastal road, Agusan-Davao road, Bislig bridge, 2nd Magsaysay bridge and Butuan bypass road, and the flood control component of the Lower Agusan Development Project.

In the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao, the DPWH will complete the on-going Midsayap-Tacurong-Koronadal road in Maguindanao; start the construction of the Malabang-Sultan Gumander road in Lanao del Sur and the Awang-Upi-Palimbang road in Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat.

Also to be carried out are the Cotabato City by-pass road, Lanao del Sur section of the Cotabato-Pagadian-Zamboanga road, Lake Lanao circumferential road in Lanao del Sur, Sulu-Tran central road and other bridge program for Tawi-Tawi.

Datumanong had sought the help of Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin for an additional P1 billion for roads to modernize agriculture and industry in Mindanao and to raise to P8.154 billion the Mindanao allocation for 2003 or the equivalent percentage allocation of 30 percent of the total DPWH infrastructure program.

The DPWH would be able to use the P60 million Saudi Development Fund for Mindanao roads projects next year.

Shahani to attend culture meet in Turkey

Presidential Adviser on Culture Leticia Ramos Shahani is slated to attend the 3rd Round Table of Ministers of Culture on "Intangible Heritage: A Mirror of Cultural Diversity" in Istanbul, Turkey from September 16 to 17.

Shahani had been invited by the Paris-based Unesco and the government of Turkey.

She said that she would work for the preservation and protection of the country's intangible heritage during the meeting.

"This would give us a clearer sense of national identity which in turn can give us greater confidence to face the challenges of globalization," she said.

She clarified that intangible heritage referred to the language, music, dance, literature, games, mythology, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts of a cultural community. These are found in all countries, particularly in the developing world.

The Philippines, with more than 80 ethno-linguistic groups, is rich in its intangible heritage.

The country's "Hudhud" was selected as one of 19 masterpieces selected during last year's Unesco's first proclamation of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

The "Hudhud" is an epic consisting of 200 chants and 40 episodes clearly linked with the agricultural life in the Ifugao rice terraces.

Going with Shahani to the cultural meet are MacArthur Corsino, minister and consul general of the Philippine embassy in Ankara, and Adil Guray, Philippine honorary consul in Istanbul.

Gov't doing all it can to safeguard lives and interests of OFWs in Middle East — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the nation that the government is doing all it can in order to safeguard the lives and interests of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Middle East.

In her weekly radio program aired nationwide, the President said she has designated former AFP Chief of Staff Roy Cimatu as her special envoy to Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries.

“Ito ay para tiyakin na ang inihanda nating contingency measures ay sapat upang matugunan ang pangangailangan ng mga Pilipino sakaling matuloy ang kaguluhan doon (This is to ensure that we have enough contingency measures to attend to the needs of Filipinos in case there will be trouble in the area),” the President said.

These contingency measures, the President said, include the evacuation of Filipinos if this is necessary.

The President also allayed fears that there will be fuel shortage if the United States pushes through its attack on Iraq.

She said that the country has enough supply of oil for three months. “But even then, in order to ensure that we will have a steady supply of oil, I have also asked Gen. Cimatu to work on this as part of his mandate,” the President added.

GMA renews call for public support in confronting country’s problems

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today renewed her call for support and cooperation from the Filipino people in order to confront the many problems that the country is facing.

In her weekly radio program aired nationwide, the President particularly asked for the people’s support in the fund campaign for the benefit of the thousands of Filipino returnees from Sabah.

The President said that the problems that “we are facing right now are diverse and seemingly difficult to understand.”

“Pero ang mahalaga ay nagkakaisa tayo sa paghanap ng solusyon para sa lahat ng ito (But what is important is that we are united in seeking solutions to these problems),” the President said.

She said that it is important for the people to get united and should cooperate with each other for the sake of our country and our countrymen *“dahil walang magmalasakit sa atin kundi tayo-tayo rin (because no one would be more concerned for our welfare than ourselves).”*

The President also announced that today, all the television networks in Metro Manila would conduct a telethon, entitled “Pagbabalik Tulong,” the proceeds of which would go to the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) to fund the various activities for the Filipino returnees from Sabah.

“Nakikiusap ako sa inyo na sana ay tumugon po kayo sa panawagang ito (I appeal to you to support this fund-raising program),” the President said.

GMA urges expanded, stronger SME role in RP economy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed on the expansion and the strengthening of the domestic market to spur further economic growth.

In her message aired this morning over radio nationwide, the President said the goal could be attained through the development and empowerment of small and medium enterprises (SME).

“This domestic market is what we must try to expand and strengthen *at ito ay sa pamamagitan ng ating mga* (and this would be done through) SMEs,” she said.

She said the government would convince banks to open more credit windows for SMEs “*kaysa ipautang ito sa* (instead of loaning out money to) less productive sectors *tulad ng* (like) luxury properties *at mga pabrikang may* (and factories with) excess capacity.”

She noted the SME’s capability to effectively circulate capital and increase domestic consumption, but stressed that the SMEs needed plenty of capital.

The President also disclosed that the government has begun implementing its “One Town, One Product, One Million Pesos for SME Loan” program.

She said local government units are being identified to avail themselves of the program, which proved to be an effective global economic formula, particularly in developing nations.

Earlier, the President disclosed that she would look into the loaning portfolio for SMEs and where the loans are being made to “make sure that every town has at least P1 million of SME loans.”

In her regular luncheon with the Malacañang Press Corps last Wednesday, she said she launched the strategy early this month in a visit to Lakewood, Zamboanga del Sur.

Lakewood would get the P1-million loan with a four-year payback term for fruit production. She said nine other Zamboanga del Sur towns would get the loan for the production of hybrid rice seeds.

“The PSF (Presidential Social Fund) has money in the Landbank for lending out,” she added.

In Laguna, the President picked Cabuyao to receive the P1 million loan for a SME involved in the recycling of soft packs of Nestle Philippines into construction materials.

She said the money would come from the Small Business Guarantee Fund with counterparts from Nestle and Laguna Rep. Joaquin Chipeco, Jr.

Still in Laguna, she ordered regional officials of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to identify SMEs involved in autoparts supply in Sta. Rosa, where multinational car-making plants are located, to get the loan.

She also hinted at the grant of a similar loan to an electronics SME in Sta. Rosa, Laguna to help raise the local value added of Amkor Technology Philippines, a semi-conductor producer, “which suffered last year because of the decline in the market for computers and chips.”

The President had given P1 million each to the town of Monkayo in Compostela Valley for a SME into gold jewelry production and to Mayor Pedro Acharon, Jr. of General Santos City for a SME into tuna production.

In Davao del Norte, she was informed by Governor Rodolfo del Rosario that many SMEs in various towns of the province produced picnic bags and other products from cogon grass.

“They have the market and they have the technology,” she said.

Davao Oriental Governor Ma. Elena Palma Gil also told the President that SMEs in the coastal towns of the province produced agar-agar marketed in Cebu.

The President also noted that the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center would pick up some proposals from SMEs in Bulacan and Quezon.

GMA urges private sector to join in gov't housing program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the government would “encourage the private sector to jumpstart the housing sector” as it would urge “banks to fund developers on their own.”

The President stressed on her administration’s focus on housing during a radio message aired nationwide this morning.

She said housing had been listed as one of the priority programs of the government in the next six months.

“*Ang housing industry ay isa sa pinakamalakas na magbigay ng trabaho sa ating mga kababayan at nagpapasigla ng ekonomiya* (The housing industry is one of the strongest sectors that can create more jobs and perk up the economy),” she added.

She noted the private sector’s small role in the housing industry. “*Kaya’t ito ay ating palalakin* (We shall strengthen it),” she said.

The President also took note of the various transport infrastructure the government has been putting up to decongest pedestrian and vehicle traffic in Metro Manila.

This should convince developers to put up housing projects outside of Metro Manila, particularly in transport links leading to Clark in the North and Batangas in the South.

Earlier, the President said she would ask the country’s top Chinese businessmen, or *taipans*, to help the government in its mass housing program.

In her luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps Wednesday, the President recalled that during the term of former President Fidel Ramos, he also asked the *taipans* to help the government put up a world-class international airport.

GMA witnesses signing of AFP-PNP SOP on reporting ‘rascals in uniform’

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today witnessed the formal signing of the joint standing operating procedures (SOP) in reporting police and military personnel with derogatory information.

The signing of the SOP was in fulfillment of the President’s commitment, as expounded in her July 22 State of the Nation Address (SONA), to curb criminality and to build a strong republic.

The SOP was signed in Malacañang by Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Benjamin Defensor, Jr. and Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr.

The SOP is aimed to institutionalize a system in formulating and submitting a watch list or counter-intelligence order of battle between and among members of the PNP and AFP intelligence communities.

It also hoped to ensure the accurate reporting of policemen and militarymen with derogatory information imputed against them, through careful processing and proper validation.

It would also establish a system of adjudicating cases after a thorough investigation has been made.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, who was also present in the signing ceremony said the SOP was an output of a joint counter-intelligence workshop-conference conducted in response to the President's desire for a more aggressive stance against "rascals in uniform."

In her SONA, the President instructed the AFP to field military personnel and resources in support of civilian law enforcement, particularly in eliminating criminals and other enemies of the state.

"The President ordered the workshop so that the fight against criminality can further be boosted and improved because if some of the law enforcers are law breakers, then that aggravates the problem with regards to peace and order," Lina said.

"So the President would like to see to it that the AFP and PNP ranks are cleansed of rascals in uniforms," he added.

Lina said positive results have been achieved. Several policemen and militarymen were dismissed and some charged administratively and criminally.

Police Chief Superintendent Jaime Lasar, PNP Deputy Director for Intelligence, said 326 policemen have validated derogatory reports.

The AFP listed 799 personnel actively being validated for involvement in illegal drugs, illegal gambling, carjacking and extortion.

GMA urges youth to help in gov't anti-crime drive

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the Filipino youth to help government in its anti-crime drive, as she launched the 117 Youth Patrol at the Camp Crame parade grounds.

In a short message before boy and girl scouts participating in a 117 emergency response drill, the President said the youth could contribute much in efforts of the law enforcers maintain peace and order in the country.

The President arrived in Camp Crame fresh from Malacañang where she witnessed the signing of an Armed Forces of the Philippines-Philippine National Police (PNP) joint standing operating procedure on disclosing reports on rascals in uniform.

The signing strengthened the President's resolve to fight criminality, enhance the image of the military and the police and build a strong republic, as expounded in her July 22 State of the Nation Address.

She said Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina invited her to see for herself quick responses from youthful volunteers against crime.

She said the youth should call 117 if they witnessed a crime happening, or if they heard something and had good reasons to believe a crime is being committed or about to be committed.

She pointed out that since the telephone hotline 177 had been established, many criminal cases have been solved "very quickly."

It enabled law enforcement agencies and public assistance groups to respond to emergency calls from any part of the country.

Hotline 117 is a centrally managed and secured telephone central monitoring station provided by the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT) and operated by qualified well-trained personnel from the PNP, Bureau of Fire Protection, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and private telecommunications firm PLDT.

Telephones used by the emergency hotline 117 are equipped with the caller ID system to prevent prank calls and ensure quick confirmation and response to emergency calls.

The President, during the launching, witnessed the staging of an emergency drill at the parade ground of Camp Crame, showing how quickly the youth patrol could address an emergency situation.

GMA seeks stronger BIR-LGU role in tax collection

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to tap and help mobilize local government units (LGU) nationwide to enhance the government's tax collection.

The President made this call during the first revenue performance command conference at the Premier Guest House in Malacañang.

During the briefing, the President directed officials of the BIR and other concerned agencies to find out if they could further simplify the process of tax payments and the registration of business permits with the LGUs.

BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno said the government intended to dispense with other requirements in applying for business permits in various localities.

Parayno said those in the underground economy continued to fear coming out into the open economy.

He said they do not want to go through the tedious process of getting a business permit, a form of taxation, and they wonder why they have to brandish a Social Security System and/or a Technical Education and Skills Development Authority card to get the license.

"It really intimidates people," he told reporters after the conference.

He added that the coordination with the LGUs was not something new since there existed agreements between the Department of Finance, the LGUs and the Executive Department on working together to push better tax collections.

But he stressed that the agreements needed to be implemented soonest.

Parayno said the BIR had been sending letters to some 600 companies found to have under-declared their tax payments.

The letter, he said, would send the message that the BIR had the system and method to determine the correct payment of taxes.

On the other hand, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho suggested that the LGUs should also supply the BIR with a list of taxpayers in their respective areas to help the bureau collect proper taxes.

During the conference, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin told the President and other officials that the LGUs have expressed willingness to cooperate in easing the process of business registration and tax payments.

Besides Parayno, Camacho and Boncodin, among those who attended the meeting were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Finance Secretary Isidro Camacho, Bureau of Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo, Socio Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

GMA convenes revenue performance confab

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today convened the first revenue performance command conference in an effort to achieve the government's revised targets on tax collections.

In a meeting at the Premier Guest House in Malacañang, the President would call regular command conferences on revenue collection to assess the work of various tax collecting agencies, particularly the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

She said the command conference would establish a base line against which the future performance of the agencies concerned would be measured.

"We should be very strict about evaluating performance," she said.

Among those who attended the command conference were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Socio Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, BOC Commissioner Antonio Bernardo, BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno, and the district collectors and revenue collectors in various regions of the country.

Bernardo said it was appropriate that the President had found time to talk to those in the field directly involved in revenue collections.

He said the command conference on revenue performance supported the BOC's effort to focus on their target collection.

"That's what we're doing now. We are really micro-managing the revenue collections because we believe that this is a very important mandate of the bureau," Bernardo told reporters after the conference.

In his report, Bernardo noted that in the first eight months of this year, the BOC was still P11.9 billion below its target revenue collection.

However, he noted that for the first three months of the year, the average monthly collection of the BOC was P6.9 billion but increased to P8.7 billion in the succeeding three months.

The total year-end outlook for the BOC, he said, is P99.8 billion against its original target of P115 billion.

Bernardo cited several factors for the shortfall, to include foreign exchange, and deferred payments of importation from various government agencies such as the National Food Authority (NFA), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC).

"We feel that about P100 billion is a more realistic emerging scenario for the end of the year rather than P115 billion," he said.

For his part, Parayno said the BIR has been implementing the Reconciliation of Listing for Enforcement (RELIEF) program aimed to correct discrepancies in the Value-Added Tax (VAT) declaration of taxpaying companies.

By next week, Parayno said the BIR would send some 600 letters to various companies to demand immediate payment of taxes associated with under-declared sales for the year 2001.

These measures, he said, would cover the year 2000 as well as for the first and second quarters of year 2002.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 14, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034523/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept14.htm>

The President's Day: September 15, 2002

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- **Speed program to give discounts to 756 big power users**
- **Sustainable logistics development program to bring down cost of cargo transport, prices**

Speed program to give discounts to 756 big power users

At least 219 big power users stand to benefit, starting this month, from the Special Package to Enhance Electricity Demand (SPEED), a program that gives discounts to large end-users for energy consumed above the customer's baseline load.

The SPEED program will be expanded to cover another 437 customers in October, said a report from the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) outlining achievements made against targets set in the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The report said beneficiaries could avail themselves of a fixed discount of P0.92 per kilowatt-hour from the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) and P0.80 per kilowatt-hour from the National Power Corp. (Napocor) for their respective customers from one month up to 24 months.

The SPEED's program implementors are the Departments of Energy (DOE) and of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The adoption of SPEED is in response to the President's directive in her Second SONA "to work together to give price incentives to large users so that excess power can be utilized, economic activity can be encouraged, and jobs can be created."

Large power users, usually manufacturing firms, would be able to reduce their electricity costs. Generated savings could be channeled to more benefits for their workers.

Meanwhile, the DOE and the Departments of Finance (DOF) and of Justice (DOJ) and the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) are working on concrete courses of action stemming from results of recent reviews of state contracts with Independent Power Producers (IPP).

The four agencies hoped to complete their tasks in three months.

On one hand, the DOJ and the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (PSALM) would be formulating an action plan on five IPP contracts with legal and financial issues.

Both agencies would also prepare and file actions against contracting parties and officials responsible for terms unfavorable to government.

On the other hand, the DOE and PSALM would take steps to arrive at an acceptable solution on 22 IPP contracts requiring further study and clarification of financial terms.

Further, the NEDA and the DOJ would enhance terms on two IPP contracts with remedial policy issues and would undertake administrative measures, as necessary.

The PMS report further noted government gains in strengthening of the operations of electric cooperatives (EC) nationwide.

It said the National Electrification Administration (NEA) had met with EC officials last July 25 and August 6.

In the meetings, it was agreed that a “people’s criteria,” or the parameters by which ECs would be judged by customers, would be set up. The parameters included efficiency and reliable delivery of power, prompt services, affordability and reasonableness of power rates.

It was also agreed that ECs belonging to categories A+, A and B would submit their performance improvement plans (PIP) while those in categories C, D and E would submit their rehabilitation plans (RP).

Recent reports showed that of the 119 ECs, 30 have submitted their PIPs while 22 gave their RPs.

Besides this, the ECs have continued to carry out Task Force Kapatid whereby they voluntarily assist each other in energizing critical areas.

To enhance the operations of ECs, Executive Order 119 was issued on August 28 to restructure electric cooperatives.

Sustainable logistics development program to bring down cost of cargo transport, prices

The government has unveiled a plan to reduce the cost of moving cargoes from Mindanao to Manila and thus bring down the cost of basic goods.

Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) Chairman Vitaliano Nañagas presented last Friday a three-stage “Sustainable Logistics Development Program” (SLDP). President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo lauded the DBP for its commitment to support the administration’s regional development program.

Nañagas said the SLDP, the first working draft of a comprehensive regional development plan, is expected to drastically reduce the price of basic commodities in line with the government’s poverty alleviation program and the attainment of food sufficiency at the local, regional and national levels.

The DBP chairman informed the President that the state-owned bank will help catalyze private sector participation in the SLDP, which is a basic infrastructure for the efficient movement of basic commodities through the introduction of modern storage handling and transport system under proper quality control management.

The SLDP has three components: the establishment of a grains highway, a road-roto (roll-on, roll-off) ferry network, and a cold chain.

Nañagas pointed out that what the DBP will try to do is to work with the private sector and with the rest of the government in order to have investments in areas of the logistics plan that will connect the Philippines in terms of the three components.

The grains highway will provide better transporting of grains from where it is produced to where it is consumed.

Nañagas said the road-roto network will take care of the cargo requirements of the entire country, moving it from producer to end-user in a more efficient way.

The cold chain will provide the transport of goods that includes fruits, vegetables, fish, chicken and other perishable items.

Nañagas explained that based on a study undertaken by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), waste and spoilage in transporting fruits and vegetables from farmlands to end-users is about 40 percent valued at roughly P30 billion annually.

“That 40 percent is a little bit too much and so we want to put a transport system that will reduce that number to a more manageable 20 percent,” Nañagas told reporters in a press briefing in Malacanang.

In the case of transporting corn, spillage loss is about 20 percent of national production, amounting to P4.5 billion annually.

The program, the President said, is work in progress, as it covers a lot of areas and more studies and coordination with agencies concerned.

“We would finance for example private sector investors who would want to buy or operate ro-ro,” Nañagas said.

According to Nañagas, the DBP has had experience in doing such project since they have identified specific areas in the country where improvements can be made.

He emphasized the need for the strong collaboration between the government and the private sector since the SLDP is a vital program for addressing critical and priority development concerns of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, including the efforts towards global competitiveness.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 15, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034536/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept15.htm>

The President's Day: September 16, 2002

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- **GMA orders all gov't agencies to extend help to teen girl in Sabah rape case**
- **Bunye denies blaming PNP for kidnapping incidents**
- **RP gets nod from Malaysia for doctors, social workers to examine returnees – Soliman**
- **Palace allays fears of mass lay-off in gov't agencies whose functions are now being reviewed**
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- **GMA presents 8 suspected carnappers to media appeals to victims to come out, identify them**
- **Please refrain from reporting ongoing operations against kidnappers, GMA appeals anew to media**
- **Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on the proposed visit of the Japanese Prime Minister to DPRK on 17 September 2002**

GMA orders all gov't agencies to extend help to teen girl in Sabah rape case

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered all concerned Cabinet officials to extend all possible assistance to "Angelica," the 13-year-old Filipino girl allegedly raped by Malaysian authorities while in detention in Sabah.

The President also directed the said officials to accomplish all the work here in Manila and do what only are necessary in Malaysia.

The President issued the orders during a conference in Malacañang with Gerald John (L. Pereira & Associates) and Francis Ng Aik Guan (Ng Aik Guan & Co.), the two Malaysian lawyers representing the interests of Angelica in Malaysia.

The President, along with other Philippine government officials, was briefed on the Malaysian law and procedure during the conference. For instance, the two counsels informed the Philippine side that statutory rape in Malaysia extends up to 16 years old, in contrast to the 12-year-old cap in Philippine laws.

Likewise, various options and plans of actions were studied during the conference.

Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, who was present during the conference, emphasized that the two lawyers are working on a pro bono basis.

"Pinagbilin ng ating Pangulo na gawin lahat ng magagawa upang matulungan si Angelica. At yung maaring gawin dito sa Pilipinas, dito na sa Pilipinas gawin at yung kailangang-kailangan lamang na maganap sa Malaysia ang gaganapin sa Malaysia (The President ordered everyone to help Angelica in all possible ways. She also directed us to do all the work here and do what is only necessary in Malaysia)" Perez said in a briefing.

The two counsels, who arrived in Manila last Friday, have met with representatives from various departments.

Accompanied by officers of the Public Attorney's Office and the Department of Foreign Affairs, the two counsels visited Angelica and another potential witness in the presence of Department of Social Welfare and Development personnel.

Based on the interviews, Perez said the relevant action would be imparted to the Malaysian authorities for their follow-up action.

Perez said the government is giving the necessary clearance for Malaysian police investigators to visit Manila and conduct interviews with Angelica, which may include recording of statement and possible formality of lodging a police report.

Perez said the government would also allow the duly-designated member of the Malaysian police force to conduct an investigation and inquiry in the Philippines of any claims of rape, maltreatment, violations of human rights and infringement of any laws in Malaysia.

Perez also said that it is up to Malaysia if, based on the relevant information the two counsels gathered here in Manila, they are going to send the Malaysian police to the Philippines.

We also requested the Malaysian government to send, if they wish, a Malaysian doctor to examine Angelica.

Bunye denies blaming PNP for kidnapping incidents

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today clarified that he did not blame the Philippine National Police (PNP) for some kidnapping incidents in the country even as he renewed his appeal for the media to momentarily cease from reporting about the kidnapping of the children of Congressman Jules Ledesma.

“Walang katotohanan yan (There is no truth to that),” Bunye said in a radio interview when asked if he indeed blamed the PNP for the latest kidnapping incident in Metro Manila involving the Ledesma children.

According to Bunye, what he said was that there is a need for everybody—the citizens and the law-enforcement agencies—to double their efforts so that the criminals would not have the chance to strike.

“That’s why we will just have to double our vigilance. Alam natin na ang PNP ay talagang doing its best. Kaya lang merong pagkakataong talagang nakakalusot ang mga criminal elements (We know that the PNP is doing its best. But there are times when criminal elements could get the chance to strike),” Bunye said.

Bunye said that the citizenry is always the first line of defense in the fight against all forms of criminality.

“Kailangan talaga ang pagtulongan nga mga mamamayan at mga awtoridad (What we need really is the cooperation between the citizenry and the authorities),” Bunye said.

In the kidnapping case of the Ledesma children, Bunye asked the media to respect the wish of the congressman from Negros that the media should suspend reporting about the incident in the meantime.

“Tayo ay magdasal na lamang na ma-rescue yong mga hostages (We will just pray that the hostages could be rescued safely),” Bunye said.

RP gets nod from Malaysia for doctors, social workers to examine returnees – Soliman

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman today said doctors and social workers are now allowed to go to the detention centers housing Filipinos in Malaysia to determine if they are fit to travel back to the Philippines.

Soliman said the new arrangement was the result of the recent private phone conversation between the President and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir.

“Because of the arrangements borne out of the conversation of the President and Prime Minister Mahathir and the party of Nur Jaafar, the first level of work that will be done by the team of doctors and social workers is to go to the

detention centers to see if Filipinos are fit to travel and if they are fit to travel, then they board the boats,” Soliman said in a briefing at Malacañang.

Soliman noted that the arrangement would require that their parents or guardians accompany minors.

Soliman was among the Cabinet officials present during the President’s conference with the two Malaysian lawyers representing the interests of a 13-year-old Filipina rape victim in Malaysia.

Soliman announced that there are two groups of Filipino deportees numbering at most 536, who’ll be arriving this week on board the *BRP San Juan* and *BRP Bacolod*.

Soliman said aside from detained Filipinos, the Philippine vessels will be taking in voluntary deportees. “These are Filipinos who do not wish to be detained if and when the moratorium is lifted,” she said.

Soliman said the 536 Filipinos are expected to be the last batch of Filipinos since there is a halt in the deportation.

She noted that the Department of Foreign Affairs is continuously working out several options so that the government will be able to have a rational, systematic, humane repatriation and or legalization of documents.

Palace allays fears of mass layoff in gov’t agencies whose functions are now being reviewed

Malacañang today allayed fears of a mass layoff of employees in the 14 state agencies whose functions are now being reviewed by the Presidential Commission on Effective Governance (PCEG).

In an interview, Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin said that while some 7,000 employees correspond to the total number of workers in the 14 agencies now being reviewed by the PCEG, this does not mean that they will all be laid off.

Boncodin said that some of the agencies, especially those with overlapping functions, could be merged and the affected employees could be absorbed.

“Palagay ko yong nagsasabing ile-layoff yong 7,000 ay hindi tumutulong sa bansa, kung hindi naninira (I think those who are saying that the 7,000 will be laid off are not helping the government but are trying to destroy it),” Boncodin said.

Boncodin appealed to all sectors, including the media, to just wait for the result of the ongoing review being undertaken by the PCEG, which is chaired by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

In the case of the National Printing Office (NPO), which is under the Office of the Press Secretary, Boncodin said its operations are also being studied.

Boncodin confirmed that she has indeed discussed with Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye on how to make the operations of the NPO more efficient.

She said that the NPO has a budget deficit since its income from printing jobs is not sufficient to cover for its operations.

“Iyan ay hanggang ngayon ay tinitingnan ko ang pinakamabuti at iyan ay gagawin in consultation with them (Up to now we are still looking on how we can work out something good for NPO in consultation with them),” Boncodin said, referring to the employees of NPO who have appealed to the leadership not to abolish their office.

GMA receives P3 M donation for returnees from Malaysia

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today received from *Manila Bulletin* Chairman Emilio Yap the amount of P3 million drawn from the contributions of concerned donors for the reintegration of Filipino returnees from Malaysia.

In a ceremony at the Study Room in Malacañang, the President personally thanked Yap for the contribution and immediately turned over the check to Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Juliano Soliman for proper disposition.

Yap said the *Manila Bulletin* fund drive was in response to the President's appeal for support from the private sector.

The donation will be deposited in the account of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), which is in charge of holding the common fund for the different line agencies of the government.

Yap expressed gratitude to the concerned donors for their continued generosity and kindness in support of the thousands of Filipino returnees from Malaysia.

Last September 4, Yap also turned over to the President the amount of P2 million representing his personal contribution to the *Manila Bulletin* fund drive to help the returning Filipinos from Malaysia.

Soliman said the President turned over Yap's initial donation to Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Chairman Parouk Hussin for the needs of the returnees in his area of jurisdiction.

Aside from Yap's donation, the social welfare secretary said the P7.1 million raised during last Saturday's live telethon fund-raising campaign will also be deposited under the NDCC.

She said there is now a total of more than P10 million in contributions from the private sector, ordinary citizens and corporations.

Aside from Soliman and Yap, also present during the turn-over ceremony were ARMM Chairman Hussin and Dr. Andrew Gonzales, president of the *Manila Bulletin*.

Palace brushes off criticisms of GMA's cover photo in lifestyle magazine

"We should not make a mountain out of a mole hill."

This was Malacanang's reaction regarding the criticisms about President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and some of her Cabinet members appearing in a "Men in Black" in the anniversary cover of *Philippine Tatler*, a lifestyle and entertainment magazine.

In today's press briefing in Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye pointed out that the photograph of the President, together with some of her Cabinet members, should not be taken out of context, saying, "it is not inappropriate in a magazine like this to show the President letting her hair down."

"*Tatler* is a lifestyle magazine. It's not in the same category as the newsmagazine like *Time* and *Newsweek*. The President, on occasion, can show her lighter side," Bunye said.

In the said cover photo, the President, together with Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II and Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, were shown wearing black suits and dark glasses similar to those worn by the characters in the famous American action-comedy movie series, "Men in Black."

Bunye stressed that the photograph of the President and some of her Cabinet secretaries should not be taken out of context

The Press Secretary noted that in the movie “Men in Black” that starred Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones, the lead actors were portrayed as the “good guys and saviors of the Earth.”

“So this magazine is trying to portray the good guys, the President and her Cabinet as the good guys in a fun sort of ways. We don’t see anything wrong with that,” Bunye said.

Bunye advised the President’s detractors to lighten up instead of criticizing her.

“I don’t think that the photograph has detracted from the President’s ability to government,” he said.

Moreover, Bunye said, the objective of the magazine cover photograph could be justified and is not inappropriate given the circumstances.

GMA presents 8 suspected carnappers to media appeals to victims to come out, identify them

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presented to the media today eight suspected members of the Bonnet Gang — including three alleged “rascals in uniform” and two women — who are believed to be involved in robbery-holdup and carnapping cases in Metro Manila.

In presenting the suspects to reporters just hours after their arrest this morning in Quezon City by the Philippine National Police-Traffic Management Group (PNP-TMG), the President appealed to possible victims of the gang to go to the police and identify the suspects.

“The Bonnet Gang is notorious for its criminal activities,” the President said in Filipino during the presentation of the suspects at the PNP headquarters in Camp Crame. “I hope those who have been victimized by this group would come out and go to the police to identify them,” she added.

The President also assured the media and the public that the police are relentlessly pursuing the fight against criminality, particularly the campaign against rascals in uniform.

Among the suspects are two soldiers on absence without official leave (AWOL) – Roberto Bacus and Raul Ravina of the 10th Infantry Battalion of the First Infantry Division of the Philippine Army – and Senior Fire Officer 1 Dionisio Pabanto of the Bureau of Fire Protection assigned in Ozamis City. Bacus has been AWOL since 1993 and Ravina, since 1992. Both have been dropped from the rolls of the military.

The two women in the group were identified as Grace Hamili and Sheryl Sta. Rita. The other members of the gang were identified as Neil Santos, Silvino Oca and Jade Abalon.

The eight were on board a stolen green Isuzu Crosswind AUV (Asian Utility Vehicle) when arrested at the corner of Aurora Blvd. and Gilmore Avenue in Quezon City by members of the TMG.

The President personally congratulated TMG chief Senior Supt. Danilo P. Mangila and his men for the arrest of the Bonnet Gang members and their successful operations against carnapping syndicates operating in Metro Manila.

“Congratulations, Colonel Mangila. It is Colonel Mangila and his men who did this. And Colonel Mangila, tell it to your troops, ‘Congratulations,’ and ask them to continue their good work,” President said.

The President said the TMG operatives were also behind the neutralization of six members of the Parungao gang of car thieves who were killed in a shootout with the police last Saturday.

In her speech, the President said that because of the quick action of the TMG operatives, the eight members of the Bonnet Gang were caught unharmed.

Recovered from the suspects who did not resist arrest were four shotguns, one .38 caliber revolver, 109 rounds of shotgun ammunition, two hammers, several license plates and five black bonnets.

Please refrain from reporting ongoing operations against kidnapers, GMA appeals anew to media

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today appealed anew to the media to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in solving cases of kidnapping by refraining from airing live reports or writing about these cases while operations are ongoing.

In her remarks at the presentation to media at Camp Crame of eight members of the so-called “Bonnet Gang” earlier arrested by operatives of the Philippine National Police (PNP), the President asked the media to consider the safety of the hostages by not reporting about the ongoing rescue operations.

“*So, sana tumulong kayo. Muli akong nananawagan na yung mga live cases ay i-postpone muna natin ang pagre-report* (So, I hope you will cooperate. Again, I would like to appeal to you not to report live the ongoing operations),” the President said, particularly referring to the broadcast media.

She said that this was also the appeal of non-government organizations (NGOs) involved in anti-crime activities.

The President was referring to the ongoing operations by the PNP against the kidnapers of the two children of Negros Congressman Julio Ledesma who were abducted last Friday.

According to the President, the media would be properly briefed as soon as there is a breakthrough in the solution of the cases now being investigated by police authorities.

In his regular press briefing this afternoon, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye also called on the media to respect the wish of Congressman Ledesma that the media should refrain from writing about the kidnapping of his children at the moment.

Bunye said that what we should all do at this time is to pray for the safe return of the children to their father.

The press secretary also clarified that he did not blame the PNP for the kidnapping incidents in the country. “*Walang katotohanan yan* (There is no truth to that),” Bunye said, adding that he was misquoted by the paper.

According to Bunye, what he said was that there is a need for everybody — the citizens and the law-enforcement agencies — to double their efforts so that the criminals would not have the chance to strike.

“That’s why we will just have to double our vigilance. *Alam natin na ang PNP ay talagang doing its best. Kaya lang merong pagkakataong talagang nakakalusot ang mga criminal elements* (We know that the PNP is doing its best. But there are times when criminal elements could get the chance to strike),” Bunye said.

Bunye said that the citizenry is always the first line of defense in the fight against all forms of criminality.

“*Kailangan talaga ang pagtulongan nga mga mamamayan at mga awtoridad* (What we need really is the cooperation between the citizenry and the authorities),” Bunye said.

Bunye said that if the citizenry can work together with the law enforcement authorities, “then we could solve kidnapping cases faster.”

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on the proposed visit of the Japanese Prime Minister to DPRK on 17 September 2002

The Philippines wholeheartedly welcomes and fully supports the proposed visit of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 17 September 2002.

A meeting between PM Koizumi and General Secretary Kim Jong-Il would be a fitting follow-up to the June 2000 summit meeting between the leaders of the two Koreas.

This unprecedented visit signals the normalization of relations between Japan and the DPRK, and should hasten the resolution of certain outstanding issues between the northeast Asian neighbors.

It is also a critical step towards the further engagement of the DPRK in the effort to promote peace, security and stability in the Korean peninsula, in the region and, ultimately, the world.

We are hopeful of positive results from this visit.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 16, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034559/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept16.htm>

The President's Day: September 17, 2002

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- **GMA receives with gladness news of release of Ledesma children**
- **Presidential statement on the Iraqi situation**
- **GMA orders suspension of evacuation of Filipinos from Iraq**
- **O.L.E. to strengthen OFW reintegration program**
- **GMA okays draft of M.O. to regulate rice importation for 2003**
- **GMA okays DTI plan to ban import of used vehicles**

GMA receives with gladness news of release of Ledesma children

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo received with gladness the news of the release of the children of Negros Occidental Rep. Julio "Jules" Ledesma, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today said.

In a radio interview, Bunye said the President is very thankful to the Lord that no harm was done on Christina Julieta Victoria, 10, and Julio Carlos V, 5.

Bunye said the President is likewise appreciative of the media's cooperation in the tried and tested formula of not reporting on live or ongoing kidnapping cases.

"Ang ating Pangulo ay nagpapasalamat, unang-una sa ating Panginoon na ang panalangin ng marami na mailigtas yung anak ni Rep. Jules Ledesma ay nangyari ngayong umaga (Our President is grateful to God for heeding the prayers that the children be spared)," Bunye said.

Nagpapasalamat din ang ating Pangulo sa mga members ng media na nakinig sa kanyang pakiusap na pansamantala ay magkaroon muna ng maayos na pagre-report, i-tone down iyong pagre-report dito sa kidnapping incidents (The President is also thankful to the media for cooperating with the government in toning down their reports on kidnapping cases that are in progress)," Bunye said.

Bunye, however, stressed that the President is continuously working on strengthening government efforts against kidnapping and other forms of crime.

He said the kidnappings only strengthened the President's resolve to fight criminality in all its forms.

He said the President is also enjoining the people to be actively involved in the administration's fight against criminality.

"Nakikita natin iyong talagang kailangang-kailangan ang lubos na pagtutulungan ng ating mamamayan at ng ating awtoridad at para lalong mapalakas natin iyong ating kampanya laban sa mga ganitong uri ng aktibidad (There is no doubt that we need cooperation between the people and the authorities in order to strengthen the campaign against this kind of activities)," Bunye said.

According to the police, the two children were released unharmed at the Makati Medical Center at around 4:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Congressman Ledesma, in several interviews, thanked the President, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines for the safe release of his children.

"I stumbled into something and I just came to realize that there is a system, what President Macapagal-Arroyo is saying is a tried-and-tested formula. They were all quiet all the while, but she's actually doing something," he said.

Presidential statement on the Iraqi situation

The Philippines reaffirms its commitment to the global war against terrorism. We believe the world will never be secure unless terrorist lairs are exposed and destroyed, and terrorist supporters are brought to justice.

The Philippines has full confidence in the UN Security Council process. We believe the Council will act in accord with the imperatives of world peace and security and find the most expeditious way, the most effective way to serve these imperatives. We support the UN Security Council Resolutions on states aiding terrorism and the dismantling of weapons of mass destruction that are an overriding threat to humanity.

We join the United Nations in the most fervent wish for dialogue and peace, but we must say more in defense of our unique national interest.

We are victims of homegrown and regionally-based terrorism. The victims of terrorism cry out for justice. We have vowed to fight against terrorism at home and with our international allies until it is defeated.

The Philippines supports the case brought by the United States against Iraq before the UN Security Council. The UN Security Council should give these charges most urgent and serious consideration.

Consistent with our national interest and in accordance with our Constitution, the Philippines is prepared to extend political, security and humanitarian assistance to the United States in the pursuit of its most vital interests, which coincide with our own vital interests, to defeat terrorism.

These policies have been conveyed officially by Secretary Blas Ople to US Secretary of State Colin Powell, and shall be the basis of our position which Secretary Ople will state before the United National General Assembly.

GMA orders suspension of evacuation of Filipinos from Iraq

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered a suspension of the evacuation of Filipinos in Iraq as a result of new developments, adding that the situation in the Middle East would be evaluated by the Cabinet committee on internal security.

In an impromptu press conference in Malacañang this afternoon following a Cabinet meeting, the President said the government is “interrupting” the evacuation as it takes a fresh look at international developments.

“So, while we are holding off the evacuation for one or two days, in two days we can have a definitive next course of action regarding the matter,” the President said.

Last week, the President ordered the evacuation of some 118 Filipinos, including non-essential embassy personnel, from Iraq as “a precautionary measure.”

The President said that former AFP chief, Gen. Roy Cimatu, is still the crisis manager on the Iraqi situation.

She also said that the Cabinet committee on internal security would be meeting this afternoon “and certainly the matter of Iraq is going to be the main subject.”

Before the unscheduled press briefing, the President also read a prepared policy statement where she said that the Philippines “reaffirms its commitment to the global war against terrorism.”

In the statement, the President said the Philippines has full confidence in the UN Security Council process.

“We believe the Council will act in accord with the imperatives of world peace and security and find the most expeditious way, the most effective way to serve these imperatives,” the President said.

The President also said that the Philippines supports the case brought by the United States against Iraq before the Council. “The UN Security Council should give these charges most urgent and serious consideration,” the President said.

The President’s policy statement was issued after Iraq, in a letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, expressed its willingness to allow the return of UN weapons inspectors to Iraq without preconditions.

The Iraqi decision came days after US President George W. Bush addressed the UN General Assembly and warned that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein must comply with UN resolutions or face a military strike.

D.O.L.E. to strengthen OFW reintegration program

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has started laying down the framework for an effective and sustained reintegration program for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

Lucita S. Lazo, DOLE undersecretary for the reintegration of returning migrant workers, said the program is aimed at helping returning OFWs bolster social stability for the national good.

“We hope to have about 50,000 OFW parents, sons, daughters and kin band together into OFW family or community clubs by December this year,” Lazo said.

She said that nationwide, DOLE regional offices have begun the groundwork to organize at least 30 OFW family clubs in each region, prioritizing the areas considered as the largest sources of OFWs.

Lazo stressed that the effort requires interaction and cooperation by various sectors considering that there are some 7.41 million Filipinos who are either working or have settled overseas.”

“We hope to engage or involve local governments in this undertaking,” she said, adding that the DOLE has already linked up with some local government units (LGUs) whose constituents include OFW families, and would also work with non-government organizations (NGOs) helping OFWs.

Lazo indicated that the program would pursue a balanced approach, giving regard both to the many “circulatory” OFWs in the global labor market who only temporarily come home, and the retirees and permanent returnees who want to engage in small businesses, invest their earnings, upgrade their skills, or get employed locally.

The program would help reinforce the protection, morale, and welfare of OFW families all over the country, Lazo said.

Director Alex E. Maraan of the DOLE’s National Capital Region (NCR) office indicated that advocacy work has already started in the country’s premier region to meet the initial target of 30 OFW family circles this year.

Maraan said a DOLE-NCR team has initiated linkages with different barangays in cooperation with LGUs.

The DOLE’s Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) are expected to provide assistance and opportunities needed by OFWs and their families.

POEA statistics show that 60 percent of the Filipinos working abroad come from the NCR, Region 3 (Central Luzon), and Region 4 (Southern Tagalog).”

The OFW family circles would also be formed in the cities of Davao, Cebu, Zamboanga and in other regions where there are significant concentrations of Filipino migrant workers' families.

GMA okays draft of M.O. to regulate rice importation for 2003

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the Cabinet today approved the draft basic principles to be contained in a Memorandum Order (MO) that will allow other sectors to participate in the 2003 rice importation.

According to Presidential Assistant on Agriculture Modernization Angelito Sarmiento, under the MO, the National Food Authority (NFA) will prioritize domestic palay procurement in beefing up its buffer stock. "So as much as possible, the buffer stock should be purchased from the Philippines," Sarmiento said.

Sarmiento said the NFA will also continue to make available the P16 per kilogram regular-milled rice in the market, especially for the poor. "On well-milled rice, we would let the market decide as instructed by the President," Sarmiento said.

He said that the government will still continue the present system of rice importation under the "Quantitative Restriction" regime as a protection for palay farmers.

The government will allow other sectors to participate in the importation of rice, but there will be no issuance of import permits, Sarmiento said.

"So the principle of first-come, first-served will be followed," he said.

Sarmiento said the government will impose a cap of 10,000 metric tons (MT) per importer to allow a greater number of participants and encourage competition.

In the implementation, Sarmiento suggested that there will be a single opening of letter of credit (LC) source, which is the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP).

For the first quarter tranche volume, LCs will be opened with LBP on January 2-31, 2003. Farmers will be initially allowed the privilege of opening LCs for January 2-15, 2003. The unavailed balance shall be made available to other importers starting January 16 up to January 31, 2003. Arrival of importation is not later than March 31, 2003.

For the second quarter tranche volume, LCs shall be opened with LBP on April 1-30, 2003.

Farmers will be initially allowed the privilege of opening LCs for April 1-15, 2003.

The unavailed balance shall be made available to other importers starting April 16 up to April 30, 2003. The second quarter tranche will arrive not later than June 30, 2003.

According to Sarmiento, any rice importation that arrives after the said dates per tranche will be turned away and may be considered as an unauthorized importation and may be subjected to forfeiture under the Tariff and Customs Code.

GMA okays DTI plan to ban import of used vehicles

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today approved in principle the recommendation of the Department of Trade and Industry to prohibit the importation of used vehicles.

The President expressed approval during the presentation of Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel "Mar" Roxas II during the regular Cabinet meeting at Malacanang.

Roxas' recommendation is to ban all types of used motor vehicles with the exceptions of special purpose vehicles like fire trucks and ambulances and vehicles of Filipino *balikbayans*.

Roxas said the DTI would draft the Memorandum Order that would simplify and clarify the rules and regulations for approval by the President.

According to Roxas, there were only 76,670 units of vehicles sold in the domestic vehicle industry in 2001 while 178, 285 units were registered at the Land Transportation Office that year.

Roxas said there are at least 52, 615 used vehicles unaccounted for.

Roxas noted that for the first four months of 2002, the number of vehicles that entered Subic Freeport was estimated at 15, 000 units.

Roxas noted that in ASEAN countries like Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, used vehicles are generally not allowed to be imported.

He said the only exceptions are vehicles that are not locally produced, used reconditioned luxury vehicles or personal vehicles for returning citizens.

Meanwhile, the President also approved the proposal of Roxas to restructure the MFN Tariff Rates, the rationalization of excise taxes on vehicles.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 17, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034612/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept17.htm>

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- **Average registration period of transactions at D.O.H. reduced — PMS**
- **GMA lauds police, media for successful operation vs. kidnap gang, rescue of trader, recovery of ransom**
- **Employment grows, more people finding full-time jobs, D.O.L.E. informs Malacañang**
- **GMA meets with heirs of Sulu Sultanate**
- **World Bank okays \$100-million loan for KALAHI-CIDSS project in RP**
- **Overall RP-US ties in excellent condition — DFA**

Average registration period of transactions at D.O.H. reduced — PMS

In line with the efforts of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to reduce red tape in government transactions, the Department of Health (DOH) has drastically reduced the average registration period for local and imported drugs from 180 days to five days.

The new DOH program has also cut down the number of signatories for the certification of product registration under the Bureau of Food and Drugs Administration (BFAD) from five to four days, according to an update prepared by the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) on the targets set by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July.

The latest comparative data released by the DOH covers the period of June-Sept. 2001 to June-Sept. 2002.

The PMS report showed that the DOH has filed charges against six of its personnel for offenses ranging from attendance to ghost seminars, extortion, vaccine pilferage, procurement anomaly and overpricing since July 2002.

On the accreditation and certification of medical equipment and devices, the DOH has also reduced the average accreditation period by 50 percent, from 10 days to five days.

The number of signatories for the said process has also been trimmed down to two.

In her SONA, the President has vowed to reduce red tape by cutting in half the number of signatories needed for transactions in various government agencies.

Since then, frontline agencies of the different departments have instituted red-tape reduction measures, to reduce opportunities for graft, which are being monitored by concerned civil society groups and client groups.

In a related development, DOH Secretary Manuel Dayrit has tasked newly-appointed BFAD Director Dr. Leticia-Barbara Bañez-Gutierrez to continue the reforms instituted by her predecessor in the agency.

Dayrit commended erstwhile Food and Drug chief Dr. William Torres for the major improvements in BFAD.

He was referring to the streamlining of operations in the BFAD, the improvement in the registration process of drugs, the quality assurance of drugs under the parallel importation program, and the fight against fake drugs.

GMA lauds police, media for successful operation vs. kidnap gang, rescue of trader, recovery of ransom

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the Philippine National Police (PNP) for another major accomplishment against big-time kidnapping syndicates and thanked the media for cooperating with the authorities for the success of the operations against a kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gang in Cavite.

The President went to General Trias, Cavite, this morning to personally congratulate PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, PNP Region 4 (southern Tagalog) Director Chief Superintendent Enrique Galang and Cavite Provincial Police Director Senior Superintendent Samuel Pagdilao for neutralizing the Radam-Mostrales KFR gang which was believed responsible for a series of kidnappings in Metro Manila.

“Congratulations and keep up the good work,” President said to Ebdane, Galang and Pagdilao.

Addressing the reporters, the President said: “I’d like to thank the media in Cavite because they did not report the kidnapping. Because of their full cooperation, the solution time just took two days and the police also recovered the ransom money.”

Three members of the kidnap gang — Rodolfo “Bullet” Patinio, Diosdado Santos and Eugene Radam, former members of the Philippine Marines — were killed in a gun battle with members of the Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (PACER) and the Cavite provincial police at dawn today.

The police also rescued the gang’s captive, businessman Jose Piñano, and recovered the ransom money picked up earlier by the gang.

The three slain kidnap suspects were linked to slain Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom gang leader Faisal Marohombsar who was also killed by PACER members and members of the military during a shootout in Magallanes town, also in Cavite.

Pagdilao informed the President that the encounter came a day after the gang members released Peñano last Tuesday at a McDonald’s outlet in Tagaytay City after the victim reportedly paid P2 million in ransom. The businessman was abducted last September 16 near the boundary of Carmona and Silang, Cavite.

He further informed the President that he ordered a raid on the gang’s hideout in Barangay Manggahan in General Trias only after assuring that the victim was free and safe.

Recovered at the scene of the shootout were one traveling bag containing the P2 million ransom; one black leather bag; two cellular activated bombs; one Pietro Berreta 9mm gun with serial number MOD-9205; one 9mm DP51 Daewoo gun with serial number BA-003945; one 9mm Rugger P85 gun with serial number 300-45431; three cellular phones, one M16 A1 Armalite rifle with serial number 180300; three magazines of 9mm; two black inside holster; two fragmentation grenades; two leather wallets containing a list of suspected target victims; one camera; and other personal belongings of the suspects.

Pagdilao also said the Mostrales group was also responsible for the kidnapping of Grace Ong on October 2, 2001 in Ayala, Alabang; Jason Lim on October 15, 2001 in Sta. Cruz, Manila; and Angela Vina Pineda on November 12, 2001 in Mandaluyong City.

Santos was one of the prime suspects in the killing of Baron Cervantes, former Young Officer Union (YOU) spokesman, last December 31, 2001 in Las Piñas City.

Patinio escaped from the defunct National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTAF) detention cell last June 19, 2002 together with Pentagon gang leader Marohombsar, who was killed in an encounter last month in Magallanes, Cavite.

The two was also involved for the kidnapping of Patricia Cheung and Winena Jordan on August 19, 2002.

Employment grows, more people finding full-time jobs, D.O.L.E. informs Malacañang

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reported to Malacañang today that employment grew in July this year and the quality of employment improved as more people found full-time jobs.

In her report, Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said the 2.8 percent expansion in employment in July compared to the same period last year represents an increase of 823,000, bringing the total employed persons to 30.104 million.

Sto. Tomas said the gain in employment was recorded strongest in the service sector with 4.9 percent, with the agricultural, fishery and forestry sector posting a modest increase of 1.5 percent.

She noted, however, that the growth in industry employment was essentially flat with -0.1 percent.

Sto. Tomas also said more people found full-time employment during the period.

“Of the total employed persons, 60 percent or 18.343 million were engaged in full-time employment,” she said, adding that wage and salary employment also grew by 3.6 percent.

Sto. Tomas also said underemployment, the incidence of employed persons who expressed desire for additional hours/additional jobs, posted a slight decline.

The gain in employment, however, was matched by an even larger growth in the labor force (4.1 percent or 1.351 million) as more people entered the labor market, she added.

Sto. Tomas also reported that the rise in labor supply pushed the July unemployment rate to 11.2 percent from 10.1 percent in the same month last year. “This figure is, however, lower by 2.7 percentage points than the April unemployment rate of 13.9 percent,” she said.

According to the labor secretary, if the number of Filipinos who are employed abroad (which as of September 12 has reached 665,741) are included, the employment figures will further improve by at least 2 percent more.

It can be recalled that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration is targeting a deployment of one million Filipino workers for the year.

Sto. Tomas vowed to continue to strengthen the implementation of DOLE’s four employment strategies, namely, employment generation, employment preservation, employment enhancement, and employment facilitation.

“More specifically, DOLE is committed to intensify the training and upgrading of skills of workers, and to strengthen employment facilitation mechanism (PESOs and Manpower Registry of Skills) to place more workers in local and overseas jobs,” Sto. Tomas said.

GMA meets with heirs of Sulu Sultanate

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today formally welcomed the heirs of the Sultanate of Sulu and informed them that their interest and welfare are foremost in her mind.

In a press briefing in Malacañang after the President’s luncheon meeting with representatives of the nine families acknowledged as heirs of the Sultanate of Sulu, Presidential Assistant on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales said that the President told the heirs of her reestablishing the Legislative-Executive Committee on the Sabah claim to review the initiatives undertaken by past administrations vis à vis the issue.

The move of the President, Gonzales said, was in response to the request of the heirs to resolve the issue of sovereignty and proprietary rights of the Sultanate of Sulu on Sabah.

Gonzales said that Sultan Jamalul Kiram III, the recognized head of the heirs of the Sultanate of Sulu, said that he will pursue simultaneously both the proprietary and sovereignty rights. Aside from Sultan Jamalul Kiram, Sultan Bantilan Esmail Kiram also attended the meeting.

Gonzales pointed out that the sovereignty question has been given back to the heirs of the Sultanate of Sulu, but they have asked the President for assistance with respect to both their sovereignty and proprietary rights.

“There will be discussions on whether the heirs of the Sultanate will probably give back to the Philippine government the power of attorney for the sovereignty rights,” Gonzales said.

But the President, according to Gonzales, has cautioned the heirs that the sovereignty issue would take a long time to settle.

“In the case of the proprietary rights, the President was very precise in her statement that what she really wants was for the heirs to be protected in terms of their future,” Gonzales added.

The representatives of the nine families recognized as heirs of the Sultanate of Sulu who attended the luncheon meeting with the President in Malacañang included the heirs of Dayang Dayang Mariam Kiram, Sultan Punjungan Kiram, Dayang Dayang Jahara Kiram, Dayang Dayang Sitti Rada Kiram, Mora Nafsa, Sultan Esmail Kiram I, Princess Tarhata Kiram, Dayang Dayang Hjiipiandao Kiram and Princess Sakinur-in Kiram.

The nine families are the ones recognized in court ruling that defines the authentic and legitimate heirs of Sulu.

“One of the things that we cleared during the luncheon meeting in Malacañang is that Malaysia, Britain and the Philippines have a common basis for the legitimate claimants to the Sulu Sultanate and this is the Makaski Judgment which recognizes the nine families,” Gonzales said.

World Bank okays \$100-million loan for KALAHY-CIDSS project in RP

The Washington-based World Bank has approved a US\$100 million loan for the *Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHY)* program, an anti-poverty initiative of the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In a press statement, the WB said that the loan from the International Bank for Rehabilitation and Development (IBRD) was approved Wednesday by the WB’s board of executive directors.

The loan, the WB statement said, would be used for the KALAHY program and for the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) project of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

The WB said that the project will assist the government in strengthening the capability of local government units (LGUs) to design, implement, and manage development activities.

Such activities may include basic infrastructure like new or rehabilitated roads and bridges, *barangay* schools and clinics, and water supply and sanitation facilities.

Communities will prioritize their development needs, design activities, seek technical expertise and make informed choices on how resources are used for sustainable poverty reduction, the WB statement said.

More than 5,300 poor *barangays* in 193 municipalities in 40 of the poorest provinces in the Philippines are expected to benefit from this project. These will be mostly in rural areas, where most poor Filipinos live.

“The KALAH-CIDSS project will promote good governance, transparency, participation with local level decision-making, and increased accountability, as villagers gain hands-on experience in managing projects,” said Cyprian Fisiy, World Bank task team leader for the KALAH-CIDSS project.

Robert Vance Pulley, WB country director for the Philippines, said that promoting growth and enabling people, especially the poor, to participate fully in development are the twin pillars of the World Bank’s strategy for the Philippines.

“This project will support the second pillar by giving influence over decisions and resources to local communities. Poverty reduction efforts are more likely to be effective and sustained when communities are responsible for activities that affect them,” Pulley said.

The WB identified the core project principles as follows:

- Localized decision-making. Decisions on community sub-projects will be made by barangay residents and their representatives.
- Transparency. Every aspect of project decision-making will be known to local communities and each peso spent will be accounted for on public information boards and independently monitored by non-government organizations (NGOs) and media groups.
- Social inclusiveness. The entire community, not just a few families, will have the opportunity to be involved in planning and decision-making processes.
- Competition. Participating barangays will submit project proposals to an inter-barangay forum for selection based on criteria like number of poor beneficiaries and technical soundness of the proposal.
- Demand-driven poverty reduction. Options for community-driven projects are based on an open menu, but projects with negative environmental or social impacts will not be funded.

The DSWD will be the implementing agency for the project.

Overall RP-US ties in excellent condition — DFA

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) today said the country’s overall bilateral relations with the United States have been in “excellent condition” starting in 2001 shortly after the September 11 terrorist attack in New York and Washington, DC, when President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared the Philippines’ support for the US-led war on terrorism.

The DFA spokesman, Assistant Secretary Victoriano Lecaros, made this statement in the wake of the reports that the Philippines and other Southeast Asian nations were even behind Africa in the hierarchy of interests of the US.

Lecaros said the excellent relations between the Philippines and the United States have been manifested in the large number of visits to the Philippines by high-level US officials.

Among the US officials who visited the Philippines under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration include US Secretary of State Colin Powell; Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert Mueller III; US Senators Daniel Inouye and Ted Stevens; US Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony J. Pincipi; US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers; Admiral Thomas Fargo, Commander in Chief of the US forces in the Pacific; US Congressional delegate Robert A. Underwood; US Rep. Dana Rohrabacher; and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz.

Lecaros also said the Balikatan 02-1 exercises, the first of its kind between the Philippines and the US, went very well.

“The Bush administration requested the US Congress to grant \$25 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for the Philippines,” he said, adding that this amount is significant compared to the low FMF levels provided to the Philippines in recent years.

Moreover, Lecaros said the \$25 million FMF intended by the Bush administration for the Philippines was doubled by the US Senate to over \$50 million.

He noted that the Philippines is the “only country in the supplemental to be given an earmark, that is, a specified amount designated for a named country.”

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 18, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034622/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept18.htm>

The President's Day: September 19, 2002

19 SEPTEMBER 2002

- **GMA orders GFIs to give more loans to SMEs to reinvigorate domestic market**
- **GMA joins state workers in mass to celebrate 102nd RP civil service anniversary**
- **GMA calls on banks to extend more loans to SMEs, housing sector**
- **GMA reassures U.S. of continued support in fight vs. global terrorism**
- **S. to provide funds for RP's forest conservation program**
- **GMA thanks junior golf champion for bringing honor to her country**
- **GMA presents cash awards to best films for July and August, and to 10 best scripts for MMFFP '02**

GMA orders GFIs to give more loans to SMEs to reinvigorate domestic market

In stressing the need to reinvigorate the domestic market, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered officials of government financial institutions (GFIs) to step up efforts in providing loanable funds to small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The President, who made the emphasis during her meeting with GFI officials at the State Dining Room in Malacañang, also ordered the GFIs to focus on special niches in the credit market.

"It is important that we manage our financial resources or loanable funds of government corporations like a tight ship," the President said.

The President noted that in the past, the GFIs have always followed market forces. But this time, she said, there is a need for directed credit.

The President further noted that the best and the most reliable source to boost the domestic market are the SMEs.

Among the GFIs represented in the meeting were the Philippine Postal Savings Bank, Land Bank of the Philippines, Development Bank of the Philippines, United Coconut Planters Bank, Small Business Guarantee and Finance Corporation, Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corporation (Quedancor), Livelihood Corporation, Technology and Livelihood Resource Center, PhilExim (formerly Trade and Investment Development Corporation of the Philippines), and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

According to the agencies, the total loan portfolio for the SMEs of the leading 11 GFIs reached P91.2 billion as of December 2001.

From January to June 2002, the total loans and guarantee extended by the GFIs to SMEs amounted to P5.9 billion. The total beneficiaries for the same period were 69,000 SME borrowers.

In 2001, the biggest lender among the agencies were the LBP and DBP (with P22 billion) while the largest guarantor was Quedancor (P20.3 billion).

The National Capital Region and Regions 3 and 4 received the highest share of SME loans from both GFIs and private banks.

The GFIs also received 14 percent of the loan applications of SMEs while private banks covered the rest.

During the meeting, the President also discussed ways on how to improve SMEs' access to credit and how it can likewise increase capacity to absorb credit.

The President noted her “One Town, One Product, One Million Pesos for SME Loan,” where the government lends out P1 million to a town (to be paid out to LBP) for the development of a single indigenous product.

The President has said the government would convince banks to open more credit windows for SMEs instead of loaning out money to less productive sectors like luxury properties and factories with excess capacity.

She noted the SME’s capability to effectively circulate capital and increase domestic consumption, but stressed that the SMEs needed plenty of capital.

Among those who attended the meeting were Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho and Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II.

GMA joins state workers in mass to celebrate 102nd RP civil service anniversary

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today joined the nation’s public servants in a eucharistic celebration at the Heroes Hall at Malacañang to commemorate the 102nd anniversary of Philippine civil service.

With the President were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Presidential Assistant for Ecumenical and Media Affairs Conrado Limcaoco, Presidential Assistant for Agricultural Modernization Angelito Sarmiento and Presidential Assistant for Education Mona Valisno, among others.

Monsignor Augusto Laban, chaplain of the Office of the President, officiated the Mass, offered the mass to bring to mind the efforts and sacrifices of the country’s civil workers in assuring faster and quality services in an effective and efficient bureaucracy.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, in her two State of the Nation Address (SONA) had stressed on good governance and ridding the government of people involved in graft and corrupt practices to pave the way in building a strong Republic.

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) celebrates this month the anniversary of the Philippine civil service with the theme “*Lakas ng Serbisyo Sibil, Lakas ng Bayan* (Strength of Civil Service, Strength of the Nation).”

CSC Chairperson Karina Constantino-David said the anniversary celebration would be highlighted with the conferment of the 2002 Outstanding Public Officials and Employees Awards by the President.

The awards to be conferred are the Presidential Lingkod Bayan Award for outstanding individual work performance and the Dangal ng Bayan Award for exemplary ethical behavior or public service act.

These are considered as the highest awards in the civil service.

David said a concert-tribute for state workers, dubbed “Parangal ... Pasasalamat 2002” would also be staged. During the activity, the CSC will confer the Pagasa Award for outstanding individual or group work performance, and the Katangi-tanging Bihasang Manggagawa Award for exemplary blue-collared workers in government.

David called on all government agencies nationwide to actively participate in the activities set for the anniversary and to help ensure the success of the occasion.

An activity is the “A Day with a Barangay” where government agencies involved in health, environment and sanitation are encouraged to group together and to go to specific barangays to offer their respective services.

“A Day with a Barangay” aims to bring government services to the people’s doorsteps. Local government units are urged to be active partners in the endeavor as they will help identify the beneficiary barangays. CSC regional offices will take the lead in the activity.

Agencies are also urged to undertake fund-raising activities and donate the proceeds to institutions such as the Philippine National Red Cross or the social welfare department.

Other activities that agencies can conduct include open house, bloodletting, media forum, and recognition day. Agencies, however, are not precluded from carrying out other activities in celebrating the occasion.

GMA calls on banks to extend more loans to SMEs, housing sector

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has called on the banking community to provide more loans to the housing sector and to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in a bid to reinvigorate the domestic market.

In a press briefing this afternoon in Malacañang, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said that the President met Wednesday night with officials of the Bankers Association of the Philippines (BAP) where she asked them to further expand their lending program for the SMEs.

This morning the President also met with officials of government financial institutions (GFIs) where she also asked them to step up their lending program for SMEs, stressing that this is one way of expanding the domestic market.

Camacho said that what the government is trying to do is to focus its efforts “so that the different sectors of our economy, including the banking sector, can be in sync with what the national government is doing.”

He said that because of the potential weakness in the global economy, the administration is focusing on the SMEs and the housing sector.

“Activities in these two sectors could help promote domestic economy, create domestic demand but this will require domestic financing,” Camacho said.

Camacho said that during the Wednesday meeting in Malacañang, the bankers expressed their willingness to increase their loan portfolio for the SMEs but they could not identify who the qualified SME businessmen and borrowers are.

So this is where the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) would come in, and since they have regional and provincial networks, they will be the ones to introduce the SMEs to the bankers and the GFIs, Camacho said.

Camacho said that there is a need for government agencies to be proactive to be able to help the SMEs in seeking loans from the GFIs and the private banks.

He even suggested the holding of “loan fairs” and the operation of a website where prospective borrowers can surf for GFIs and private banks willing to lend money to them for their operations.

“So, what we are really trying to do is identify measures or activities that would allow us to be proactive in the provision of credit to SMEs, such as technical assistance and empowering them,” Camacho said.

GMA reassures U.S. of continued support in fight vs. global terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reassured the United States of the Philippines’ continued support in its fight against global terrorism as well as in its efforts to go after illegally acquired funds by terror groups.

The President's assurance was given to John Taylor, US Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs, who called on her in Malacañang this morning. During their meeting, the President and Taylor discussed topics of mutual concern for the two countries.

Taylor, who is in the country for a two-day visit, was accompanied to Malacañang by Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho.

In a media briefing later, Camacho said the President, in a candid conversation with Taylor, "emphasized our support for the US in the fight against global terrorism."

Camacho said the President also told Taylor about the efforts undertaken by the government to strengthen its anti-money laundering law and keep this "within international standards."

The President told Taylor that administration officials are now working with leaders of Congress on amendments to the anti-money laundering law.

Another topic discussed by the President and Taylor was the US announcement of a Millennium Challenge account for qualified developing nations.

The account was first brought out during the recent visit of US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who also called on the President in Malacañang.

The account is a "\$5-billion fund the US government would like to provide in the next four or five years to countries they believe could meet the criteria," Camacho explained.

The fund would be used for government programs and projects "in the area of poverty alleviation, specifically in health education and in the fight against the dreaded AIDS (Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome) in regions like Africa," Camacho said.

Camacho also disclosed that he and Taylor would sign an agreement that would formalize the Philippines' eligibility to avail itself of the tropical forest program of the US.

"This will allow us to take advantage of funds being made available by the US government to help us in our environmental conservation projects, particularly in reforestation," he added.

The bilateral agreement will be implemented by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

U.S. to provide funds for RP's forest conservation program

The governments of the Philippines and the United States today formally signed an agreement on the Tropical Forest Conservation Fund (TFCF) that would provide financial assistance to help the country's campaign in the environmental concerns, especially in reforestation projects.

The agreement was signed by Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho and John B. Taylor, US Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs, during a simple ceremony held at the Department of Finance this afternoon.

In his press briefing this afternoon in Malacañang, Camacho said that Taylor briefed the President about the TFCF agreement during his courtesy call in Malacañang this morning.

"Under the program, the Philippines would take advantage of funds being made available by the US government to help us in our environmental conservation projects, particularly in reforestation," Camacho said.

Camacho said that the agreement is the first concrete step and fruit of the President's working visit to the United States in November last year and also part of the existing bilateral relations between the two countries.

The US would provide an initial fund of \$8.2 million for the program that will be implemented by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Under the TFCF, the government will establish, in consultation with non-government organizations (NGOs) involved in forest conservation, a Tropical Forest Conservation Board to administer the fund.

The Board shall consist of nine members, two each from the government and the US, and five from NGOs. Representatives of the NGOs should constitute a majority of the board.

Activities eligible for financing under the fund are:

1. Establishment, restoration, protection of parks, protected areas, and reserves;
2. Development and implementation of scientifically sound systems of natural resource management, including land and ecosystem management practices;
3. Training programs to increase scientific, technical and managerial capacities of individuals and organizations involved in forest conservation efforts;
4. Restoration, protection, or sustainable use of diverse animal and plant species;
5. Research and identification of medicinal uses of tropical forest plant life to treat human diseases, illnesses and health-related concerns; and
6. Development and support of the livelihood projects for individuals living in or near a tropical forest in a manner consistent with protecting such tropical forest.

Entities eligible to receive grants from the fund are:

1. Non-governmental environmental, forestry, conservation, and indigenous people organizations of, or active in the Philippines, including those involved in development, education, science research, or forest management;
2. Other appropriate local or regional entities of, or active in, the Philippines; and
3. In exceptional circumstances, the government of the Philippines.

GMA thanks junior golf champion for bringing honor to her country

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed her gratitude to international junior golf champion Javie Marie Agoho, for bringing honors to the country by winning in two prestigious golf tournaments in the United States.

"We're proud of you. Thank you for bringing honor to your country," the President told Agoho during the latter's courtesy call in Malacañang.

Among those who accompanied the young Agoho during the call on the President were Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) Chairman Eric Buhain, her parents, Jun and Vicky Agoho, and her personal trainer Romulo Negrado.

The 16-year old golfer has won the girls division (13-15 years old) of the International Junior Golf Championship held last July 10-13 in Temecula, California, and the Optimist International Junior Golf Competition (14-15 years old) in July 19-21, also in California.

The three-day Optimist International Junior Golf Championship (OIJGC) is one of the largest and most prestigious events for junior golfers, with ages 10 to 18.

Each year over 5,000 young people from the United States and Canada compete in qualifying tournaments. There are over 650 players from 15 countries, 45 states, and 6 Canadian provinces who participate in the championship event. Players compete in the 10-11, 12-13, 14-15, 16-18 age divisions.

During their conversation, the President said she is looking forward to playing a round of golf with Agoho at the Villamor Air Base golf course where the latter does her regular practice every Sunday.

Agoho is currently studying at the O.B. Montessori in Greenhills, San Juan.

GMA presents cash awards to best films for July and August, and to 10 best scripts for MMFFP '02

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presented cash awards and plaques of recognition to the best Filipino movies for the month of July and August and to 10 winning scripts for the Metro Manila Film Festival Philippines 2002 (MMFFP '02).

In ceremonies held at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang attended by leaders of the country's movie industry, the President also called on the movie producers to make films that would not only entertain but also portray the best in Philippine culture.

Earlier, the President announced a P50 million subsidy for the movie industry so that it could produce quality films.

The President handed out P500,000 and a plaque each to the movie "Pakisabi Mo Na Lang na Mahal ko Siya" and "Jologs" which were adjudged winners of the Pilipino Great Movie Arts Awards for the month of July and August respectively.

The President also awarded P100,000 and plaque of recognition each for the scriptwriters of ten winning scripts submitted by the movie companies as entries to the MMFFP '02.

Leaders of the movie industry, headed by lawyer Esperidion Laxa, executive chairman of the MMFFP '02, thanked the President for giving incentives to locally-produced films.

In an interview later, Fernando Poe, Jr., who was among those present in the ceremony, also said that the President's subsidy is a great help to the movie industry.

"I would like to thank the President for helping the movie industry," Poe said.

The script of "Alamat ng Agimat," a film produced and directed by Poe was among the 10 winning scripts submitted to MMFFP '02. Poe will also star in the said movie.

The 10 scripts that won P100,000 each and a plaque of recognition were:

1. Home Along the Riber, written by Ben Felo and produced by RVQ Films of Rodolfo Quizon;
2. Spirit Warrior II, written by Roy Iglesias and produced by the MAQ Productions headed by Sherida Monteverde;
3. Mano Po, written by Roy Iglesias and being filmed by Lily Monteverde of Regal Entertainment;
4. Dekada, written by Lualhati Bautista and produced by Malou Santos of Star Cinema;
5. Lapu-Lapu, scripted by Jerry Tirazona and produced by Florante Castillo of Calinauan Cine Works;
6. Agimat 2, written by Peque Gallaga and produced by Marlon Bautista of Imus Films;
7. Alamat ng Lawin, written by Manuel Buising and produced by Ronald Allan Poe of FPJ Films;
8. Hula Mo, Huli Ko, written by Senen Dimaguila and Humilde Roxas and filmed by Rudy Fernandez of Reflection Films;
9. Lastikman, written by Antonio Reyes and produced by Octoarts Films headed by Orlando Ilacad; and
10. Kulimlim, written by Roy Iglesias and produced by Teresita Cruz of Neo Films.

According to Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman Bayani Fernando, who is the over-all chairman of the MMFFP 2002, the cash awards given to the 10 best scripts and for the best quality films for the months of July and August came from the P50 million presidential subsidy.

During the program, the President, the awardees and the officials of the MMFFP '02 viewed a one-minute promo material on Filipino Great Movie Arts Award and on the government's anti-film piracy campaign.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 19, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034637/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept19.htm>

The President's Day: September 20, 2002

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- **NEDA Board approves projects worth P33.7B**
- **GMA lauds Malampaya for winning U.N. award for sustainable development**
- **GMA wishes Philippine team to Asian good luck**
- **Taipans assure GMA of joining gov't socialized housing program**
- **Bush thanks GMA for support on U.S. petition before U.N.**
- **GMA gets vote of confidence from Taipans**
- **GMA appoints Ibay as acting ERC chairperson**

NEDA Board approves projects worth P33.7B

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board has approved 12 projects worth P33.7 billion to boost agricultural productivity; support health, education and social services; and improve infrastructure in Metro Manila and the countryside.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is the chairman of the NEDA Board.

The President had stressed the importance of speeding up the delivery of social services and fast-tracking the implementation of critical infrastructure projects to build a strong Republic in her State of the Nation Address last July.

The P10.8-billion Agno River Integrated Irrigation Project led the list of approved projects.

The project is expected to provide year-round water supply to irrigate some 70,800 hectares and raise the output of paddy rice and diversified crops in Pangasinan and Tarlac.

This would make farming highly competitive and profitable and would increase per capita income, upgrade the living standards of the people and create jobs in Central Luzon.

The Agno irrigation project covered the repair of the San Roque diversion weir and intake; the construction of the re-regulating pond with a capacity of 4.6 million cubic meters; construction of a canal at the right bank of the Agno River to supply existing service areas of the Agno River Irrigation System (ARIS); and the construction of siphon across Agno River that will link the main canal of lower ARIS.

The NEDA Board also approved the P4.52-billion Pasig-Marikina Channel Improvement Project Phase I, which aims to alleviate the living and sanitary conditions in Metro Manila due to massive flooding caused by the overflowing of the Pasig-Marikina River.

Experience showed that flooding had resulted in severe damage to lives, properties and infrastructure.

The project would lessen the overflowing of Pasig River at times of heavy discharge by increasing the river's conveyance capacity.

The riverbank would be elevated with the erection of some 18.2 kilometers of parapet wall and 17.6 kilometers of revetment walls, and the dredging and excavation of about 7,000 cubic meters of riverbed deposits from the Del Pan Bridge to the Napindin Channel.

The project would further include the repair of about ten kilometers of damaged stretches of existing river walls to prevent erosion and the collapse of riverbanks.

Also in the pipeline is the implementation of the P3.4-billion Agrarian Reform Community Development Project-Phase II, which aims to significantly raise household incomes and the quality of life of target agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs).

The NEDA Board said the project would improve productive assets, rural infrastructure and access to key support services.

The project has three components: community development and capability building; rural infrastructure; and agriculture and enterprise development and rural credit financing.

Lately, President Macapagal-Arroyo called on banks and government financial institutions to help fund projects of small and medium enterprises, particularly those under the government's "One Town-One Project" program.

Another project, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Social Fund for Peace Development worth P2.53 billion, aimed to reduce poverty and help build sustainable peace in the ARMM.

The project involved interventions for socio-economic development of target communities, the implementation of infrastructure of regional strategic significance, and peace and advocacy at various levels.

It would cover 2,800 barangays in 94 towns in the ARMM's five provinces — Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur, including Marawi City.

Other projects approved were the General Santos Fishing Port Complex Expansion/Improvement Project worth P1.52 billion; Bago River Irrigation System Rehabilitation and Improvement Project, P1.52 billion; 26th Tranche Increased Food Production Program, P610 million; Upgrading the Inter-Urban Highway System, P3.4 billion;

Valenzuela-Obando-Meycauayan Area Drainage System Improvement and Related Works, P3.23 billion; Educational Facilities Improvement Program, Phase VI, P900 million; Philippine Follow-Up Measles Elimination Campaign, P450 million; and Upgrading of Essential Medical Equipment for Strategic Government Referral Hospitals in the Southern Mindanao, P825 million.

GMA lauds Malampaya for winning U.N. award for sustainable development

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Malampaya Deep Water Gas to Power Project, a joint venture of multinational conglomerates and government corporations, for capturing a major United Nations award for sustainable development during the World Summit on the Environment held recently in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The President, who met with officials of the joint venture partners and project associates during a courtesy call in Malacañang, said that the recognition is a great honor for the Philippines.

"We're very honored with this award," the President said.

The President noted that the Malampaya Gas to Power project shows that the government can undertake a joint venture with the private sector that would have a great economic impact, as well as positive effect on the environment.

Members of the joint venture undertook a reenactment of the awarding ceremonies at the Music Room of the Palace.

Jeremy Cliff, managing director of Shell Philippines Exploration B.V., operator of the joint venture, presented the award to the President. "It looks really humble but it's very meaningful for us all," Cliff said.

Cliff said the award recognizes the Malampaya project's program for natural gas development using a sustainable management framework that ensures the economic, environmental and social acceptability of a large-scale industrial venture in the Philippines.

This is being achieved through a partnership among the government, local communities, and local and international non-governmental organizations.

The project is a joint venture of Shell, Chevron-Exaco, and Philippine National Oil Company-Exploration Corporation (PNOC-EC).

Those who attended the meeting were Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Heherson Alvarez, Shell Philippines country chairman Eliseo Santiago, Shell Philippines Exploration B.V. business development manager Mike Wooton, Exaco Philippines President and Chief Finance Officer Therry Brebion, PNOC-EC president Rufino Barasang, Karl Cotbell of Exaco; Federico Lopez of First Gas, Batangas Gov. Hermilando Mandanas and British Ambassador Paul Diamond.

The award was given by the International Chamber of Commerce/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

ICC, a business organization, is the largest private sector association in the world. UNEP is the environment agency of the United Nations. This is the second year they have joined forces to recognize the sustainable development achievements of companies around the world.

The Malampaya project was among the 10 that were selected as winners from more than 120 entries from 37 countries.

This year's winning entrants covered the range of industrial activity – from farming of organic cotton to sustainable forestry practices, natural gas extraction and recycling programs.

The winners came from four continents and included companies in Finland, Spain, South Africa and the Philippines.

GMA wishes Philippine team to Asian good luck

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today wished the 218-member Team Philippines good luck and cheered them on to do battle in the 14th Asian Games in Busan, South Korea and bring home as many gold, silver and bronze medals as they can.

During a sendoff ceremony held at the Heroes Hall of Malacañang, the President expressed hope that the Philippine delegation would surpass the number of medals they won in the 1998 Asiad.

Thomas Carrasco, chef d' mission to the Busan Asian Games, presented the Philippine Flag to the President during the ceremony and introduced the members of the Philippine contingent by batches.

The President also received the official jacket of the Philippine delegation from Eric Buhain, chairman of the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC).

The athletes will compete in various events during the quadrennial event, including archery, aquatic games, badminton, baseball, basketball, billiards, rowing, sailing, fencing, sepak takraw, soft tennis, table tennis, wrestling, wushu, and aikido.

The Philippine athletes will be leaving the country by batches in the next few days to participate in the 14th Asian Games scheduled to run from September 29 to October 14 in Busan, South Korea.

The Palace sendoff comes less than a week after the President agreed to augment the PSC coffers with P50 million from the President's Social Fund. The augmentation fund will be directed to the Asian Games campaign as well as for the PSC's other commitments.

The Malacañang affair also comes two days after Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin gave his best wishes and blessings to the sports delegation.

Aside from Buhain and Carrasco, among those present during the Palace sendoff were Cynthia Carreon and Mike Barredo of the PSC board of commissioners; Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Celso Dayrit; and Frank Elizalde, Philippine representative to the International Olympics Committee (IOC).

Taipans assure GMA of joining gov't socialized housing program

The country's top Filipino-Chinese businessmen, known as taipans for being the captains of Philippine business, have agreed to participate in the government's socialized housing program.

In her luncheon meeting with John Gokongwei, Henry Sy, Andrew Gotianum, and representatives of George Ty and Alfonso Yuchengco in Malacañang, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo encouraged them to help develop idle and supposed to be privatized government properties for housing for government employees, specially for teachers, soldiers and policemen.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, who was present in the meeting, said that the luncheon did not discuss generalities or motherhood statements.

"We talked about specific ideas and specific projects and we were very happy with the response that the government is getting from the *taipans*," Camacho said.

According to Camacho, the President urged the taipans, in particular, to invest in the development of the Philippine government villages where idle government lands or those that are supposed to be privatized could be developed as real estate properties.

"Through this mechanism, we hope we would be able to deliver housing units at affordable prices through the combination of different inputs from different parties from government and the private sector," Camacho said.

Camacho stressed that the multiplier effect of housing to the total economy is about 11 percent, adding that with related industries, like labor, gravel and metal and other construction materials, the multiplier effect would total about 14 to 21 percent.

The government will also minimize bureaucratic red tape to encourage the Filipino-Chinese businessmen to go into the government's socialized housing program, Camacho said.

"We are also looking at the possibility of using government to be able to bring down the cost of construction materials" Camacho pointed out.

From the private sector, the contribution to the program would be their financial resources, their capitals, and their management skills, and their access to technology on housing.

Saying that she was just following the example of former President Fidel Ramos when he asked the taipans to develop a world-class airport, the President this time asked them to help the government in its housing program, Camacho said.

Also in the luncheon meeting were Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Michael Defensor, Interior and Local

Government Undersecretary Alipio Fernandez, Aniceto Sobrepeña representing George Ty of Metro Bank and Helen Dee, representing Alfonso Yuchengco, and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Amado Tetangco.

Bush thanks GMA for support on U.S. petition before U.N.

United States President George W. Bush today thanked President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo “for her government’s strong support for the US approach on Iraq,” a White House statement said.

President Bush called up President Macapagal-Arroyo and the two leaders discussed “counterterrorism efforts around the world, including in Southeast Asia,” said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer.

In an official statement released Tuesday, President Macapagal-Arroyo said the “Philippines supports the case brought by the US against Iraq before the United Nations Security Council,” adding that the council should give the charges most urgent and serious consideration.

She said the Philippines has full confidence in the council, which “will act in accord with the imperatives of world peace and security and find the most expeditious way, the most effective way to serve these imperatives.”

She also said her administration “reaffirms its commitment to the global war against terrorism,” believing that “the world will never be secure unless terrorist lairs are exposed and destroyed.”

President Macapagal-Arroyo added that the Philippines “is prepared to extend political, security and humanitarian assistance to the US in the pursuit of its most vital interests, which coincide with our own vital interests, to defeat terrorism.”

GMA gets vote of confidence from Taipans

A group of Filipino-Chinese businessmen belonging to the so-called “cream of the crop” of the business community today expressed their confidence that the government under the leadership of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would be able to get rid of the crime syndicates, particularly the kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) gangs operating in the country.

“I always have confidence in the President,” said business and industry tycoon John Gokongwei during a press briefing in Malacañang.

The President met this afternoon with Gokongwei, Shoe Mart owner Henry Sy, Fil-Estate chief executive officer Andrew Gotianum and representatives of George Ty and Alfonso Yuchengco in Malacañang where they discussed the proposed construction of government villages, a socialized housing project for government employees.

Also present in the meeting were Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Michael Defensor and Ambassador Tomas Alcantara.

Gotianum, for his part, said that while everybody is concerned about the recent incidents of kidnappings, “at least the government is taking steps.”

“They have eliminated seven of the (KFR) gangs. If they continue, we should be able to get rid of them in the next six months,” Gotianum said.

On the other hand, Sy said that the business community is looking at the kidnapping incidents as “temporary.”

“We look at this crisis as temporary and the country has a lot of potentials. The crisis could be addressed sooner or later,” he stressed.

During the briefing with the media, Gokongwei also lauded the President for initiating the government-private sector partnership to provide housing for civil servants using government lands, including idle properties within military camps throughout the country.

“The plan to encourage building and development of army lands is very good,” Gokongwei said.

GMA appoints Ibay as acting ERC chairperson

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today appointed Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) Commissioner Leticia V. Ibay as acting chairperson of the ERC vice Fe Barin, who is resigning to pave the way for her appointment to the Monetary Board.

Barin has been appointed by the President as one of the private sector representatives of the Monetary Board.

Barin will replace Teodoro Montecillo, Monetary Board member representing the private sector. Montecillo served the Monetary Board for a term of six years from August 6, 1996 to August 5, 2002.

Ibay’s involvement in the public sector spans 33 years of government service, majority of which were spent with the Board of Investments. She represented the Philippines in various international fora, including the World Trade Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as well as the Association of Southeast Nations, among others.

She finished her Bachelor of Laws degree at the Manuel L. Quezon University and graduated cum laude from the Philippine College of Commerce, where she was a dean’s lister.

Ibay is married to Judge Francisco B. Ibay of the Regional Trial Court 135 in Makati with whom she has three children.

Barin obtained her Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of the Philippines in 1956.

Before she became ERC chairperson, Barin held various positions, among them as Secretary to the Monetary Board and Special Assistant to the Governor of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and Assistant Legal Counsel of the Philippine Deposit and Insurance Corporation (PDIC).

The powers and functions of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas are exercised by its Monetary Board, which has seven members appointed by the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Among the major functions of the Monetary Board include the power to issue rules and regulations it considers necessary for the effective discharge of the responsibilities and exercise of the powers vested in it; direct the management, operations, and administration of Bangko Sentral, organize its personnel and issue such rules and regulations as it may deem necessary or desirable for this purpose.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 20, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034717/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept20.htm>

The President's Day: September 21, 2002

21 SEPTEMBER 2002

- **Gov't identifies public lands for expanded housing program**
- **GMA commends PNP for recent successes in fight against kidnap-for-ransom gangs**
- **RP would support any U.N. action to solve the problem of Iraq — GMA**
- **GMA stresses commitment to good governance**
- **GMA makes a strong pitch for 2003 'Visit the Philippines Year' among PATA officials**
- **GMA exhorts Region 8 officials to step up efforts in bringing development to region**
- **'We must not let terrorism defeat tourism' — GMA**

Gov't identifies public lands for expanded housing program

The government has proclaimed several of its real estate properties in Metro Manila as sites for housing projects, according to Michael Defensor, Chairman of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC).

This is in line with the goals on housing for the urban poor communities expounded by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered in July this year.

Defensor, in a briefing in Malacañang, said several public lands have been identified for expanded housing projects following commitments from *taipans* and other groups to help build a strong Republic by providing better homes for needy Filipinos.

The President, Defensor said, had also called on government financial institutions (GFIs) and private banks to support the shelter program.

"The President is taking a lead role on this not only through the maximization of government efforts but also in enhancing the environment in the private sector to set up not only socialized housing, but even low-cost and economic housing projects," Defensor stressed.

Defensor said the lands included those in Guadalupe, Makati City; the Taguig area; the area of the National Development Corp. in Sucat, Parañaque City; and some areas in Quezon City.

He added that there have also been some negotiations with the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP) for the use of some its lands for housing purposes.

Complementing these are the housing projects being discussed and detailed with the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Defensor said.

Defensor said a project that would erect 50,000 housing units for agrarian reform beneficiaries could commence immediately, following agreements with DAR Secretary Hernani Braganza.

"We hope to expand our programs and projects," he said.

"The multiplier effect of housing to the total economy is about 11 percent. And with related industries, such as labor and construction materials, the multiplier effect would total to about 14 to 21 percent," Defensor said.

GMA commends PNP for recent successes in fight against kidnap-for-ransom gangs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today commended the Philippine National Police (PNP) under the leadership of Director General Hermogenes Ebdane for its recent successes in the fight against kidnap-for-ransom gangs and other criminal elements in the country.

In her weekly radio program aired nationwide, the President said that the PNP has already neutralized five of the identified 21 kidnap-for-ransom groups operating mostly in Metro Manila.

The President cited the recent successful operation by the PNP in Cavite that resulted in the death of some members of the Radam and Patino gang and the recovery of ransom money.

“Ito rin ay nagsisilbing babala sa mga natitira pang grupo ng mga kidnaper—bilang na ang inyong araw (This will also serve as a reminder to the remaining groups of kidnappers—your days are numbered),” the President said.

The President said her administration is determined to wipe out all forms of criminality as she has pledged in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered in July this year.

“Makakaasa kayo sa patuloy na determinasyon ng inyong pamahalaan na linisin ang ating lipunan laban sa lahat ng uri ng krimen (Rest assured that this government is determined to cleanse our society of all forms of criminality),” the President said.

In her SONA, the President vowed to win “decisive victories” in the war against terrorists, kidnappers and drug lords.

The government, the President said, will also continue to go after public officials who have committed crimes or graft and corruption, including those in the military and the police, who she described as “rascals in uniforms.”

According to the President, the administration has already filed several cases against government officials involved in tax frauds and money laundering.

The President said that peace and order and an honest bureaucracy are needed to speed up the country’s economic growth.

“Ang paglutas ng ating peace and order problems at sa problema ng katiwalian ay kasing-halaga ng pagbuti ng ating ekonomiya (Solving our peace and order problems as well as our problems in graft and corruption is as important as improving the economy),” the President said.

“Peace and development and the rule of law always come together,” the President stressed.

RP would support any U.N. action to solve the problem of Iraq — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that the Philippines will support any action to be taken by the United Nations in order to resolve the situation in Iraq.

In her weekly radio program aired nationwide, the President also stressed that the Philippines is determined to honor its earlier commitment to support the campaign against global terrorism.

“At kaisa tayo ng United Nations para sa paglutas ng problema ng Iraq (And we are one with the United Nations in its search for solution to the problem of Iraq),” the President said.

The President recalled that some two weeks ago, she ordered the evacuation of all Filipinos in Iraq because of the threat of war in the area.

But since the threat of war has diminished because of the decision of Iraq to allow the reentry of UN arms inspectors to the country, she has suspended the evacuation at the moment, the President said.

Despite this new development, however, the President said she had instructed former AFP Chief of Staff, Gen. Roy Cimatu, her special envoy to the Middle East, to proceed to Iraq and find out the situation of the Filipino workers there and in the neighboring countries.

“Nais nating makatiyak na mabuti ang kalagayan ng ating mga kababayan doon (We just want to be sure that our countrymen there are safe),” the President said.

GMA stresses commitment to good governance

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed her commitment to good governance, saying that without good governance, the war against poverty cannot be won within the decade.

In her weekly radio program aired nationwide, the President also said that good governance is a prerequisite for the building of a strong Republic that she had espoused during her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered in July this year.

The President said this is the reason why she has ordered the arrest of influence peddlers who have been using their alleged connections to the First Family in their illegal activities.

She also said that she has ordered the Public Estates Authority (PEA) and the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) to look into the charges that there was an overpricing in the construction of the Diosdado Macapagal Avenue at the Manila Bay reclamation area.

“Inatasan ko ang PEA at ang GSIS na magpaliwanag hinggil dito (I have ordered the PEA and the GSIS to explain their side on this),” the President said.

Earlier, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye bewailed the penchant of some groups to immediately link First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo to the alleged overpricing in the road-building project.

“Some people made it a habit to implicate the First Gentleman in every anomaly (in order) to have an impact on the President,” Bunye said.

But Bunye said the President’s detractors are not succeeding because *“they cannot present even an ounce of evidence to their allegations.”*

GMA makes a strong pitch for 2003 ‘Visit the Philippines Year’ among PATA officials

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo made a strong pitch Friday night before the delegates of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) for the country’s celebration of *“Visit the Philippines Year”* in 2003.

“The Filipino people are the best reason for visiting the Philippines,” the President said in her speech during the dinner reception in honor of the PATA delegates at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang.

The President informed the delegates that the celebration, which will run for the whole year, will feature colorful events such as cultural fairs, food festivals, and exhibits of locally-made handicrafts and other products.

“You can always tell your clients that there are at least 7,000 reasons for them to visit the Philippines,” the President told the more than 100 PATA delegates who are currently on a three-day meet in Manila.

Founded in Hawaii in 1951, PATA is the leader of and an authority on travel and tourism in Asia and the Pacific. It combines a traditional role of product development and marketing support for destinations, with strategic initiatives for the long-term vitality of the industry.

PATA's mission is to enhance the growth, value and quality of Pacific Asia travel and tourism for the benefit of its members.

President Macapagal-Arroyo pointed out that in visiting the Philippines, there will always be something that the country can offer even to the most discriminating visitor.

Most importantly, she said, the Philippines is "home to the world's most hospitable, cheerful and charming English-speaking people."

Also in her speech, the President explained that the country's tourism vision by year 2010 is more than the usual sun and beaches, nature, fun, service, and tourist mindset.

She said the government would like international arrivals to grow from two million in the year 2000 to five million in the year 2010.

In terms of jobs being generated from that sector, the President added that she would like jobs to grow from three million in the year 2000 to double in the year 2010.

"We would like the contribution of tourism to grow from US\$7 billion in the year 2000 to US\$17 billion in the year 2010," she said.

On domestic tourism, the President said she would like it to grow from US\$800 million in the year 2000 to US\$2.5 billion in 2010.

The Chief Executive said it is for this reason that she has appointed Richard Gordon as secretary of tourism and converted the department into a "super Cabinet" with policy ascendancy over other departments.

"Because we need these other departments to serve our national strategy for tourism," she said.

Under the tourism strategy, the President said the government has identified specific tourist segment priorities that include beach tourism, domestic tourism, short-course sightseeing, and shopping tourism.

The approach to these segments, she added, is to promote the relevant destinations through multi-channel marketing, spending 50 to 70 percent of the department's promotion budget.

The President said this budget will be geared specifically for the Japanese, Korean and Chinese market.

Next to the three-segment priorities are recreation tourism, eco-tourism, "Balikbayan" tourism, or the visits from overseas Filipinos, and the so-called back-packers.

These, she said, are niche segments which call for a tailored marketing approach. The government, she said, will be spending 20-30 percent of the DOT's promotion budget on "drive for shots" promotions tailored to specific groups, such as Japanese golfers.

According to the President, Japan has been traditionally the country's largest market for tourism and yet it is still highly under-penetrated.

She said Korea is a rapidly growing market while China's proximity to the Philippines provides an opportunity for the country to be a frontrunner in a "strategic emerging market" with a huge potential.

Aside from Gordon, among those who were present in the dinner with the President were PATA Chairman Bo Long, PATA President Peter De Jong, Japan Travel Bureau President Takashi Kitamura, former Tourism Secretaries Mina Gabor and Narzalina Lim, Olongapo City Mayor Katherine Gordon and Ilocos Norte Rep. Roquito Ablan, who is a PATA lifetime member.

GMA exhorts Region 8 officials to step up efforts in bringing development to region

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on provincial officials of Region 8 to step up their efforts in bringing more development to the region.

In a working luncheon with Region 8 officials, the President also discussed ways and means on how to further improve trade within the region.

Noting that the region has outranked Bicol as the largest producer of abaca, the President told the officials to seek new approaches that would further strengthen the region's stronghold in the abaca market.

The President also inquired on the various ongoing infrastructure projects in the region such as farm-to-market roads, schools, seaports, airports and hospitals.

She also discussed with the officials ways on how to improve the region's tourism prospects.

The President noted that Region 8 has many scenic spots that could be developed as tourism destinations. The President said one of her most favorite scenic spots in the area is Maqueda Bay.

"I stopped and look at the bay whenever I passed by the area," the President said.

The President instructed Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales, who was also present in the meeting, to follow up on her guidance.

Region 8 officials who called on the President included Eastern Samar Governor Clotilde Salazar, Northern Samar Governor Raul Daza, Southern Leyte Governor Rosette Lerias, Samar Governor Milagros Tan, Leyte Governor Remedios Petilla, Biliran Governor Rogelio Espina and Tacloban City Mayor Alfredo Romualdez.

'We must not let terrorism defeat tourism' — GMA

We must not let terrorism defeat tourism.

This was the clear message imparted by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to the delegates of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) during a dinner Friday night at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang.

In her remarks, the President said her administration is determined to make the Philippines a pleasant and safe destination for tourists, adding that efforts are now underway to soon put an end the local terrorism, particularly the Abu Sayyaf bandits.

"Even as we speak, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are relentlessly pursuing the Abu Sayyaf who are now gathered in their main lair in one island, for their last but hopeless stand," the President said.

As for foreign terrorists who will attempt to venture into the country, the President assured the PATA delegates that the government is keeping a close watch on the country's key entry points.

“They won’t get far because with our trilateral agreement with Indonesia and Malaysia, soon to be quadrilateral with Thailand, we can check terrorist incursions in our common seas and common borders,” the President said.

According to the President, terrorism should not be allowed to defeat tourism, which is a proven growth engine even in countries that have security problems.

She cited the two separate incidents in Egypt in the year 1996 and 1997 where gunmen opened fire and killed scores of tourists.

Despite the said incidents, Egypt posted four million tourist arrivals in each of those two years.

In Spain, where the ETA or *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (Basque Fatherland and Liberty), a leftist group and one of Europe’s feared separatist groups, is sowing terror, the year 2000 still saw 15 million tourist arrivals in that country.

On the other hand, five million tourists still visited Indonesia at the height of the civil unrest and anti-Chinese riots in that country in 1998.

The President stressed that tourism is a powerful growth engine in any country and deserves to be a top national priority in the Philippines.

Citing figures, the President said tourism is a giant global industry wherein 700 million international tourists spent US\$475 billion in 2000.

To include domestic tourism, she said, the total expenditure worldwide will amount to US\$3.3 trillion.

“It has huge additional potential for growth. Only 3.5 percent of the world population has traveled international,” the President said.

Moreover, the President noted that in Asia Pacific, which is the area of operation of PATA, the tourism market is projected to grow from 16 percent to 25 percent by the year 2020.

In the Philippines, she said the average international tourist spends over a thousand dollars per visit to the Philippines.

“It can have a rapid impact. Thailand, which is number one in tourism in Asia, increased their arrival by 25 percent in the first year of Visit Thailand in 1987,” the President noted.

The President said that over and above economic reasons, tourism deserves to be a national priority because of its impact on social development.

Being a labor-intensive sector, the President said one international arrival creates one job.

“It promotes job security because it is personal service related. We cannot automate and replace the people who serve the tourists,” she said.

On top of job generation, Mrs. Arroyo said tourism also provides excellent training for skills and good personnel development opportunities.

The President also sought the opportunity to call on the officers and members of the PATA to help promote the Philippines as one of the major tourist destinations in the region.

“You can always tell your clients that there are at least 7,000 reasons for them to visit the Philippines,” she said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 21, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034734/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept21.htm>

The President's Day: September 22, 2002

22 SEPTEMBER 2002

- **GMA joins celebration of National Laity Week**
- **GMA orders review of tariff program**
- **OFW remittances reach \$4.143B, boost B.O.P**
- **Zambo folk to benefit from gov't-funded Norwegian sea cage**

GMA joins celebration of National Laity Week

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today joined the nation in celebration of National Laity Week as the Archdiocese of Manila announced the holding of the Fourth World Meeting of the Families in Manila on January 22-26, 2003.

The President, together with daughter Evangelina "Luli" Arroyo, arrived at the Manila Cathedral at exactly 10:00 this morning and received a warm welcome from church and laity officials before the Eucharistic celebration officiated by Bishop Teodoro Bacani.

During the Mass, Bishop Bacani and Dr. Ricardo Ledesma, president of the Council of the Laity of Manila (CLM), led a pray-over offering for the President, asking the Almighty God to guide her and give her courage and strength in leading the people towards a more fruitful, peaceful and progressive future.

The Mass signalled the start of National Laity Week from September 22-28.

The CLM, the premier Church lay organization in Manila, spearheaded an archdiocesan-wide program centered on the family.

This year's celebration of Laity Week also focuses on two very important objectives. First is to promote devotion to the first Filipino patron saint of the laity, San Lorenzo Ruiz, and Blessed Pedro Calungsod. The second is the preparation for the forthcoming World Meeting of the Families to be held in Manila on January 2003.

GMA orders review of tariff program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered a review of the government's unilateral tariff reduction program implemented in the mid-1990s following the request of several industries that this has severely affected production.

The President, who issued the order during a meeting with members of the Fair Trade Alliance (FTA) in Malacañang Saturday afternoon, also directed the holding of another meeting to discuss the smuggling problem that is also becoming detrimental to the local industries.

Among the industries represented at the forum were textile and garments, steel, pulp and paper, footwear, and rice.

The President said she called for the meeting with the local industries precisely to reinvigorate the domestic market.

She also said she is particularly interested in the issues raised by small and medium enterprises as this sector would be responsible for stimulating the domestic demand.

The President listened intently to the issues discussed during the forum, specifically on points raised against the government's unilateral tariff program implemented in the mid-1990s.

FTA Lead Convenor Wigberto Tañada, who was present at the meeting, noted that the government has been reducing tariffs towards the ASEAN Free Trade Area – Common Effective Preferential Tariff (AFTA-CEPT) rates down to a band of 0 percent to 5 percent.

He said this scheme coupled with the government's unilateral tariff reduction program is to the detriment of the local industries and agriculture.

Aside from local industry leaders, the meeting was attended by members of the automotive industry workers who complained of illegal importation of second-hand vehicles, which they considered a form of smuggling.

A position paper submitted by the Automotive Industry Workers Alliance (AIWA) said that from 1997 to 1999, there were at least 6,914 retrenched employees because of low production in the assembly plants of Mitsubishi Motor, Toyota Motor, Nissan Motor, Isuzu Philippines, Honda and auto parts manufacturers.

Meanwhile, the ceramic tile industry is complaining of the increasing volume of cheap, substandard imported tiles which do not comply with Philippine standards for durability.

The footwear industry called on the government to impose strict quality control standards to ensure that only high quality shoes enter the country.

It also called on the authorities to strictly implement the Consumer Act of the Philippines where appropriate product labeling specific to footwear is mandated.

In its position paper, the footwear industry noted that footwear products from China are sold at almost one-third the cost of locally-produced goods.

It said more than 50 percent of the industry (mostly from Marikina, Laguna, Nueva Ecija and Cebu) is now considered beleaguered.

OFW remittances reach \$4.143B, boost B.O.P

Dollar remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFW) continued to be a significant source of exchange earnings, expanding by 43.2 percent to \$4.143 billion in the first semester compared to the year-ago level.

A Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) report reaching Malacañang said this strong showing from the OFW sector boosted the balance of payments that yielded a \$1.729-billion surplus from January to June, reversing a \$606-million deficit in the same period in 2001.

It also pushed the country's income account that increased by more than twofold to reach \$2.750 billion, the BSP report said.

The report noted that the rise in the number of deployed newly hired and rehired OFWs contributed to the dollar remittance uptrend.

Deployment rose by 4.1 percent during the review period and the growth in OFW deployment was seen in Europe, Africa and the Americas.

Most deployed OFWs landed in transport equipment operation, professional, technical and other related jobs abroad.

The BSP report said the government continued to step up marketing missions to promote Filipino skills.

Prospects, it said, were bright, with the expanded hiring of the United Kingdom of OFWs in the medical field, which is expected to offset the impact of the trend towards “localization” and the economic slowdown experienced in some of the countries where Filipino workers are deployed.

Localization means the preferential hiring by a country of its own residents.

A recent report from the Department of Labor and Employment showed that as of September 1, a total of 638,875 OFWs, or an average of 2,618 daily, were deployed abroad.

Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas said the deployment of documented Filipino workers abroad could reach one million this year due to global demand and preference for their services and skills.

Sto. Tomas stressed that the continued absorption of OFWs by foreign-based employers mirrored the global competitiveness of Filipino workers and the country’s human resource edge.

Aside from their highly rated skills, reliability, and productivity, Filipinos are culturally adaptable and can clearly and fluently communicate in English, the accepted international language, she said.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) said of the 638,875 OFWs deployed overseas for the eight-month period, 497,577 are land-based workers and 141,298 are seafarers.

The POEA said 309,538 of the 497,577 land-based workers were rehires, while the remainder, or 188,039, were newly hired OFWs.

Zambo folk to benefit from gov’t-funded Norwegian sea cage

The government, through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), has put up a Norwegian sea cage worth some P907,000 in Payao, Zamboanga Sibugay to enhance milkfish and other finfish production in the area.

A report reaching Malacañang from the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) in Western Mindanao said the construction of the circular marine sea cage was started in July and completed in August.

The report cited efforts of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to bring social services, particularly in the area of food production and stability, where they were most needed, in the poor rural areas. The President had stressed this in her State of the Nation Address.

The President had visited the Zamboanga peninsula and inspected government projects in the area in recent weeks.

According to the PIA report, BFAR Region 9 information officer Trusiya Maldan said the Payao local government helped stock the fish cage with milkfish and other finfish.

The project beneficiaries have helped stock the fish cage with fingerlings, Maldan said.

Under the project, a 60-40 management and income-sharing ratio had been adopted in favor of the beneficiaries.

Revenues generated from the project would either go to the maintenance of the fish cage or the construction of another unit for other groups of beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, the PIA also reported that in Barangay Binuangan, Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte, at least 32 cooperative members have benefited from the BFAR’s P1.3-million Lambaklad fish corral project.

Lambaklad is the Philippine version of the Ootshi-Ami fishing method of Japan. Commercial in nature but put up in municipal waters, it is operated like a deep-sea fish corral and harvests are done daily.

The report said the cooperative had saved enough money to put up another Lambaklad unit.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 22, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034758/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept22.htm>

The President's Day: September 23, 2002

23 SEPTEMBER 2002

- **GMA lauds Intel contribution to economy, \$300-M additional investment**
- **Roxas sees exports reaching \$33.4B by yearend**
- **GMA notes P850-M ICTSI investment in MICT, lauds high export volumes landed in port**
- **Privatization of transmission lines to mean more efficient power distribution – Palace**

GMA lauds Intel contribution to economy, \$300-M additional investment

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited Intel Corporation for its significant contribution to the economy by investing another \$300 million to put up a wafer facility in the country.

The President, together with Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Science and Technology Secretary Estrella Alabastro and Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) Chairman Lilia de Lima toured Intel Corporation's state-of-the-art assembly and test facility at the Gateway Business Park in General Trias, Cavite.

"Thank you for the \$300 million that you invested under my administration. Onward, the wafer facility in the Philippines," the President wrote in the Intel's souvenir signboard that she signed during the tour of the facilities.

The Chief Executive specifically visited Intel's production line, including the latest Pentium 4 microprocessor manufactured on the newest 0.13-micron and 300 mm. wafer fab technologies.

Intel uses wafers of pure silicon cut from a silicon ingot to make microprocessors. Silicon, the primary ingredient of beach sand, is a semiconductor of electricity. Semiconductors are materials that can be altered to be either a conductor or an insulator.

The President also took a first-hand look at the latest Mobile IT (Information Technology) Classroom of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), an air-conditioned bus equipped with 17 Pentium 4 microprocessors based notebooks, PC peripherals and audio-visual equipment.

The mobile classroom will provide students and teachers in Region IV (Southern Tagalog) with access and exposure to the latest technologies.

During the tour of the facilities, Intel General Manager Robin Martin assured the President of his company's support for the government's continuing efforts to boost the country's competitiveness by improving infrastructure such as roads and telecommunications facilities, traffic conditions, investment incentives and science and technology education.

According to Martin, Intel is also committed to technology partnership with education, industry and government, to contribute significantly to the development of the Philippines' information and communications technology sector.

Intel's strategy in the Philippines is to work closely with the academe, industry and government to help the nation realize the growth potential of its computer industry and develop the local computing infrastructure.

Among those who welcomed the President on her arrival at the Intel facility were Cavite Gov. Erineo Maliksi, 2nd District Rep. Gilbert Remulla, Gen. Trias Mayor Dencito Campana and Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM) chief Maj. Gen. Roy Kyamko.

Roxas sees exports reaching \$33.4B by yearend

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is projecting the country's export receipts to hit \$33.4 billion by the end of the year.

This shows that the trade and economic policies of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's administration are working despite some unfortunate global economic developments.

Trade Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II said the projected exports would be at least four percent more than the \$32.1 billion generated last year.

Roxas said electronics, which make up 68 percent of exports, continued to fuel the growth for two reasons, "increase in consumption and inventory hedging."

He said digital signal processors, the Philippines' main semiconductor product, have been in demand.

The processors are universal components of electronic products like cellular phones that have low cash outlay and limited life spans and thus have steady replacement markets.

Roxas said companies have been stacking up their inventories to hedge against inflationary pressures spawned by a number of factors, among them the widening rift between the United States and Iraq and fears of oil price increases.

"The 6.9-percent growth in exports during the first seven months is very encouraging. We expect our August figures to maintain such pace," he said.

"But we have to temper our forecasts with the realization that the factors that are fueling our current growth still do not appear to be sustainable," he added.

Statistics showed that export sales from January to July rose to \$19.895 billion from \$18.582 billion year on year.

Sales of microcircuits and semiconductors posted 20.13-percent and 19.18-percent growth, respectively.

However, sales of input/output peripherals used in making desktop computers declined by 9.9 percent.

Exports of machinery and transport grew by 10.6 percent while garments and textiles were down by 3.9 percent.

Electronics, machinery and transport, and garments and textiles account for over 80 percent of the country's exports.

"The Philippine economy is subject to the vagaries of the world economy," Roxas noted.

He said the US economy, which accounted for 40 percent of the world's gross domestic product, has yet to fully recover.

"If it suffers a relapse, then the global economy will be at risk again. This would mean a slowing in the expansion of trade and capital flows that have underpinned global integration," he added.

The trade secretary also took note of gains in the export of motor parts and the food industry.

The continued growth in motor parts was due to strong car sales in the US brought about by interest-free loans given to consumers and the improving economies of Asia, among them Malaysia and Thailand, which import Philippine-made motor parts.

While export sales of furniture and fixtures registered a 4.17-percent growth, strong competition faced by the wearable (to include footwear and jewelry) sector went down by 31 percent and gift ware and holiday decors slowed by 19 percent.

“We have proven that we have been competitive, particularly in furniture and fixtures. But these industries will have to continue investing on new technologies and improve their efficiencies so they can compete in price and quality,” Roxas said.

He urged small and medium entrepreneurs to avail themselves of the wide range of help – like financial packages and market matching — the DTI had been offering.

“Our exports to China grew by 90.57 percent,” he said, adding that Asia remained a firm market for Philippine export products.

“Our exports to China grew by 90.57 percent,” he added, noting that exports to Asian countries continued to grow while traditional markets like the US and Japan posted single-digit declines.

Trading with the Netherlands, said to be the country’s biggest market, has started to pick up as it marked a 13.79-percent growth.

Other Asian markets that showcased remarkable growth were Malaysia and South Korea at 18.85 percent and 45.93 percent, respectively.

GMA notes P850-M ICTSI investment in MICT, lauds high export volumes landed in port

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the increased export volumes that passed through the Manila International Container Terminal (MICT) in the last five months, significantly exceeding what was achieved in the last seven years.

The President, in a visit to the country’s premier international gateway for cargo managed by the International Container Terminal Services, Inc. (ICTSI), also cited the company for expanding its operations by putting in some P850-million in additional investments.

“This is a leading indicator for accelerated economic growth,” the President said, as she lauded ICTSI chairman Enrique K. Razon, Jr. for ICTSI’s contribution to the country’s economic prosperity.

The President said that the expansion program of ICTSI would be reflected in government statistics on production and this will be a prelude to increased employment in three to four months.

In a briefing, MICT Manager Felipe Pacheco said MICT handled the highest volume for exports at 50,307 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent unit) in August compared to 40,522 TEUs for the same period last year.

On import volume, Pacheco informed the President that the highest was registered at 46,453 TEUs compared to 38,678 TEUs year on year.

“Again, in the last five months, you have seen import volumes higher than you’ve seen in 1995, and these are mostly raw materials for production,” the President said.

“So, again it’s a leading indicator that production is taking place and employment figures will be reflected as going on,” she added.

Pacheco said the overall volume handling of MICT for this year ending August had grown to 96,967 TEUs from 79,200 TEUs in the same period last year, a rise of 11 percent.

MICT's productivity – the movement of container per hour per quay crane – was 30 percent higher than Singapore's worth.

Pacheco said MICT posted a low of 28.43 moves per hour per crane in February and a high of 38.62 moves per hour per crane in July.

ICTSI infused new investments worth P150 million for the construction of the empty container depot, in anticipation of increasing MICT volume.

The depot, which is 500 meters from MICT, is a new service for shipping lines. Freed of empty containers, the main terminal becomes more flexible and maneuverable.

Early this year, ICTSI also infused P700 million in investments for two additional quay cranes that would be operational next month.

Total investments for this year totaled P850 million, resulting in improved operations and customer service at MICT.

“Thank you Ricky (Razon) for your P850-million investments for the year 2002, and more to come I hope,” the President told Razon. “It's very good news.”

At the MICT, the President toured the ICTSI freight station No. 1 and the container yard.

After her visit to MICT, the President motored to the Divisoria wet market and made a surprise inspection of stalls to see for herself the prevailing prices of basic commodities, particularly the price of rice.

Riding in an open window four-wheel drive vehicle, the President waved to pedestrians en route to the wet market.

In Divisoria, the President was greeted by the market vendors and consumers alike.

She shook hands with them as she inspected the prices of the basic goods. She stayed at the wet market for about 25 minutes.

Privatization of transmission lines to mean more efficient power distribution – Palace

Malacañang today said that the privatization of the transmission facilities of the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) would mean more efficient power distribution in the country.

In his regular press briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that it would be to everybody's interest to have the transmission lines privatized “as soon as possible.”

“If these line are privatized, there will be additional inflow of investments. And the operations will be a lot more efficient if the lines are privatized,” Bunye said.

Bunye was commenting on the franchise of the National Transmission Corp. (Transco) that has already been approved by the House of Representatives but is still being debated in the Senate.

He said that he agreed with the observation of some sectors that there will be a problem if the Transco franchise bill will not be passed.

Bunye said that in theory there would be a more efficient operation if the transmission facilities would be handled by the private group.

“The private group will not be saddled with obligations that are now being carried by the NAPOCOR. So, the cost of transmitting their operations would not be as expensive,” Bunye said.

Energy officials have said that the passage of the Transco franchise bill would help reduce the purchased power adjustment (PPA), or the cost of excess electricity generated by independent power producers (IPPs).

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has repeatedly said that the Transco bill and the special purpose assets vehicle (SPAV) bill are vital to her administration’s economic program.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 23, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034809/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept23.htm>

The President's Day: September 24, 2002

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- **'Taipans' laud gov't-private sector partnership in housing for state workers**
- **Gov't sets new policy guidelines on customs bonded warehouses**
- **People happy with GMA handling of gov't campaign against poverty, crime, terrorism, corruption**
- **BOC steps up efforts in gathering evidence against big time smugglers**
- **Bureau of Customs hoping for P99-B plus collection for 2002**
- **GMA names Cimatú head of Mideast Preparedness Team**
- **SWS survey still shows satisfaction over GMA performance, Palace says**
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'Taipans' laud gov't-private sector partnership in housing for state workers

Several top Chinese-Filipino businessmen or the so-called "taipans" have lauded the efforts of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to initiate a government-private sector partnership that would provide affordable housing units to government employees.

In a luncheon meeting with the President last week, the taipans, composed of business tycoons such as John Gokongwei, Henry Sy, Andrew Gotianun and representatives of George Ty and Alfonso Yuchengco have agreed to develop government properties, particularly those idle properties within the various military camps in the country, and convert it into socialized housing units.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said the contribution of the private sector in the proposed project will be their vast financial resources, their capitals, their management skills, and their access to technology on real estate development and housing.

"Through this mechanism, we hope we would be able to deliver housing units at affordable prices through the combination of different inputs from different parties from government and the private sector," Camacho said.

Aside from the taipans and Camacho, also present in the luncheon meeting with the President were Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Michael Defensor, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Ambassador Tomas Alcantara.

In a press briefing that followed the luncheon with the Chief Executive, the businessmen also expressed their confidence that the government under the leadership of Mrs. Arroyo would be able to get rid the country of the crime syndicates, particularly the kidnap-for-ransom gangs.

"I always have confidence in the President," said Gokongwei, owner of the Robinson's shopping mall chain.

Gotianun, for his part, said that while everybody is concerned about the recent incidents of kidnappings, "at least the government is taking steps."

"They have eliminated seven of the (KFR) gangs. If they continue, we should be able to get rid of them in the next six months," said Gotianun, owner of real estate developer Filinvest.

SM holdings owner Henry Sy said the business community is looking at the series of kidnapping incidents as "temporary."

"We look at this crisis as temporary and the country has a lot of potentials. The crisis could be addressed sooner or later," Sy said.

Gov't sets new policy guidelines on customs bonded warehouses

A new policy decision on customs bonded trading warehouses was reached after President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo met today with various industry leaders and officials of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

In a briefing after the meeting in Malacañang, Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo said that the President has directed the BOC to conduct a very strict monitoring and audit of all bonded warehouses.

“Where violations are clearly established, we will impose the proper sanctions, including closure,” Bernardo said.

An order providing for a negative list was also issued by the BOC so that other commodities, which should not go through the bonded warehouses, are stopped, Bernardo said.

The policy is moving towards the direction of going into industry based support facility warehouses, Bernardo said.

Bernardo cited as an example the garments and semi-conductor and electronic industries where there are already existing bonded warehouses for them.

Other industries that would apply and meet the criteria and qualifications to be set up by the regulatory authorities will be welcomed to open their own bonded warehouses, Bernardo said.

Bernardo explained that the basic concept of customs bonded trading warehouses was to establish sources of imported inputs required by small and medium exporters to be able to compete globally in view of high tariffs, and high interest costs.

“But recently we have noticed that a lot of commodities go through these bonded warehouses, including finished products, so it has clearly deviated from the original concept of bonded trading warehouses,” Bernardo pointed out.

The findings of the Federation of Pilipino Industries (FPI), headed by Meneleo Carlos, on the operation of the customs bonded trading warehouses showed the following:

- tariffs have been reduced significantly;
- tax credit processing time has been tremendously reduced;
- customs value range information figures indicate questionable values;
- some customs bonded trading warehouses are importing finished products which they are not supposed to import; and
- diversion of imported items to the domestic market, as in proliferation of products in Divisoria.

People happy with GMA handling of gov't campaign against poverty, crime, terrorism, corruption

People are happy with the way President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is handling the government's campaign against poverty, corruption, crime and terrorism.

This was revealed in a survey conducted by the prestigious poll group Social Weather Stations from August 24 to September 8.

The survey, released Monday, said most of the “1,200 statistically representative adult respondent” considered the President as a “serious” state manager who has committed government men and resources to public service.

Topping the President's work cited in the survey was her total war against terrorism that led to the weakening of the notorious Abu Sayyaf Group which the United States recently branded as global terrorists linked to Osama bin Laden.

At least 68 percent of the respondents said the wiping out of terrorists was one area the President had been seriously focusing on.

The survey respondents also highly noted the government's thrust against crushing criminality.

The survey said 61 percent of the respondents saw the President as serious in fighting illegal drugs and in fighting kidnapping.

Recent reports showed government gains in neutralizing at least five kidnap-for-ransom gangs and crushing a number of syndicates involved in illegal drugs.

The survey also showed that 52 percent say she is serious in fighting corruption in government.

On the social side, the most of the survey respondents, at least 59 percent, believed the President was serious in helping the poor.

The favorable notion might have been brought about by the President's hands-on policy in delivering social services to the people, particularly in depressed urban and rural communities.

The President, as she vowed during her two State of the Nation Addresses, had pushed for the speedy delivery of public food stability, health and shelter programs, among other things.

Some 53 percent of the nationwide survey respondents further noted the President's desire to develop Mindanao, considered to be the poorest among the country's geographical territories, socially and economically.

Recent reports showed that the region had been provided the necessary support infrastructures and services to bring it on a par with Luzon and the Visayas in terms of gross domestic product and per capita income.

Another area that the respondents noted as seriously being worked on by the President was the government's move to eradicate graft and corruption in the bureaucracy.

The third quarter SWS survey gave the President a moderate satisfaction rating level of +18.

It explained that the net satisfaction rating was below the fairly good net +28 in the SWS special post-SONA survey of August 6 to 9, but above the rather low net +4 in the second quarter SWS survey of March 17 to June 3.

"The new satisfaction rating is close to the President's previous net +18 in March 2001, +15 in September 2001, and +16 in March 2002; though not as high as her net +27 of November 2001 and +29 of early August 2002," the SWS noted.

BOC steps up efforts in gathering evidence against big time smugglers

Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo today said that in compliance with the instructions of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to go after smuggling syndicates, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) has stepped up its efforts in gathering evidence against suspected big-time smugglers.

In a press briefing after a meeting with the President in Malacañang, Bernardo said right now, the Bureau is preparing charges against suspected big-time smugglers. “We will soon be filing cases against those who have violated Customs laws,” he said.

Bernardo said that the BOC is still on the lookout for evidence against those who have been on its watch list for sometime as he explained the difficulty of amassing evidence in smuggling activities.

“It is difficult to gather evidence because you are not able to establish immediately a direct linkage between the name on the list and the actual incidence of smuggling,” Bernardo said.

First of all, Bernardo said, the names of those in the watch list do not appear in the documents and they are also not on board the ships that bring in the smuggled goods.

“But we are on the lookout, and we are coordinating with other government agencies, the intelligence units of other government agencies in gathering evidence,” Bernardo said.

Bernardo also clarified that First Gentleman Jose Miguel T. Arroyo never interceded on behalf of anybody in facilitating shipments at the Bureau as alleged by his detractors.

In fact, Bernardo said, the First Gentleman even sent him a letter warning him that some people might be using his name but asking him not to accommodate them.

The First Gentleman even told him to immediately arrest and prosecute those who would be using his name in their transactions at the BOC.

“So, two things. First, the First Gentleman never called me about Customs activities. Second, nobody has ever approached me using the First Gentleman’s name,” Bernardo said.

Bureau of Customs hoping for P99-B plus collection for 2002

Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo today said that the Bureau of Customs (BOC) is hoping that its collections at the end of the year would be around P99 billion.

In a press briefing in Malacañang after a meeting with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Bernardo admitted that it would be difficult to meet the whole year target of P115.1 billion.

“At this point from where we stand, it would be very, very difficult to meet the P115.1 billion at the end of the year,” Bernardo candidly said.

Bernardo explained that there are bound to be some changes in the target projections for the whole year since these targets are set sometime July or August of the previous year.

“So, there were certain assumptions made, which at the time we made the projections seemed realistic but apparently, turned out they did not hold,” Bernardo said.

Bernardo said that for their projections for this year, for example, their assumptions were that in imports, there would be a ratio of 48 percent non-dutiable to dutiable but the actual figures that the BOC got right now is that the ratio of non-dutiable has already been about 59 percent.

Non-dutiable are import items that do not have levies or tariffs.

Bernardo, however, pointed out that starting with the first quarter, the collections at the BOC have significantly risen.

He said that for the first quarter, or from January to March, of this year, the BOC's monthly collections averaged P6.9 billion and this rose to a monthly average of P7.9 billion for the second semester, or from April to June.

So, for the second semester, we have seen an increase of P1 billion from the first quarter average, Bernardo said.

In July, Bernardo said, the BOC collected some P7.8 billion, and in August, the Bureau collected P9.2 billion, showing a steady increase.

"So, we are hoping the emerging scenario by the end of the year would be something like P99 billion plus," Bernardo said.

He said that before he was assigned to the BOC, he was a member of the group at the Department of Finance, where he was an undersecretary, that participated in the setting of collection targets for the BOC and the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

GMA names Cimatu head of Mideast Preparedness Team

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has instructed former Armed Forces chief of staff Roy Cimatu to head the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT), a group of government agencies that would monitor the evolving situation in the trouble-ridden region, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said today.

Bunye, in his regular press briefing this afternoon, also said the National Security Council and the Cabinet would meet on Tuesday to come up with recommendations to the President "on a full range of social, political and economic measures to prepare the nation for any eventuality."

Bunye said that after the meeting, the President would issue directives to the MEPT based on these recommendations.

The MEPT would be composed of representatives from the Department of Energy, Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of National Defense and the National Security Council.

Bunye said Cimatu would focus on energy security and the safety of overseas Filipino workers.

"He will (also) conduct regular press briefings to keep the public posted on the evolving situation," Bunye said.

The President earlier appointed Cimatu to lead the Philippine crisis team responsible for evacuating Filipinos in Iraq.

Cimatu, along with top diplomatic officials, have met with ambassadors of Middle Eastern countries and assessed the situation that could affect some 1.3-million Filipinos deployed in different countries in the region.

SWS survey still shows satisfaction over GMA performance, Palace says

Malacañang is pleased with the results of the latest Social Weather Stations survey as it still shows the moderate satisfaction of the public for the performance of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said today.

Bunye, in his regular press briefing, said that the latest SWS survey should be taken in its context.

“Because during the period in question, several circumstances took place such as the deportation of our Filipino workers from Sabah, the resignation of Secretary Raul Roco and Revenue Commissioner Rene Banez and also the renewed activities of the Abu Sayyaf group,” Bunye said.

“We would note that during the post State of the Nation Address survey, the President had a very high acceptance rating principally because of the killing of Abu Sabaya and the lowering of our purchased power adjustment rates. These circumstances, of course, are not present during the latest survey,” Bunye said.

Bunye added that “we (should) take note of the fact that the plus 18 percent net satisfaction rating is still the highest if we compare the results of the quarter by quarter basis.”

“So this is (still) higher than the second or higher than the first quarter results,” Bunye said.

In a radio interview, Bunye said the second half of the survey still showed that the people are very satisfied with her.

He noted that when the respondents were asked how serious the President is in fighting terrorism, 68 percent stated that the President is very serious in the fight.

This is also the same in the fight against crime with 61 percent net satisfaction rating for the President.

“On questions on the President’s pro-poor efforts, 59 percent was posted for the President while efforts to help Mindanao yielded a 53 percent net satisfaction rating for the Chief Executive,” Bunye said.

Palace brushes aside talks of 2004, says GMA focused on her job

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would rather do her job than delve on the 2004 presidential elections, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said today.

In his regular press briefing, Bunye noted that the political opposition keeps harping on the 2004 elections.

“But our stand has always been consistent: that we don’t want to talk about 2004 at this time,” Bunye said.

“We’d rather not delve on 2004 at this time because there are other things that have to be attended to by the President, that require her full attention,” Bunye added.

An opposition lawmaker has claimed that any candidate can beat the President in 2004.

In an earlier radio interview, Bunye said it was not surprising for the political opposition to say such a thing.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 24, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514034822/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept24.htm>

The President's Day: September 25, 2002

25 SEPTEMBER 2002

- **GMA expresses desire for PEA directors to go on leave while road project is probed**
- **Cimatu says gov't ready for eventualities in Middle East**
- **GMA formally launches 'One Town, One Product, One Million Pesos' project**
- **Abad goes to PITC: Yap to NFA**
- **PAGC to start formal inquiry into alleged overpricing of PEA's Boulevard project**

GMA expresses desire for PEA directors to go on leave while road project is probed

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed her desire that the entire board of the Public Estates Authority (PEA) should go on leave for the duration of the investigation of a complaint of alleged overpricing in the construction of the Central Boulevard and Bay Boulevard projects.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that in accordance Executive Order No. 12 dated April 16, 2001, the office of the Chief Presidential Legal Counsel has referred the complaint to the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) for appropriate action.

EO 12 is an order outlining the process of the investigations being conducted by the PAGC.

PAGC is the body tasked to investigate cases filed against the appointees of the President.

Bunye said the President earlier approved the request of PEA director Sulpicio Tagud, Jr. to go on indefinite leave.

"This does not preclude any investigation that will be conducted by the House and the Senate on the same matter," Bunye said.

The Press Secretary said that concerned PEA officials will just be allowed to go on leave in order to have an impartial investigation.

Bunye said Malacañang has just received the official explanation of the PEA board of directors, adding that those documents, together with the complaint, will in turn be endorsed to the PAGC.

"This matter is very serious and very urgent and it goes without saying that the PAGC should investigate this with dispatch," Bunye said.

Bunye noted that after the allegation of Tagud was publicized, the President immediately ordered the PEA to submit its explanation.

"The formal explanation has been received so this is now being referred to the PAGC," he said.

Bunye also pointed out that the allegations against PEA and the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) could be treated separately and the appropriate referral could also be done individually.

Cimatu says gov't ready for eventualities in Middle East

The government will ensure the safety of Filipinos in the Middle East once a possible armed conflict would erupt in the region.

Retired Gen. Roy Cimatu, designated by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to lead the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT), said contingency plans are being discussed, even in the worst case scenario of Iraqi missile attacks on its enemies.

In a radio interview this morning, Cimatu said there might be no need to bring back home some 1.3-million overseas Filipino workers (OFW) in a worst case scenario.

He said this exercise could turn out to be an unnecessary “logistic and evacuation nightmare.”

The government has been ascertaining if Iraq would launch its Scud missiles, the effective range of the missiles, possible interceptions by American Patriot missiles, and other factors, he added.

Cimatu said it was likely that Filipino expatriates in at least nine countries around Iraq would be transferred to places beyond the reach of a full-blown war, at the most, in the Middle East.

He hinted that there would be indicators that would show if the Middle East situation would escalate into a missile war and the MEPT would know.

He said the MEPT has continued assessing the situation, “expecting the worst and hoping for the best.”

The former Armed Forces chief of Staff said he had been in constant touch with Ambassador Bahnarin Guinomla in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

He said the MEPT would visit all nine countries that might be affected by a war in the Middle East to look into the welfare and safety of OFWs there and gather inputs for a comprehensive plan of action for them.

GMA formally launches ‘One Town, One Product, One Million Pesos’ project

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo officially launched yesterday in Malacañang the “One Town, One Product, One Million Pesos,” project during a special luncheon meeting with 27 municipal mayors of the province of Laguna.

The President told the mayors that the project is aimed at generating employment within the towns involved in the project, alleviating poverty and thus, reinvigorating the domestic economy.

The President said she has directed the officials of government financial institutions (GFIs), the Small Business Guarantee Fund of the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Science and Technology, and the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), among others, to cooperate with the different local governments units in providing loanable funds as well as techno-managerial assistance to small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The GFIs, the President pointed out, will provide seed financing for the SMEs in each town through the local government units (LGUs).

One town is assigned to develop a single indigenous product from the P1 million loan that will be released through to the LDB, the President said.

The President made a soft launching of the project early this month in a visit to Lakewood, Zamboanga del Sur.

Lakewood would get the P1-million loan with a four-year payback term for fruit production. Nine other Zamboanga del Sur towns would get the P1-million loan for the production of hybrid rice seeds.

“The PSF (Presidential Social Fund) has money in the Landbank for lending out,” the President said.

Later, the President picked Cabuyao, Laguna to receive the P1-million loan for SMEs involved in the recycling of soft packs of Nestle Philippines into construction materials.

She said the money would come from the Small Business Guarantee Fund with counterparts from Nestle and Laguna Rep. Joaquin Chipeco, Jr.

Still in Laguna, the President ordered DTI regional officials to identify SMEs involved in auto parts supply in Sta. Rosa, where multinational car-making plants are located, to get the loan.

She also hinted at the grant of a similar loan to an electronics SME in Sta. Rosa, Laguna to help raise the local value added of Amkor Technology Philippines, a semi-conductor producer, "which suffered last year because of the decline in the market for computers and chips."

The President had also given P1-million each to the town of Monkayo in Compostela Valley for a SME into gold jewelry production and to Mayor Pedro Acharon, Jr. of General Santos City for a SME into tuna production.

Abad goes to PITC: Yap to NFA

Malacañang today announced that former National Food Authority (NFA) Administrator Anthony Abad has accepted his designation as president of the Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC), a government-owned trading firm under the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

In a press briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye also announced that PITC president Arthur Yap has been named as the new NFA administrator.

Bunye said both appointments will take effect immediately.

Abad was a student of President Arroyo in the economics honors class at the Ateneo.

After graduation, Abad decided to take up law, then joined an influential law firm during the Ramos administration.

With the law firm's backing, he joined the government, building up an expertise on taxation and tariff law at the Tariff Commission.

Yap, who graduated with degrees in economics and management and earned a doctorate of laws at the Ateneo de Manila University, was appointed president of PITC in August 2001.

Aside from engaging in law practice in some of the country's most prestigious law firms, Yap also served as national president of the Philippine Association of Paint Manufacturers from 1997 to 1999.

He is a member of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), the American Society of International Law (ASIL), Ateneo de Manila University Alumni Association (College of Arts and Sciences, and School of Law) and the Philippine Constitutional Association (Philconsa).

The PITC is engaged in the export and import of commodities, industrial products and consumer goods.

It is an active participant in the implementation of government-to-government trading transactions, in alternative marketing and financial mechanisms like counter-trade, and in bulk importation programs which seek to stabilize prices and supply in the domestic market.

To support the market development efforts of its clients worldwide, the company also provides access to a competitively-priced trade services and facilities.

Created through Presidential Decree No. 4 dated September 26, 1972, the NFA is tasked to promote the integrated growth and development of the grains industry covering rice, corn, feed grains and other grains like sorghum, mungo, and peanut.

In January 14, 1981 Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1770 was issued which reconstituted the NGA into what is now the National Food Authority (NFA).

This decree widened its commodity coverage to include, in addition to grains, other food items like raw or fresh, manufactured, processed, or packaged food products, collectively referred to as non-grains commodities.

Today, the National Food Authority is vested with regulatory powers over the grains industry and is likewise tasked with implementing the government's food security program.

PAGC to start formal inquiry into alleged overpricing of PEA's Boulevard project

The Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) today said that it will now formally start the investigation into the alleged anomalies relating to the Central Boulevard and Bay Boulevard projects of the Public Estates Authority (PEA).

PAGC Chairman Dario Rama said that his office received this afternoon the pertinent documents to the case from Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz, Jr.

"We are immediately endorsing the matter to our Investigation Division so that the necessary evaluation of the case may be commenced immediately preparatory to the issuance of an order directing the parties to file their response and/or counter-affidavit (s) in the event the existence of a probable cause is determined by the Commission," Rama said in his letter to Cruz acknowledging receipt of the documents.

The documents, according to Rama, are related to the case involving the PEA and the JD Legaspi Construction.

Earlier, in his press briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the investigation to be conducted by the PAGC is governed by Executive Order No. 12.

Bunye said that E.O. No. 12 outlines the procedure that will be followed by the PAGC in its investigation of cases involving presidential appointees.

Meanwhile, PEA chairman Ernest Villareal and three of his directors have filed for an indefinite leave of absence from the board "in order to have a free and impartial investigation on the issues raised on the President Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard,"

The other three PEA directors who filed for an indefinite leave of absence, along with Villareal, were Rodolfo Tuazon, Benjamin Cariño, and Angelito Villanueva.

Joemari D. Gerochi, another board member, has tendered his resignation instead of just filing for a leave of absence.

"I am doing this Madam President in the higher interest of good governance, transparency and principled leadership. I have every hope that this will pave the way for the impartial investigation into the facts and circumstances regarding the PDM Boulevard project of the PEA," Gerochi said in his letter of resignation.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 25, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030062616/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept25.htm>

The President's Day: September 26, 2002

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Roxas pushes for expanded exports to Asian market

The Philippines should start focusing more on the Asian market as a key export destination.

This Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II pushed to help ease the impact of declining exports to the United States and Japan, which continued to experience economic slowdown.

The US and Japan are two of the country's top export markets.

Roxas said the growing exports to China, Malaysia, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore had resulted in a 32.3-percent increase in aggregate market share in the first half of 2002, compared to last year's 26 percent.

He said the expanding Asian market led to the recovery of Philippine exports, which posted a 4.3-percent growth in the same period.

Exports to China grew by 82.2 percent; Malaysia, 55.7 percent; South Korea, 51.1 percent; Hong Kong, 28.3 percent; Taiwan, 25.3 percent; and Singapore, 1.5 percent.

In contrast, total exports to the US and Japan declined by 6.6 percent and 5 percent, respectively.

"Expanding Asian markets led by China and the continued rebuilding of inventory for semiconductors and electronic products provided the much-needed push for the country's exports," Roxas noted.

He called on businessmen to take advantage of China's own liberalization, deregulation and reform measures.

"There is a wide range of products that could potentially enjoy greater demand from the Chinese market due to lower prices brought about by lower tariffs in China and the expected benefits to accrue from the expected higher income from Chinese consumers," he added.

The top five exports to China include semiconductor devices, petroleum oil, copper cathodes, automatic data processing machine parts and accessories.

Four OIC envoys vow assistance to ensure safety of OFWs in their countries

Diplomats of four member countries of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) have assured the Philippine government of assistance to ensure the safety of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in their respective countries.

The diplomats met this morning at the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) with Acting Foreign Affairs Secretary Lauro Baja, Jr. and retired Gen. Roy Cimatu, who was recently designated by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as head of the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT).

The President has instructed the MEPT to draw up a comprehensive contingency plan to ensure the safety of OFWs in case war erupts in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq.

During the meeting, Baja and Cimatu briefed the diplomats on the functions of the MEPT.

The DFA asked the diplomats for their views and advice on how to ensure the safety of the OFWs who are working in their respective countries in case there is a need to repatriate them to the Philippines.

Specifically, the DFA asked for assistance from the four countries in arranging for meetings between the MEPT and the appropriate officials in their respective countries.

The diplomats assured the DFA that they would assist Cimatu and members of his team in securing clearances and other documents that the team would need before its departure and during its visit to their countries.

Earlier, Cimatu said that as instructed by the President, the MEPT would visit all the nine countries in the Middle East that might be affected by the conflict to gather inputs for a comprehensive plan of action for their safety and welfare.

Present during the meeting at the DFA were Ambassador Tanju Sumer of Turkey, Ambassador Mohammed Ebrahim al Jowaid of the United Arab Emirates, Deputy Chief of Mission Mohsen Al-Ajmi of the Kuwait embassy, and Second Secretary Rafat Ahmed Mirza Al Sayed of the Saudi Arabian embassy.

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on the release of four MSU teachers

At 11:00 last night, September 25, 2002, the four teachers abducted in Lanao del Sur last Sept. 13, 2002 were released without ransom through the joint efforts of DSWD, the provincial government of Lanao del Sur, local government of Marawi City, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police (PNP)

The four (4) Mindanao State University teachers, Edith Bontilao, Emma Karaan, Salvacion Mikin, and Luzvilla Serate, are back safe in the arms of their families. To our teachers, welcome back. Your courage and faith have been rewarded by your safe release. We heard your plea and responded by working double time to bring you home.

I congratulate our team who worked non-stop and with singular determination to bring our teachers home after twelve days in captivity.

The successful operations were made possible by the concerted effort of DSWD Undersecretary Omera Lucman, Assemblyman Anzaruni Adiong, Akira Alonto, both representing the provincial government of Lanao del Sur under Governor Mamintal Adiong, Maj. Gen. Al Dagudag of the 4th Infantry Division, Col. Ernesto Boac of the 401st Infantry Brigade, Philippine Army, and Chief Superintendent Acmad Omar, regional director of PRO-ARMM.

The competent and dedicated role of the Provincial Crisis Management Committee must also be mentioned as a concrete example of how proper planning and united action work for our citizens and our country. The provincial government adheres to the government's no-ransom policy, and no ransom was paid in the release of the hostages.

The release of our four teachers is the result of the tried and proven formula of the PNP against kidnapping and other crimes: Community cooperation with the united effort of local government officials and concerned citizens to

convince the abductors to release the victims, professional police action with the pressure exerted by the personnel of PNP PRO-ARMM and the 401st Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army and responsible media coverage which has encouraged concerned citizens to provide information and support.

We will not be held hostage by bandits and criminals. We will apply not only the full force of police and military resources but also the greater weight of a united front against crime and every threat to our strong Republic. We will not stop, we will not fail.

GMA assures public gov't readying measures in case of Iraq-U.S. war

GEN. LUNA, Surigao del Norte – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the public that the national government is preparing some drastic measures to counter the possible problems that the country will face if the conflict between the United States and Iraq escalates.

The President said the Cabinet Oversight Committee and the National Security Council will be meeting on Tuesday next week to tackle the immediate actions the government would take once war erupts between the two countries.

“We’re preparing for a possible Iraq war,” the President said during her luncheon meeting with Malacañang reporters and local media representatives here at the Pansukian Resort on Siargao Island yesterday.

The President said the purpose of the meeting is to establish a road map on what the government’s immediate action would be to counter the problems that may arise in the event of an Iraq war.

Among the major components included in the road map is the evacuation of the Overseas Filipino Workers in Iraq and the energy concerns of the country.

The President also said she will be going to Palawan tomorrow to visit the Malampaya platform and see to it that our natural gas supply can accommodate the country’s fuel needs.

She also said that former Armed Forces of Chief of Staff retired Gen. Roy Cimatu, who now heads the crisis committee on Iraq, will conduct a daily briefing about the preparations of the government.

GMA grateful for safe release of four MSU teachers

ILIGAN CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she was grateful for the safe recovery of the four Mindanao State University (MSU) teachers who were released without paying any ransom.

In a statement she read before the Second Mindanao Shippers’ Conference at the Maria Cristina Hotel here, the President said the release of the four teachers was the result of the “tried and proven formula” of the Philippine National Police (PNP) against kidnapping and other crimes.

“I congratulate our team — our team who worked non-stop and with singular determination to bring our teachers home after 12 days in captivity,” the Chief Executive said in her statement.

The four MSU teachers who were abducted last Sept. 11 in Lanao del Sur were identified as Edith Bontilao, Emma Karaan, Salvacion Mikin, and Luzvilla Serate.

They were released at around 11 p.m. on Wednesday through the joint efforts of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the provincial government of Lanao del Sur, the local government of Marawi City, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

The President said the release of the kidnap victims was mainly due to community cooperation, professional police action, and responsible media coverage which encouraged citizens to provide information and support.

“To our teachers, welcome back. Your courage and faith have been rewarded by your safe release. We heard your plea and responded by working double time to bring you home,” she said.

Upon her arrival at the National Steel Corporation (NSC) landing zone here, the President met with three of the four released MSU teachers and gave them words of comfort.

In her speech, the President specifically cited the role played by Social Welfare Undersecretary Omera Lucman, Assemblyman Anzaruni Adiong, Akira Alonto, both representing the provincial government of Lanao del Sur, Maj. Gen. Al Dagudag of the 4th Infantry Division, Col. Ernesto Boac of the 401st Infantry Brigade, and Chief Supt. Acmad Omar, regional director of the PNP.

GMA says lower transport, cargo handling costs between key ports to boost national economy

ILIGAN CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed her desire to lower transport and cargo handling costs between Mindanao and other areas of the country to perk up national economic growth.

In a speech before the Second Mindanao Shipper’s Conference at the Maria Cristina Hotel’s Ballroom Hall here, the President said this measure would speed up Mindanao’s development.

She noted Mindanao’s sustained economic growth hinged on exports, disclosing that she looked forward to improved regional exports with the completion of the Mindanao International Container Port Terminal by April 2004 and the Laguindingan airport in Misamis Oriental.

At the same time, she also disclosed that the Development Bank of the Philippines is leading a program to develop roll-on, roll-off facilities between key port destinations.

But doing business in Mindanao should be favorable and more competitive, she said.

She reiterated the government’s three-point program to reduce transport and cargo handling costs in Mindanao ports, to include:

- The adoption, starting this month, by the Philippine Ports Authority of a universal rate in collecting government shares from the revenues of cargo handlers.

The rate would be pegged at 10 percent for domestic ports and 20 percent for international ports. She said this was her initial move to mitigate the cost of cargo handling, especially in Davao and Zamboanga,

- The freezing of the 35-percent rise in port and wharfage fees for the next five years. The previous administration ordered the fees raised.

She said the non-implementation of the 35-percent increase in port and wharfage fees being charged by the PPA, would mean a loss of P200 million a year in public revenues. But she explained she was ready to take the gamble to set the stage for Mindanao’s growth.

- The freezing of arrastre and stevedoring fees for 24 months.

Besides the three-point program, the President also pushed for aggressive investments in modernizing port handling facilities.

She earlier directed the Maritime Industry Authority to work closely with the PPA and the private sector to help unbundle all the charges related to cargo handling in the freight charges.

GMA pushes for construction of int'l airport in Bohol

GENERAL LUNA, Surigao del Norte – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Wednesday said the construction of an international airport in Bohol would boost eco-tourism and beach tourism in the country.

In a luncheon meeting with members of the media at the Pansukian Resort here, the President said the plan to build a big airport in Bohol was contained in her administration's short and medium-term tourism strategy.

The airport's economic windfall would benefit the people and the world-rated tourism industries in Boracay, Palawan, Siargao Island in Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur.

Surigao is very near Bohol. With an airport at hand, Siargao Island, known as the country's surfing capital, and other tourist destinations in the Surigao provinces will socially and economically grow.

The President said she told Senator Robert Barbers, Surigao del Norte Governor Robert Lyndon Barbers and Rep. Robert Ace Barbers to facilitate tourism tie-ups between and among Cebu, Bohol and Surigao.

She said the construction of the Bohol international airport would bring tourists nearer to the famous Chocolate Hills and the Siargao surfing area.

As much as Bohol benefited from the Cebu air transport facilities, so would Siargao benefit from a Bohol airport, she averred.

She added that the government has strived to bring tourists to Siargao. "This is one of those areas that we want to develop," she said.

She also expressed optimism that the tourism industry would improve with the government's "Visit the Philippines Year" program in 2003.

"For the longer term, we hope that we can double the number of tourists by the year 2010," she said.

"This year, we want to win the battle against poverty with our short term and a medium term tourism strategy," she stressed.

The President noted that the pristine white beaches nationwide continued to lure most visitors to the country.

In a recent voting conducted by the beach owners association in China, the Philippines was selected as having the best beaches in Asia, she said.

Gov't to pay for repair of presidential plane as soon as cost is ascertained, says Palace

Malacañang today said it is willing to pay the cost of repair of the presidential twin-engine Fokker jet as soon as an independent appraiser establishes the correct amount.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, in his regular press briefing, said that this was the recommendation made by the chief Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz, Jr.

Bunye further said that the matter is now the subject of a suit involving the government as plaintiff and the Fokker Services Asia PTE Ltd. and Seal Aircraft Industries Inc. as defendants.

Bunye said the government's case, filed before the Regional Trial Court of Paranaque, arose from a dispute on the extent and cost of repairs.

"What the government wants is the appointment of an independent expert to appraise the cost of repairs," Bunye said.

The aircraft is now in Singapore but the aircraft's two engines are now in Dallas, Texas, where repair and maintenance work are being done.

Datumanong named O.I.C. of P.E.A.

Malacañang today announced that Department of Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon Datumanong would take over immediately as Officer-In-Charge of both the Office of the Chairman and the Office of the General Manager of the Public Estates Authority.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, who made the announcement during his regular press briefing in Malacañang, stressed that Datumanong "has to secure all the pertinent documents."

"He (Datumanong) has to make sure that all the documents are accounted for, no documents are missing and because any missing documents will definitely hamper investigation," Bunye said.

Meanwhile, Bunye said the Government Service Insurance System – PEA loan agreement is separate and distinct from the construction agreement between PEA and JD Legaspi Construction.

He said the approval process for the alleged variation orders under the new PEA Board is separate and distinct from the GSIS-PEA Loan Agreement.

"The alleged variation orders have not been referred to the Office of the President," Bunye said.

The Press Secretary noted that the P1-billion loan was to be used primarily "for the construction and completion of horizontal development of the Manila Bay reclamation project, including PEA properties in Central Business Park 1-A."

Bunye noted that this is "not only the construction of the Central Boulevard which currently is the subject of the controversy."

Bunye noted that the GSIS-PEA Loan Agreement, a government to government transaction underwent the established procedure for review such as the favorable recommendation of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Finance and the Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Legal Affairs.

DOE says oil price hikes have no effect on power rates

The Department of Energy (DOE) today assured that recent adjustments in oil prices have minimal effect on electricity rates.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez, Jr. said that the Philippines, despite being a direct oil importer, has veered away from complete dependence on oil for power generation.

The assurance came in the heels of increased tension in the Middle East that could affect world oil prices, and consequently impact on local oil prices, a DOE report reaching Malacañang said.

Perez said the country has diversified energy sources to fuel its power plants. Most of these energy sources are indigenous, such as hydro and geothermal power and natural gas.

This would shield the country from any unstable supply and any rise in the price of oil brought about by external factors.

“The country through the National Power Corp. (NAPOCOR) has been veering away from the use of oil in our power generation mix. Our data from NAPOCOR show that dependence on oil as fuel for power plants has significantly been reduced to only 11.75 percent as of July this year,” Perez said.

Coal, considered one of the cheapest fuels, accounted for 40.02 percent in the power generation mix; followed by geothermal power at 27.23 percent as of July.

Dependence on hydro power as a fuel source was at 16.25 percent. NAPOCOR’s Ilijan power plant, which came on stream this June, has also contributed about 4.72 percent in the fuel mix.

In 1995, oil contributed more than half or 56.85 percent in the power generation mix. But this slowly dropped over the years. In end-2000, the use of oil in the power generation mix has declined to only 20.28 percent.

Last year, the country’s energy self-sufficiency stood at 45.5 percent.

NAPOCOR initial studies showed that a 10-percent rise in the price of bunker fuel per liter would translate to only one-centavo per kilowatt hour (kWh) increase in the fuel cost adjustment component of NAPOCOR’s electricity rates in the Luzon grid, Perez said.

Even a 50-percent increase in diesel fuel would only translate to one-centavo per kWh increase, he said.

Meanwhile, NAPOCOR has retired aging oil-based power plants with a combined capacity of 1,020 megawatts (MW) as of 2000.

In Luzon, another three oil-fired power plants with a total capacity of 860-MW will be decommissioned by 2009 and 2010.

In the Visayas, five oil-fired power plants with a combined capacity of 285.4-MW are also in the pipeline for decommissioning between 2004 and 2011.

These include the 36.5-MW Panay diesel (2004), 22-MW Bohol diesel power barge (2005), 55-MW Cebu land-based gas turbine (2011), 43.9-MW Cebu diesel (2011) and Power Barge 101-104 with a total capacity of 128-MW (2005).

The retirement of the Bohol diesel power barge, however, is contingent on the upgrading of the Leyte-Bohol transmission line.

“Our goal is to have a stable and secure energy supply by increasing the share of indigenous energy sources. We are working hard to develop our indigenous energy sources to increase our energy self-sufficiency level,” Perez said.

He also echoed the call of Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye to consumers to conserve gas in the light of the Middle East situation.

“We fully support the call of Secretary Toting Bunye urging the consumers to conserve oil. We have seen that prices of oil have gone up in the last few months. We believe it will be best for all of us to be more prudent on oil consumption including use of LPG for cooking,” Perez said.

GMA reaffirms gov't commitment to pursue rehabilitation of Nat'l Steel Corp.

ILIGAN CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reiterated the government's commitment to pursue the rehabilitation of the defunct National Steel Corporation (NSC).

In her speech during the Second Mindanao Shippers' Conference at the Maria Cristina Hotel here, the President said the Philippine government and the Danaharta, Malaysia's Asset Privatization Trust (APT), has already developed a "meeting of the minds" to develop and rehabilitate the NSC.

She recalled that last August 22, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II met with the creditors of Danaharta where the outstanding issues were fully discussed and negotiated.

"At that meeting they developed a meeting of minds regarding future steps toward the rehabilitation of National Steel," the President said.

She added that both the creditors and the Danaharta confirmed that the game plan is still to operate the national business.

According to her, the Danaharta stressed that the sale of the assets need not require 85 percent majority consent, provided that the sale is at least 80 percent of the appraised value.

"It clarified that the 85 percent shareholder consent requirement is intended as an anti-volition provision to protect its 60 percent equity in case there is a change of ownership," she said.

The President said the Danaharta underscored that the appointment of the chief executive officer and the chief operating officer shall be made upon the recommendation of the creditor banks.

"It only wants to share the decision making in the screening process," Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said.

These, she said, are great strides regarding the contentious issues of the National Steel.

Since then, she said the Philippine National Bank (PNB), which represented the bank at the meeting, has presented the agreement to all the creditor banks where each member creditor bank has secured their respective board's approval.

When the clearance of the banks came, the President said the agreements were converted into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

The MOA, she said, was already transmitted to the Danaharta for comment last Sept. 20.

According to her, the Danaharta board is reviewing the MOA, even as she expressed hope that the Malaysian group would sign it.

The President also took the opportunity to thank Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad for making it possible for the Philippines and the Malaysian Danaharta to sit down and discuss major issues involving the rehabilitation of the NSC.

As the start of her speech, President Macapagal-Arroyo donated P1 million to Iligan City Mayor Franklin Quijano for the "One Town, One Product, One Million Pesos" program to benefit displaced NSC workers.

Among those who graced the shippers' conference were Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza, Presidential Adviser on One-Million Jobs Cito Lorenzo, Presidential Adviser for Mindanao Jesus Dureza and Iligan City Mayor Franklin Quijano.

GMA offers P1 million loan for SME of displaced steel workers

ILIGAN CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today offered to release a P1-million loan to displaced workers of the mothballed National Steel Corporation so that they can engage in a small and medium enterprise (SME).

In her speech at the Second Mindanao Shippers Conference held here, the President said the amount would be loaned through the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) under her "One Town, One Project, One Million Pesos" project.

The President formally launched the project in Malacañang last Tuesday during a luncheon meeting with the 27 municipal mayors of Laguna.

In her speech, the President said that the American economy is still weak and the government is now relying on the domestic market to expand the economy.

"Because Iligan is a steel town, I will be giving a P1 million loan, to be advanced by my President's Social Fund, but to be reimbursed by the Land Bank, for a small and medium enterprise of the displaced steel workers," the President said.

The President also said that since the government does not have the money, she wants the private sector to lead in strengthening the local economy.

She also lauded the City of Iligan for its initiative in developing, along with the private sector, at least 5,000 hectares of land for abaca, banana, pineapple and coffee production.

"This will translate not only to at least 10,000 jobs but also to an increase of at least 25,000 tons of cargo," the President said.

The President also commended Iligan City for diversifying its employment base and not just depending on one single industry.

According to the President, the thrust of the region is to develop the seaweed industry from Pangil Bay in Misamis Occidental and Lanao del Norte to Yanga Bay in Surigao del Sur.

The seaweed industry, the President said, will generate an additional hundred thousand jobs within the next 12 months besides the 25,000 families that have already benefited from it.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 26, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029130908/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept26.htm>

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Despite September 11 and kidnapping incidents, tourism in RP is growing, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said that despite the negative impact of September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States last year and the series of kidnappings perpetrated by criminal groups, the country's tourism industry is still growing.

Speaking before the ceremonial opening of the 7th International Surfing Cup and the 1st Human Body Boarding Challenge held Thursday at Cloud Nine Beach Resort at Siargao Island, the President said that despite the negative growth in some countries in the world brought by September 11, tourism in the Philippines is still a thriving industry.

"Tourism is one of the primary sectors in the world where there has been negative growth rate after September 11 but tourism in the Philippines is still growing at double digit," the President said.

In her impromptu speech, the President also congratulated Surigao del Norte Governor Robert Lyndon Barbers, his brother, Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, and the provincial and local officials of Surigao as well as the Department of Tourism for hosting the surfing and body boarding competition at Cloud 9 Beach Resort in Siargao Island.

The President wished the participants of the four-day surfing competition all the luck. The surfing event started Thursday and will end Sunday while the human body boarding challenge is set for October 1 to 13.

The President also said that in order to help accommodate local and foreign surfers, she has launched the "One Town, One Product, One Million Pesos" loan program for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the island.

She issued a P1 million check as loan to one of the beach resorts of the island. The President handed the check to Gov. Barbers after her speech.

Siargao island, which is composed of nine municipalities, has the best surfing terminals in Region 13. General Luna town alone has 14 beach resorts and during the tournament there was an overflow of patrons resulting in the lack of rooms for visitors.

The President said she is very hopeful that the "One Town, One Product, One Million Pesos" loan for SMEs will help a lot to further develop the tourism industry in Siargao.

GMA says Siargao surfing tilt negates bad notions on Mindanao's peace and order situation

The holding of an international surfing competition in Mindanao negates notions that the region is beset by peace and order problems.

This was stressed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Thursday in a speech before officials, competitors and guests at the 7th International Surfing Cup and the 1st Human Body Boarding Challenge at the Cloud Nine Beach Resort in Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte.

“The world thinks of Mindanao as a place that is not secure. Siargao makes that claim false,” the President said.

She also took note of the very stable peace and order condition in Surigao del Norte.

The President said the international gauge for good peace and order is pegged at eight crimes per 100,000 population, adding that Surigao del Norte has a crime rate of only two per 100,000 population.

According to the President, many areas in Mindanao have also achieved great gains, thanks to stepped-up drive by local officials and the people against criminal and terrorist elements.

She recalled that during her most recent visit to General Santos City, she was informed that the local police have killed the area’s number one drug pusher.

In an earlier visit to the same city, she said she was greeted by the news that the head of the Abu Sofia, a kidnap-for-ransom group linked to the terrorist Abu Sayyaf, was also killed.

She said she came back to Mindanao with every piece of good news about government achievements in its peace and order campaign.

On Thursday, in Iligan City, the President received the four teachers of Mindanao State University who were rescued Wednesday from their abductors.

GMA inspects Malampaya platform, stresses role of project in gov’t energy self-sufficiency program

MALAMPAYA PLATFORM, Palawan—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today inspected the offshore platform of the Malampaya Deep Water Gas to Power Project to stress the importance that her administration is giving to projects aimed at making the country self-sufficient in its energy requirements.

The President arrived here this morning from El Nido by Heli-Canadian Air, the Malampaya chopper.

Among those who accompanied the President in her brief inspection of the platform were Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, and former AFP chief, retired Gen Roy Cimatu, now chairman of the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT).

Cimatu’s inclusion in the inspection visit was part of the preparations for his visit, starting tomorrow, to the nine Middle East countries where he will draw up a comprehensive contingency plan for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in case war erupts in the region.

Before proceeding to El Nido on board the presidential yacht, *Ang Pangulo*, the President on Thursday opened the international surfing competition in Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte and keynoted the 2nd Mindanao Shippers Conference in Iligan City.

The President and her party stayed for only about 30 minutes at the platform, after which they returned to El Nido where she briefed the media about the importance of the Malampaya project.

During the briefing, the President cited the importance of the Malampaya project, especially with the threat of war in the Middle East where the Philippines gets the bulk of its oil requirements.

The President also said that the Malampaya project is well secured.

She also said that her “One town, One Project, One Mission Pesos” program will be implemented in Palawan where small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can apply for loans for their livelihood projects.

The Malampaya project, whose operation will span decades, is an example of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration’s long-term view of the country’s prospects and capabilities.

Earlier, the President said that because of the project, the country’s need for foreign oil and gas and petroleum products would be lessened, adding that the Philippines would have more protection, especially with the impending new round of increase in the price of crude oil brought about by the threat of war in the Middle East.

The \$5-billion Malampaya Deep Water Gas to Power project, which the President inaugurated on Oct. 16, 2001, is the largest and most important investment of its kind in the history of the Philippines.

During the inauguration of the facility in Tabangao, Batangas City, the President said the project marks the beginning of a whole new industry that will provide clean and environment-friendly fuel to Philippine industries.

The President said that with an expected \$700 million in yearly savings as a result of the natural gas project, the country is expected to earn at least \$13 million in royalties within its 20-year period of operation.

The year-round production of oil and gas from the Malampaya project in Palawan is one of the factors that would help sustain the country’s economic growth in 2002, according to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In her yearend report to the nation, the President said that with gas production in Malampaya that started in the middle of October, 2001 and oil production that kicked off in December of the same year, the Philippines is now 52 percent self-sufficient in its energy requirements.

The inauguration of the project, held three and a half years after the declaration of the commercial quantity of gas in Malampaya in May 1998, marked the birth of the Philippines’ natural gas industry.

Prior to the launching of the Malampaya project, the country was consuming up to \$3 billion worth of imported fuel every year.

The President said that the impact of the natural gas project would be long and widely felt far beyond the power and energy sector itself in the daily lives of millions of Filipinos.

“Many of those Filipinos may have never heard of Malampaya and maybe never will, because they are far in the hinterlands. But they will be reached and touched by the benefits of natural gas,” she said.

The President said that in order to achieve the goal of enhancing natural gas utilization, it shall be the policy of her administration to promote activities in the downstream sector by offering access for all land-based gas pipeline networks to ensure the inflow of investments in this area.

Several Japanese, Filipino, European and Malaysian companies have already signified their interest in investing in a land-based gas pipeline network from Batangas to Manila and eventually to Bataan.

Faster cargo handling, transport in Mindanao by 2004

By the year 2004, shippers and stakeholders in the cargo industry would benefit from the faster handling and transport of goods between Mindanao and other top domestic ports.

But most importantly, they would gain from more reasonable cargo handling and transport costs.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, in a speech before a gathering of shippers and cargo operators in Iligan City Thursday, said container port modernization would finally be implemented in Mindanao.

She said she looked forward to the completion by 2004 of the P2-billion Mindanao Container Port Terminal (MCPT) in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental.

The President hinted that the construction of the huge terminal would generate jobs by itself. When it operates, more employment opportunities would be generated, she said.

The completion of the terminal would go side by side with the construction of the nearby Laguindingan airport.

The two support infrastructure projects are in line with the President's commitment, as expounded in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA), to improve services that would rev up Mindanao's economy.

The Interagency Investment Coordination Committee (ICC) of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) had approved last May the implementation of the second stage of the MCPT.

The NEDA-ICC, in approving the project, noted that the MCPT would meet the increasing demand for cargo movement to and from Cagayan de Oro and Iligan City.

The MCTP Phase II bulk and food terminal covers the extension of an existing 300-meter berth by 200 meters, the provision of a wharf bulk loader and unloader for easier cargo handling, and the expansion of support facilities and office.

The MCTP Phase II will be located on the shoreline of Macajalar Bay at Tagoloan, some 17 kilometers northeast by road from Cagayan de Oro City.

The site of the MCTP Phase II is within the vicinity of industries at the the PHIVIDEC Industrial Estate-Misamis Oriental (PIE-MO) adjacent to the MCTP Phase I.

Of the total cost of \$40.9 million (P2.043 billion), around 60 percent will be funded under Japan's Special Yen Loan Package (SYLP) while the remaining 40 percent will be shouldered by local counterpart funds.

The SYLP carries an interest rate of one percent, with a 40-year repayment period, inclusive of a 10-year grace period.

The NEDA-ICC said port access would be through the national coastal highway, without using or passing through congested city roads.

The MCTP Phase II will cater to bulk cargos like fertilizer, animal feeds, grains, rice and palay, and sugar.

The project is also expected to ease conditions at the already heavily congested Cagayan De Oro City port.

The MCTP Phase II has been designed to handle 2.3 million tons of dry and breakbulk cargoes and accommodate the berthing of one 20,000-DWT vessel to two 150-DWT vessels in a 200-meter berth length.

Support facilities include terminal operation building, transit shed, maintenance shop, generator house and canteen and port workers room.

Wharf crane loaders and unloader, and belt conveyor system are the main equipment to be procured for the project.

Palace announces arrest of Dipolog City swindler who posed as DBM facilitator

Malacañang today announced the arrest of a swindler who claimed before Misamis Occidental Governor Loreto Leo Ocampos that he facilitated the release of the province's Local Government Service Equalization Funds (LGSEF).

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, in a press briefing in Malacañang, led a video presentation showing elements of the Misamis Occidental Police Provincial Office arresting Nestor Dapar, a businessman and a resident of Dipolog City, in an entrapment operation.

The arrest took place last September 24 inside the Office of Governor Ocampos and was witnessed by representatives of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC).

According to Boncodin, Dapar was immediately arrested after receiving marked money from Gov. Ocampos. The marked money was supposed to represent the 15-percent commission of the group in connection with the "facilitation" for the release of LGSEF to the provincial government.

A case of swindling was filed against Dapar before the City Prosecutors Office in Oroquieta City on the same day of the arrest.

The group of Dapar, Boncodin said, claimed responsibility for the release of the funds allegedly using their connections inside the Office of the President and the DBM.

DBM Assistant Secretary Edgardo Opida, who was present during the arrest, has debunked Dapar's claim.

Last month, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the DBM presented architect Manuel Tolentino who was arrested in a similar entrapment operation in Manila.

Barely two months after the DBM sought the assistance of PAOCC, government investigators have already unraveled a significant part of the group's intricate network and inner workings.

The DBM said it believes that a group, which operates nationwide, has already victimized several government officials and private businessmen during a certain period of time.

Boncodin enjoined all government officials to follow Gov. Ocampos' example by volunteering information to government investigators about the group's activities.

GMA not offended by spoofs on her infomercials — Palace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is neither offended nor insulted by impersonations on her in government infomercials, wherein she explains government efforts in lowering the cost of rice, electricity and medicines, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said today.

"*Ang ating Pangulo naman ay* (Our President is) game. She's sport. She takes everything in stride," Bunye said in his regular press briefing.

Responding to queries if the President is slighted by imitations of her infomercials, Bunye noted that it is usually the heads of state that are subjected to impersonation.

"The more important you are, the more you become targets of caricatures or spoofs. These are normal in a democratic setup," he added.

Bunye noted that it is the government's duty to inform the people on the available government programs.

"It would be worst if you keep the people in the dark," he said.

Palace reassures state workers that they will get their yearend bonus

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin today reassured government workers that they would be getting their regular Christmas bonus by the yearend.

"We will all get our usual yearend bonuses from the budget as prescribed by law," Boncodin said in a press briefing in Malacañang.

The budget secretary noted, however, that the additional cash incentives are still being worked out, if there will be any.

"As you know, we have just completed our third quarter performance review and it (cash incentives) will depend on what the finances will look like by the end of the year," Boncodin said.

Boncodin noted, however, that the government could not afford the P3,000-salary increase, which is being asked by some government employees.

She said the government is looking at options to provide non-monetary benefits to state workers in lieu of salary increase.

According to Boncodin, the DBM is now meeting with the Civil Service Commission on this issue.

She added that DBM has discussed with the Public Sector Labor Management Council the possibility of providing benefits that are non-wage to public employees.

"Essentially, in terms of work conditions, better flexibility in working hours or those that will not entail additional money for the government. There are some agencies that are already contemplating a four-day work week," Boncodin said.

Gov't has identified countries where OFWs can be relocated in case of another gulf war

EL NIDO, Palawan—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the nation that the government has already identified countries where Filipinos could be relocated in case of an outbreak of another war in the Middle East.

In her opening statement at a media briefing here after her inspection visit to the Malampaya project, the President said that the identification of these relocation sites is part of the functions of the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT) headed by former AFP chief, retired Gen. Roy Cimatu.

The President said although the relocation countries have already been identified, diplomatic prudence requires that these countries should not be publicly named.

"Rest assured, however, that specific relocations plans are being worked out by our crisis manager," the President said, referring to Cimatu.

The President said that Cimatu met Thursday with the ambassadors of countries sharing borders with Iraq, namely Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Turkey.

According to the President, the ambassadors of the four countries assured the Philippines of their support for any relocation activities that would be undertaken for our Filipino nationals in their territories.

Cimatu has estimated that only 5 percent of the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Middle East would be affected if the United States pushes through with its threat to attack Iraq.

The President said that the government does not foresee an evacuation of OFWs back to the Philippines but only temporary relocation within a country or, in a worse case scenario, to an adjacent third country.

GMA cites gov't steps to meet energy contingencies

EL NIDO, Palawan—The Philippines is prepared for any energy contingency that may arise in the Middle East because of Iraq's refusal to comply with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

In her opening statement during a media briefing here, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed this as she cited the country's less dependence on oil, bulk of which it imports from the Middle East.

The President said the Philippines is now only 21 percent dependent on oil for its power needs, compared to more than 60 percent in the last Gulf War in the early 90s.

"This is because we have been able to diversify our power sources," the President said.

She noted that the country has developed its energy sources and has tapped "geothermal, coal, hydro and most recently, natural gas with the coming onstream operations of Malampaya."

The President earlier made a brief inspection of the offshore platform of the Malampaya Deep Water Gas to Power project in Palawan.

She said the Philippines was fortunate to have gained the approval of at least "four new exploration companies from Britain, Japan and the United States prospecting around Northern Palawan."

"We have been actively promoting our country's potentials in oil and gas exploration," she said.

The country is in a better situation today than during the previous Middle East crisis, the President said.

But there is a need to plan ahead because "we are still dependent on imported oil for our transportation needs," she said.

The government's contingency plans include the increase in the country's oil inventory and the facilitation of arrangements for a special contingency bilateral supply with traditional and new oil supplying countries.

Citing "diplomatic prudence" for not naming the oil suppliers, the President said there were talks with a Middle East nation for a "formal solid assurance on oil supply that will be finalized within the next few weeks."

A commercial arrangement between the Philippine National Oil Company and its counterpart in a neighboring country is also being concluded, she added.

She said she would send a high-level mission to initiate the second arrangement that would give the Philippines "an alternative source of oil with a non-traditional country source."

The President said the Philippines, in response to the call of Japan to set up a regional oil stockpile during the recent ASEAN + 3 Energy Ministers meeting, has offered Subic Bay "as a location for the regional stockpile."

The issue would be taken up in the November ASEAN Summit.

Further, the President ordered Energy Secretary Vincent Perez, Jr. to prepare an executive order “requiring all oil companies to maintain a certain minimum oil inventory within the country.”

“There will be no need to hoard. There will only be a need to conserve,” the President said.

On energy conservation, the President said the Department of Energy “will actively advocate with the motoring public fuel conservation measures that will be announced on Monday.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 27, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029041808/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept27.htm>

The President's Day: September 28, 2002

28 SEPTEMBER 2002

- **Roxas urges RP food exporters to tap Korean market**
- **GMA says RP in talks with other nations for bilateral oil supply arrangements**
- **GMA hopes for RP-China partnership against terrorism, transnational crime**
- **Palace condemns NPA attack on Lopez town, vows no let-up in war against terrorists**
- **GMA projects 6-M jobs from tourism by 2010**

Roxas urges RP food exporters to tap Korean market

Philippine food exporters should explore and take advantage of huge market opportunities in South Korea.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II noted an economic upsurge in Korea, spawning an increased demand for food products among middle class Korean consumers.

“We are urging our food exporters to take a closer look at the Korean market. Korea, which generally imports the bulk of its food requirements in neighboring countries, has been sustaining its economic momentum for the rest of the year with consumer spending in an upward trend,” Roxas said.

“Our food products definitely have a competitive edge over other country competitors,” he said.

“Aside from the presence of an agro-climatological environment – which allows the country to produce a wide range of superior fresh and processed food products through the use of modern agricultural technologies, the Philippines’ relative proximity to Korea is also an advantage,” he explained.

Roxas cited a report from Seoul-based Philippine Trade and Investment Center (PTIC) Commercial Attache Nicanor Bautista who said some \$3.067 million in negotiated sales was generated during a one-day business matching conference arranged for a mission of local food exporters.

Bautista said the huge sales indicated the rising enthusiasm of Korean consumers for food products, particularly those produced in the Philippines.

The mission comprised major Philippine food companies Divert Corp., Seachamp International Export Corp., Mabuhay 2000 Enterprises Inc., 7-D Food International Inc., Celebes Agricultural Corp., See’s International Food Manufacturing Corp., and Shemberg Marketing Corp.

It was organized by the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) in collaboration with the Korea Importers’ Association (KOIMA), which has an established importers’ group handling 83 percent of Korea’s import volume.

In the same meeting, the Filipino food firms negotiated fruitful deals with some of Korea’s major food importers, to include Samsung Corp.; Cheil Jedang Corp., the biggest food conglomerate in Korea; and the Shinsegae Department Store which owned a chain of over 25 department stores.

The Divert Corp., for one, received orders for fresh abalone and fresh baby clams worth \$600,000.

Seachamp also closed a deal for tilapia fillets, lobster, abalone and black tiger prawns valued at \$1.068 million.

The Korea Airlines’ food purchasing division tapped Seachamp for “de-veined” fresh-chilled prawns. Korea Airlines prepares over 30,000 set meals a day.

Other best selling Philippine food products were coconut juice (buko juice) in can, a novel product for Korean buyers, and Philippine mangoes.

Mabuhay closed deals worth \$570,168 for its canned coconut juice and 7-D, for dried mangoes and mango nectar valued at \$396,000.

CITEM officials said many Korean companies have offered exclusive distributorship of Philippine mango products in Korea.

Roxas said the food selling mission to South Korea carried out the memorandum of understanding signed during the May visit to the Philippines of a South Korean buying mission led by KOIMA chairman Chul-pyung Chin.

Representatives from the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Philippine Exporters Confederation and KOIMA signed the agreement.

The food-selling mission to South Korea is one of the promotional strategies being done by the trade department's brand development team for food products.

A business plan prepared by team seeks to corner some \$1.25 billion in exports sales for food products in 2004, by implementing export strategies such as complying with international food standards and pursuing tariff reduction negotiations with major food markets China, Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

GMA says RP in talks with other nations for bilateral oil supply arrangements

The Philippines is in talks with oil-supplying nations for "special contingency bilateral supply arrangements" to ensure that the country has enough oil for its transportation sector in the event that war breaks out in the Middle East.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo disclosed this Friday during a media briefing in El Nido, Palawan, as she said the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East might impact on the production, supply and price of world crude.

The President said the country, though becoming less dependent on oil for its power requirements, still needed imported oil to fill up the demands of its transportation sector.

She said the bilateral supply arrangements were being discussed with traditional and new oil suppliers.

Citing "diplomatic prudence" for not naming the oil suppliers, the President confirmed ongoing talks with a Middle East nation for a "formal solid assurance on oil supply.

"That will be finalized within the next few weeks," she said.

A commercial arrangement between the Philippine National Oil Company and its counterpart in a neighboring country is also being concluded, she added.

She said she would send a high-level mission to initiate the second arrangement that would give the Philippines "an alternative source of oil with a non-traditional country source."

The President said the bilateral oil supply arrangements were part of a comprehensive energy contingency plan the government had drawn to shield the country from the rippling effects of a possible Middle East conflict.

The contingency plans include an increase in the country's oil inventory.

Another is the government's response to Japan's call to set up a regional oil stockpile. The call was made during the recent ASEAN + 3 Energy Ministers meeting.

The President had offered Subic Bay "as a location for the regional stockpile." The issue would be taken up in the November ASEAN Summit.

Further, the President ordered Energy Secretary Vincent Perez, Jr. to prepare an executive order "requiring all oil companies to maintain a certain minimum oil inventory within the country."

"There will be no need to hoard. There will only be a need to conserve," the President said.

On energy conservation, the President said the Department of Energy "will actively advocate with the motoring public fuel conservation measures that will be announced on Monday."

GMA hopes for RP-China partnership against terrorism, transnational crime

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed hopes the Philippines and the People's Republic of China could have a defense partnership aimed at fighting terrorism and transnational crimes in the future.

The President declared her wish during a meeting with visiting Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian in Malacañang.

"We can fight terrorism together and we can fight transnational crimes together," the President said.

The President noted that the Philippines has a long standing military partnership with the United States, but none with "the neighbor across the South China Sea."

The President noted that the visit of the highest defense official of China enhances the security and peace in the region.

She also expressed the country's readiness to explore various areas of cooperation with China in the South China Sea.

Chi, on the other hand, said that bringing stability in the region is "our joint aspiration."

Chi further noted discussions he had with Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes on possible cooperation in the future.

Chi expressed to the President how "overwhelmed" he was for the warm hospitality shown by the Filipino people during his delegation's visit.

Chi also said he was "moved" by the attendance of Secretary Reyes' 92-year old mother during a dinner tendered in his honor.

Chi, who was accompanied by his wife Jiang Qingping, also conveyed to the President the regards sent by Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji and Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

His deputy Liang Guanglie, Chinese Ambassador Wang Chungui, Lt. Gen. Zhao Keming, Col. Geng Yangsheng, Senior Col. Coz Zhang Ywhe and Lt. Gen. Ziu Zhenmui accompanied Minister Chi, among others.

During the talks, the President also noted the healthy and excellent state of the two countries bilateral relations.

She also reiterated that the Philippines viewed China, along with the United States and Japan, as important factors in the security and development of the region, as well as of the Philippines.

Meanwhile, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, in a statement, noted that the South China Sea is the sea that unites rather than divides the Philippines and China.

“We are ready to explore with China various areas of cooperation in the South China Sea particularly the working groups on confidence-building measures, fisheries cooperation and marine environmental protection,” Bunye said.

Also in attendance from the Philippine side were Reyes and Armed Forces Chief of Staff Benjamin Defensor.

Palace condemns NPA attack on Lopez town, vows no let-up in war against terrorists

The government today condemned the treacherous attack perpetrated Friday by communist terrorists in Lopez, Quezon, while sympathizing with the families of policemen either killed or taken later by the rebels.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, in a statement, said Malacañang condoled “with the widows and families of the brave policemen who fell while defending the duly-constituted government and democratic system.”

Bunye also called on the people “to get involved in the fight against the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA).”

The United States government has lately branded the CPP-NPA as a terrorist organization.

“We exhort the citizenry, especially the human rights groups and communist organizations who are not engaged in violence, to join us in condemning this latest act of terrorism,” he said.

Reports said the Lopez policemen fought back during the rebel attack, leading to the death of Lopez Police Chief Superintendent Cesar Santander.

The reports added that three others, including a civilian, were wounded in the firefight. The rebels sustained fatalities too, reports said.

“This terrorist act will not go unpunished,” Bunye said.

He disclosed that police and military operations against the rebels were launched immediately after the attack.

“Police and military operations will continue. There is no ceasefire between the CPP-NPA and the government,” he added.

But Bunye said “the government will maintain open lines of communications in the hope of ending the employment of violence and terrorism as a means to attain political ends.”

GMA projects 6-M jobs from tourism by 2010

The administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo expects to generate at least six million jobs in the tourism industry by the year 2010.

Speaking before the townsfolk in Linapacan, Palawan where she gave a P1-million check to the provincial government for the “One Product, One Town, One Million” program, the President noted that in year 2000, there were at least three million jobs generated by the country’s tourism industry.

The President said that in the year 2000, there were at least 3 million local and foreign visitors who traveled the many tourist spots in the country.

She said that by year 2010, the government has projected the volume of tourists to reach five million.

She added that in year 2000, at least \$ 7 billion was earned by the tourism industry. By the year 2010, the government projects a \$17 billion income from tourism.

In year 2000, she said domestic tourists spent at least \$800 million. By year 2010, the government expects domestic tourists to spend at least \$2.5 billion in their travels.

The President stressed that tourism brings awareness to one's culture and responsibility for the environment.

“Kaya dito sa bansa nating Pilipinas, ang ating panaginip ay lumawak ang turismo at makatulong sa pagsugpo ng kahirapan sa loob ng dekada (It is our aspiration to expand tourism and eradicate poverty within the decade),” she said.

She noted that tourism is the primary stimulus of development.

Like Information Technology, tourism is considered by her administration as one of the sectors that would spur dramatic growth, she said.

She further noted that 90 percent of the money spent by tourists in the country stays in the local economy. *“Kaya napakalaki ang kanyang epekto sa local economy* (Tourism has a big effect on the local economy),” the President said.

This, the President said, is in contrast with the electronics sectors, in which only 30 centavos in each dollar stays in the local economy.

“But in tourism, in each dollar, 90 centavos goes to the local economy,” she said.

The President cited that a typical foreign tourist spends at least \$1,000 in the Philippines.

*Source: **Office of the Press Secretary***

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 28, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030063647/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept28.htm>

The President's Day: September 29, 2002

29 SEPTEMBER 2002

- **GMA urges development of tourism markets**
- **GMA says Palawan International Airport in the works**
- **GMA cites father's work to build strong RP**

GMA urges development of tourism markets

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is pushing for the immediate development of markets for tourism in the country, as she looked forward to attracting more visitors from the North Asian region.

In a speech Saturday during the celebration of the feast day of Linapacan, Palawan, the President said the government's strategy was to get both foreign and domestic tourists to relax in the country's pristine beaches, enjoy the sights of national landmarks and tourist spots and go shopping about for Philippine-made handicrafts and products.

She said 70 percent of the tourism department's promotion budget would go to beach, domestic, sightseeing and shopping tourism. "We will offer this to the Japanese, Koreans and the Chinese."

She added that the potentials of recreation tourism, ecological tourism, Balikbayan tourism and backpack tourism would also be considered, inasmuch as visitors under the categories stay longer in a place than the beach lovers, sightseers and shoppers.

Selling the Philippines to these specialized markets would be "custom-made" and at least 20 percent of the promotions fund would go to the effort, she said.

The President said the promotion blitz would target the North Asian area, saying that the Japanese continued to comprise most of the tourists that have visited the country.

However, Korean visitors are fast catching up in number while visitors from China have the potential to top the tourism market, she said.

The world is opening up and the Chinese are taking advantage of this by traveling, she added.

The Chief Executive noted Cebu, Bohol, Manila and its environs and Palawan as favorite tourist destinations.

She cited Palawan because of the people's "caring capacity" and the big number of resorts in the area.

She urged the people of Linapacan to help the government develop the tourist industry in the area by improving its facilities.

"Kaya gusto kong gamitin ng mga taga-Linapacan, mga taga-northern Palawan ang pagkakataong ito, dahil puwede nating ayusin agad ang mga nakatindig nang facilities (I want the people of Linapacan and northern Palawan to use this opportunity to improve existing facilities)," she said.

GMA says Palawan International Airport in the works

The tourism industry in Palawan will get a big boost with the planned construction of an international airport in the country's premier destination of foreign and domestic visitors.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, in a speech Saturday in Linapacan, Palawan, said putting up an international airport in northern Palawan was part of the medium-term national tourism strategy.

The President said she had assigned Energy Secretary Vicente Perez to help package the funding for the airport.

She also disclosed plans to adopt a “liberalized airline policy” from Japan and Korea going to Cebu and Palawan.

She said this would be part of expected talks between officials of the two countries and the Philippines when she visits Japan and Korea in December.

But she said that even without an international airport, the popularity of Palawan as a tourism spot in itself served as an attraction for those who would like to enjoy its beach resorts and hospitality.

“*Ayaw kong mawalan ng pag-asa* (I do not want to lose hope),” she said, referring to the slump in tourist arrivals following the infamous kidnapping perpetrated by the terrorist Abu Sayyaf in the area several years ago.

She cited how Egypt, Spain, Indonesia and other countries also beset by threats from terrorist groups have successfully overcome security problems and revived their tourism industries.

The President said there were plenty of ways to promote the image of Palawan as a tourist site, and this would all depend on good marketing.

She lauded Palawan officials for putting up a tourism fair in Puerto Princesa City from October 12 to 16.

She said that the government is pushing its “Visit the Philippines Year” in 2003.

Palawan is included in this promotional activity of the Department of Tourism, she added.

The President also hoped that Palawan, on its own, would soon set up tourism enterprise zones. She cited a company that would like to locate in El Nido.

GMA cites father’s work to build strong RP

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today paid tribute to her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, who she cited as the frontrunner of the various pro-poor public programs her administration is implementing.

In a radio message aired nationwide, the President made the tribute in commemoration of her father’s 92nd birth anniversary last Saturday (September 28).

She said that her father, a tenant farmer’s son who worked his way up to become the country’s ninth Chief Executive, spearheaded, during his administration, the “unfinished and peaceful revolution” of the masses.

She added that her ongoing programs on free enterprise, concrete social and economic development of the nation with a bias for the poor, land reform leading to agricultural and industrial growth, and good governance bereft of graft and corruption drew inspiration from her father’s philosophy of government.

“*Karangalan ko at kabasbasan ko na puwedeng magsimula kung saan siya tumigil at ituloy ang kanyang pakikibaka* (It is my honor to continue the programs started by my father in his time),” the President said.

On the occasion of the late Macapagal’s birth anniversary, the President called on the nation and the people who love and respect her father to join her in solidifying a “national consensus” for a more “socially-responsive” society.

She raised the hope that with a united stand, the Filipino people would overcome the pangs of poverty within the decade.

In her radio message, the President also urged the people to help her achieve her desire to build a strong republic, another milestone laid by her late father.

She cited two vital characteristics of a strong republic: that which is free from “class and sectoral interests” and that which has strong institutions and a bureaucracy capable of implementing good policies and delivering better services.

She said this could be achieved if the nation has an effective government, from the national government down to the local governments.

This would include the bureaucracy, the professionals and those who care for the civil service.

A strong republic is also characterized with the presence of a vibrant free enterprise where the Filipino talent and skills are used.

“Ang pamahalaan ay dapat siguraduhin na ang mga puwersa at bagay na bumabangga sa free marketay matanggal (The state should ensure that the forces that oppose the free market system are eliminated),” she said.

Another facet of a strong republic is the presence of democracy hinged on the philosophy of new politics, devoid of “bossism” and the influences of “guns, gold and goons.”

She stressed on accountability and transparency to uphold good governance.

She added that a strong republic should also have an active civil society where the family, the community, non-government organizations, the media, the church and government help each other “forge its swords into hammers” to thwart poverty and threats to national development and security.

“Huwag tayo maging maliit na bato na nawawala sa parang, o batong hinahagis sa gusaling itinatayo natin. Maging bahagi tayo sa panaginip ng bansa na magtatayo ng malakas na demokratikong Republika ng Pilipinas (Let us not be meaningless and useless pebbles. Let us be part of our collective dream to build a strong democratic Philippine Republic),” she exhorted.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: September 29, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030150852/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept29.htm>

The President's Day: September 30, 2002

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- **GMA confers Chino Roces freedom award on Doronila, F.L.A.G., Fr. Intengan, businessman Luz**
- **Ermita urges stronger village intelligence network**
- **GMA seeks PAGC report on Tagud's raps within 60 days**
- **Save on gas, energy dep't urges motorists**
- **Bunye reiterates Malacañang commitment to press freedom**
- **GMA to preside over joint NSC-Cabinet meet Tuesday**
- **Let's uphold the law in Jimenez case, says Palace**

GMA confers Chino Roces freedom award on Doronila, F.L.A.G., Fr. Intengan, businessman Luz

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today conferred the 2002 Chino Roces Freedom Award on journalist Amando Doronila, the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG), Fr. Romeo Intengan, S.J. and businessman Guillermo Luz.

Government officials, members of the civil society as well as relatives, friends and associates of the late publisher and street parliamentarian attended the ceremonies held at the Manila Polo Club.

The occasion coincided with the 14th death anniversary of Joaquin P. Roces, whom everybody called Chino or Tatay.

In presenting the award to Doronila, the Joaquin "Chino" P. Roces Foundation cited the editor-columnist for the high professional integrity and keen sense of perspective he brings to the discussion of public issues.

Doronila, who began his career in journalism in 1953, rising from reporter to columnist to editor, was detained during martial law for his strongly independent-minded writings.

He has also published several papers and books, including the current bestseller, "The Fall of Joseph Estrada."

FLAG was cited for championing the legal cause of the poor and the oppressed with revolutionary zeal and courage.

Founded by the late Senator Jose W. Diokno, FLAG "has been a quiet yet purposeful, vigorous and ceaseless revolution, one committed to the empowerment of the poor and the oppressed so that they may participate more meaningfully in the decisions and policies that affect their lives."

Atty. Pablito Sanidad received the award in behalf of FLAG.

Fr. Romeo Intengan was cited for dedicating his life to the fight for freedom, human rights and social justice.

Fr. Intengan, who is a surgeon, teacher, and democracy activist, was cited for living a mission of life, faith and social reform.

The priest faced his most dangerous challenge as a leader of the underground Philippine Democratic Socialist Party (PDSP) during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos.

He is now the Philippine Provincial Superior of the Society of Jesus. He is also a member of the Constitutional Transition Committee, organized originally to see to the smooth transfer of the presidency from Joseph Estrada to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

For his part, Guillermo Luz was cited for enlisting the business community in the cause of socio-political reform.

For over 15 year now, Luz has been speaking for the business community as executive director of the Makati Business Club and has taken his espousal further by undertaking a lead role as secretary general of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL).

The board of trustees of the Roces Foundation is composed of Chairman Jorge Sarmiento, Vice Chairman Fernando Peña, and members Luz Lopez, Jose Ricarfort, Salvador Rivera, Chit Roces, Edgardo Roces, Regina R. Paterno, Simon R. Paterno, Firmo Tripon and Jose Velez.

The foundation's Freedom Award honors extraordinary achievements in freedom and active citizenship, two causes for which Roces fought with courage and commitment.

Ermita urges stronger village intelligence network

Malacañang today stressed the importance of a strong and effective Barangay Intelligence Network in maintaining law and order and ensuring security, particularly in far-flung villages susceptible to terrorist attacks.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said there was a need for the people to bond together, pool their resources and fully support the government's bid to crush terrorists and criminals.

In a radio interview, Ermita said the people's cooperation — especially in relaying reliable information on the movements of terrorist, criminal and rebel groups to the military and the police — was a must to ensure local and national security.

He said Congress had allotted funds to firm up the Barangay Intelligence Network for counter-insurgency operations.

Ermita was reacting to last Saturday's attack on a police station in Lopez, Quezon by elements of the communist New People's Army, which was classified by the United States as a global terrorist organization.

He said the peace talks with the National Democratic Front (NDF), political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), remained suspended.

But the government panel, he said, completed a draft of the final peace agreement that would be presented to the NDF panel at the possible resumption of the talks.

The draft had twice passed the Cabinet Oversight Committee. Hopefully, it would pass the muster of the committee that would review the draft again this week, Ermita added.

He hinted that the recent attacks of the NPA, the armed component of the CPP, could be a strategy to strengthen their position when the peace talks continue.

He, however, hoped that the government and the NDF would finally agree to implementing a peace process.

"Ang mahalaga ay magkaroon tayo ng kasunduan upang sa ganoon ay matigil na ang pamiminsala sa mga kabarangay natin (We hope for the resolution of this issue so that terrorism in the villages would stop)," he said.

GMA seeks PAGC report on Tagud's raps within 60 days

The Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) is expected to submit not later than 60 days its report on the claims of Public Estates Authority (PEA) Director Sulficio Tagud, Jr. that the construction of the Central Boulevard in the reclamation area in Pasay City was overpriced.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye today said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had directed PAGC Chairman Dario Rama “to expedite the investigation of Director Tagud’s allegations and to submit his recommendations not later than 60 days.”

In his regular media briefing, Bunye also shrugged off side issues being raised on the concern, saying what was vital was to determine if the cost of building the road was more than what was required.

He further said that there was little need to check on the lifestyle of PEA officials as all government workers, from top to bottom, are expected to live within their means.

Earlier, he noted that the P1-billion loan the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) granted to PEA involved the “construction and completion of horizontal development of the Manila Bay reclamation project, including PEA properties in Central Business Park 1-A.”

He said Tagud’s allegation covered only a part of this development effort, stressing that the GSIS-PEA loan agreement was “separate and distinct from the construction arrangements between PEA and contractor JD Legaspi Construction.”

He added that the GSIS-PEA loan agreement went through established procedures and were favorably endorsed by the National Economic and Development Authority, Department of Finance and the Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Legal Affairs.

PEA general manager Benjamin Cariño also denied Tagud’s claims, saying that there had been no overprice and no corrupt transactions related to the road construction.

“Our arithmetic and ethics are clear and above board,” Cariño said.

Meanwhile, Bunye said that Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon A. Datumanong, lately named as Officer-in-Charge of PEA, had “exhorted PEA employees to extend their full cooperation to the PAGC.”

That is if “they are asked to testify before the probe body” looking into the Tagud allegations, he said.

Save on gas, energy dep’t urges motorists

The Department of Energy (DOE) today urged consumers, particularly motorists, to start conserving fuel in the face of a looming crisis in the Middle East that could affect the world’s price and supply of oil.

In a press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, Energy Secretary Vicente S. Perez appealed to consumers to adopt prudent measures to conserve fuel.

During the press briefing, Perez spelled out the features of the DOE’s fuel conservation campaign dubbed as “*Sa Bawat Patak na Matitipid Mo, Kalusugan, Kapaligiran, Kaunlaran Katumbas Nito.*”

Perez said consumers are the “best gas saving device” because their driving technique is the most important single element in determining the fuel economy of any motor vehicle.

He said that studies made by the department showed that a careful driver can get a least 30 percent more mileage than the average driver, and 50 percent more than a wasteful driver.

The government has put in place the necessary measures to address the possible impact of the US-Iraq conflict. “It is only proper for the public to also do their share including simple acts of conserving gas,” Perez said.

According to Perez, the country's dependence on oil as fuel has been significantly reduced over the years.

In particular, he said, imported oil's contribution to the power generation mix has substantially dropped to only 11.75 percent as of July this year.

"But oil is still an important energy source especially in the transportation sector. Thus, there is a need for the public to be more prudent and judicious in oil consumption," Perez said.

Perez said that the government needs the cooperation of everyone in the judicious use of energy. "Saving for the worst of times is one the best values Filipinos have," he said.

Perez said the government and the public should prepare for any eventuality in case a full-blown crisis erupts between the US and Iraq.

During her inspection visit to the Malampaya offshore platform in Palawan over the weekend, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said that the Philippines is prepared for any contingency that may arise in the case of a Middle East crisis brought about by the refusal of Iraq to comply with UN Security Council resolutions,

The President said we are in a better situation than during the previous Middle East crisis but nonetheless, we must still plan ahead because we are still dependent on imported oil for transportation needs.

The DOE's gas saving tips for motorists are as follows:

- Fill your fuel tank in the morning when it is cool. Never fill your tank to the brim to allow for fuel expansion.
- Avoid fuel spillage. Keep the fuel cap tightened to prevent fuel loss through evaporation or spillage.
- Minimize vehicle loads. Transporting unnecessary weight in your car will cause it to add 10 percent to fuel consumption.
- Follow a regular preventive maintenance program to prevent major breakdowns. A poorly maintained car can use up to 25 percent more fuel.
- Drive off immediately after starting but at a low speed. The engine will warm up faster and lubricate better.
- Do not let the motor idle for unnecessarily long periods. Turn off the engine whenever possible. It takes less gasoline to restart the car than to let it idle for prolonged periods. Generally, there is no need to press the accelerator down to restart a warm engine.
- The most efficient speed is between 75 and 90 kilometers per hour (kph). On a highway, maintain a steady speed. Tests conducted have indicated a 25 percent improvement in fuel economy when speeds are reduced from 120 to 80 kph.

Perez also urged motorists to plan their trips or driving in order to save on gas.

Perez also said motorists should avoid "jack-rabbit" starts, adding that gradual acceleration in driving can save as much as one kilometer per liter compared to rapid acceleration.

Bunye reiterates Malacañang commitment to press freedom

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye today denounced the reported confiscation of tabloid newspapers, saying the government did not authorize this.

"Malacañang is committed to press freedom and will neither allow nor tolerate any attack on such freedom," Bunye said in his regular press briefing.

Bunye stressed the reported seizure "is not an authorized action."

“If the alleged victims want to press charges against those responsible, by all means, they should do so,” Bunye added.

Reports said still unidentified individuals have seized numerous issues of the daily tabloid *Banat*.

Meanwhile, Bunye stressed anew that there is no Executive Order purportedly signed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordering the abolition of the National Printing Office (NPO).

“What surprises us is that despite several clarifications, the reports persist that there is an executive order decreeing the abolition, when in fact, there is no such executive order,” Bunye said.

“In other words, somebody is spreading a false information that this is now a *fait accompli*, an executive order has been signed decreeing abolition of such office,” Bunye added.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin earlier said that the Presidential Commission on Effective Governance, which she chairs, is undertaking a review on the viability and operations of the NPO.

Boncodin also said that she has discussed with Bunye ways on how to make the operations of the NPO more efficient.

GMA to preside over joint NSC-Cabinet meet Tuesday

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will preside over the first Joint National Security Council (NSC)-Cabinet meeting on Tuesday (October 1) to discuss the implications to the country of a possible outbreak of conflict in the Middle East.

National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said the meeting would also likely take up the positive measures the government has drawn and would implement in such a crisis situation.

The President assured the people last Thursday (Sept. 26) in General Luna town, Surigao del Norte that the government had been preparing measures to counter problems the country might face once the United States carries out its threat to attack Iraq which continued to shrug off resolutions of the United Nations.

Golez said the joint NSC-Cabinet meeting at Malacañang would be attended by other members of the NSC, to include former Presidents Fidel Ramos and Corazon Aquino, House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Senate President Franklin Drilon and chairmen of the congressional committees on foreign relations, defense and security and public order.

He said the NSC would present a security overview of the Iraqi situation.

Other discussions would revolve on the country’s foreign policy and the contingency plans being laid out for overseas Filipino workers (OFW) in at least nine countries in and around Iraq by the Department of Foreign Affairs; the situation’s economic impact, by the National Economic and Development Authority; and the oil supply/price contingency plans, by the Department of Energy.

“We are preparing for a possible Iraqi war,” the President said in a luncheon meeting with the media in Surigao del Norte.

As this developed, Middle East Preparedness Team leader retired Gen. Roy Cimatu had been regularly in touch with the President, briefing her on recent developments on the Iraqi crisis.

Among the plans for OFWs is their evacuation to safer grounds in countries around Iraq, Cimatu earlier said.

This afternoon, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez briefed Malacañang reporters on the country's oil inventory that has increased to 62 days.

The National Security Council membership includes Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr., Senate President Drilon, Speaker de Venecia, the Senate President Pro-Tempore, three Deputy Speakers, Senate Majority Leader, House Majority Leader, Senate Minority Leader, House Minority Leader;

Executive Secretary Alberto G. Romulo, National Security Director General Roilo Golez, Secretary of National Defense Angelo T. Reyes, Secretary of Justice Hernando B. Perez, Secretary of Interior and Local Government Jose D. Lina, Jr., and Secretary of Labor and Employment Patricia A. Sto. Tomas.

Others who will advise and assist in the deliberations are the NICA Director General, AFP Chief of Staff, Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, National Bureau of Investigation director and Governor of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Let's uphold the law in Jimenez case, says Palace

Malacañang today called on all sectors to uphold the law in the case involving Manila Congressman Mark Jimenez who is facing extradition proceedings in connection with his alleged crimes in the United States.

"It would be to everybody's interest if we were simply to uphold the rule of law. No more, no less," Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said in his regular press briefing this afternoon.

In reacting to reports that the House of Representatives has taken steps to thwart the execution of the decision of the Supreme Court on the case, Bunye said that the law should "apply uniformly to everyone, regardless of his station in life."

Earlier, Bunye said that Congressman Jimenez could seek a reconsideration of the high court's en banc ruling revoking the bail granted to him by a Manila Regional Trial Court.

Jimenez was given 15 days to file a motion for reconsideration of the SC's decision.

Bunye said that the extradition treaty between the US and the Philippines has the force and effect of law. "This must be upheld," he said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: September 30, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030150541/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/sept30.htm>

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- **Gov't has taken concrete steps to promote good governance, says NEDA**
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Gov't has taken concrete steps to promote good governance, says NEDA

The Macapagal-Arroyo administration has taken concrete steps to promote good governance so that the Philippines can catch up with its neighbors in economic growth, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

In a report to Malacañang, NEDA Acting Director General Raphael P.M. Lotilla said the government has taken full cognizance of the damaging effects of corruption on economic growth and public perception of the government's will and capacity to serve the people, particularly the poor.

"It is precisely for this reason that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration made good governance one of the banner programs under its Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) and even highlighted anew its importance in the recent State of the Nation Address (SONA)," Lotilla said.

Lotilla was reacting to an analysis by Peter Wallace of the Economist Intelligence Unit, which described the Philippines as having lagged behind most countries in the region in economic development during the past 25 years.

According to Wallace, the Philippines posted only an average of 3.1 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth yearly, which is half or less the rates achieved by other Asian nations.

Lotilla said that progress has been made in eradicating graft in public offices but at a pace that is in accordance with the government's absorptive capacity for change.

"The government is now gearing to take a more aggressive stance in implementing the more difficult but necessary reforms," Lotilla said.

He said this was, in fact, the central message conveyed by Wallace in his article although Wallace stated it in a less optimistic manner. Lotilla added that in his article, Wallace focused more on the problems at hand and missed out the more important reforms that have already been put into operation.

The NEDA official said that key oversight agencies are now involved in planning, programming, budgeting and auditing to enhance the quality of governance at the national and local levels.

Lotilla said that through the development of the electronic procurement system (EPS), there had been substantial gains in expenditure management in key government agencies.

"The program is actually an offshoot of the recognition by government of the pervading dysfunctions in the procurement of goods and services such as graft and corruption and unnecessary high transaction costs for the government and the private sector," Lotilla said.

Lotilla said that in order to simplify complex government accounting system, the Commission on Audit (COA) has already pilot-tested the new government accounting system to ensure correctness, completeness and timeliness in record-keeping of government financial transactions.

He said that the COA has also started enforcing a simpler auditing code in preparation for the full computerization of the national audit system.

Another institutional reform cited by Lotilla was the creation of the Presidential Commission of Effective Governance (PCEG) whose task is to streamline the operations of offices under the Office of the President.

But more importantly, Lotilla said, the administration has encouraged the civil society and the private sector to take an active role in carrying out oversight functions to further improve governance policies and processes.

“Such constructive partnership plays a pivotal role in enhancing transparency in the conduct of government activities and in improving public awareness,” Lotilla said.

Message from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

We reviewed today with members of the National Security Council a whole range of contingency measures designed to ensure the safety of our compatriots in the Middle East and to ensure that we have a steady supply of oil in the event war erupts.

Based on an evaluation of various scenarios, we believe there is no cause for undue alarm.

The Cimatu Team is now in the Middle East and preliminary reports indicate that a possible relocation to safer grounds, not a massive evacuation, would be sufficient. Nonetheless, we will be prepared to process our countrymen who would wish to return home.

We are exploring ways and means to increase our in-country inventory of fuel, including the activation and utilization of additional storage facilities. Also, we are looking at non-traditional supplemental sources of oil to augment our supply. Likewise, we are seeking the cooperation of the transport sector in controlling fare rates.

We reiterate our call for adoption of energy saving measures. It is always best to conserve our precious fuel, crisis or no crisis.

Death Penalty

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo confirmed the announcement yesterday of Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople that the execution of death convicts would be suspended to allow Congress to finish its review of pending resolutions asking for the abolition of death penalty.

GMA, NSC, Cabinet discuss most-likely scenarios in Mideast crisis, plot contingency measures

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presided over a joint meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) and the Cabinet to discuss the most-likely scenarios of a Middle East crisis and a whole range of contingency measures the government has set in motion and will implement in the event of a United States-Iraq flare-up.

National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez, in a press briefing after the joint NSC-Cabinet meeting, said the consensus is “that it is very unlikely that there is going to be an actual conflict in the months of October and November.”

“If the conflict arises, it is expected that the war is going to be very swift because of the use of high technology and because of the expected use of overwhelming force by the United States,” Golez said.

Aside from the Cabinet members, among those present during the joint meeting NSC-Cabinet were Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr., Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Senators Robert Barbers, Ramon Magsaysay, Jr., Manuel Villar and Loren Legarda-Leviste; Congressmen Florencio Abad, Raul Gonzales, Gerry Salapuddin, Francis Escudero, Agapito Aquino, Apolinario Lozada; Philippine National Police chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. and former President Corazon C. Aquino.

As far as Filipino overseas workers are concerned, Golez said the situation is not as serious as in 1991 because there are only about 180 Filipinos living in and around Baghdad, the Iraqi capital.

“We are not talking of a massive evacuation like what happened in 1991 and it is very unlikely that the conflict will spread to neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia where we have close to a million Filipinos,” Golez said.

Earlier during the joint NSC-Cabinet meeting, the President said that if families in the Philippines insist that their loved ones come home and if the workers agree, “then they will be brought back here.”

Golez said the government is not contemplating a general evacuation of Filipinos in the Middle East but only of “relocation” as contained in the contingency plans detailed by the Department of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the other concerned departments.

Golez also said that the government is asking private oil companies to increase their individual in-country reserves to 40 days instead of the usual 12 days.

The President said the government is also looking at non-traditional supplemental sources of oil to augment the oil supply. “Likewise, we are seeking the cooperation of the transport sector in controlling fare rates.”

The President also reiterated the government’s call for adoption of energy-saving measures. “It is always best to conserve our previous fuel, crisis or no crisis,” she said.

The National Security Council was established principally to address national security concerns, resolve national security issues, formulate policies, and oversee the maintenance of national security.

The NSC Proper is the principal advisory body to the President on the proper coordination and integration of plans and policies affecting national security.

The NSC is chaired by the President, with the following as members: Vice President; Senate President; House Speaker; Senate President Pro Tempore; Deputy Speakers for Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao; the Senate and House Majority Leaders; the Senate and House Minority Leaders; the chairpersons of the Senate and House committees on foreign relations; the chairperson of the Senate committee on national defense and security; the chairperson of the Senate committee on public order and illegal drugs; the chairperson of the House committee on national defense; the chairperson of the House committee on public order and security; the Executive Secretary; the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, National Defense, Interior and Local Government, and Labor and Employment; the National Security Adviser; the Chief Presidential Legal Adviser; Presidential Spokesperson; the head of the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office; past presidents of the Republic; and other government officials and private citizens whom the President may designate from time to time.

ARAMCO assures Philippines of oil supply – Cimat

The Saudi Arabian Oil Company (ARAMCO), the world’s No. 1 oil producer, has assured the Philippines of continued oil supply in the event hostilities break out between the United States and Iraq.

This was disclosed today by retired Gen. Roy A. Cimat, head of the Middle East Crisis Preparedness Team (MEPT), who is now in Saudi Arabia on orders of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to make sure that Filipino workers in Arab countries are safe, and oil supply continues to flow to the country.

In a telephone interview, Cimatú said he was assured by ARAMCO officials during their talks Monday that they would provide the Philippines with oil even if war breaks out between Iraq and the United States.

Cimatú said he went Monday to the eastern sector of Saudi Arabia, the most affected because it is near the border of Iraq, where there are thousands of Filipino workers.

He said he was briefed on the contingency plans now in place in case war breaks out.

“The contingency plan is okay,” Cimatú said.

There are many Filipinos working with ARAMCO and the oil firm has prepared a contingency plan, he said.

“There is no need for evacuation at the moment, but we will relocate our countrymen in the event of war,” said Cimatú, a retired four-star general.

ARAMCO supplies 11% of the world’s oil demand. The firm controls proven oil reserves of about 264.3 billion barrels or more than 25% of the world’s total and 12 times that of the US reserves.

It extracts eight million barrels a day and sells them around the world.

The Philippines has been building up its oil buffer stocks as tension in the Middle East grows by the day.

Energy Secretary Vicente Perez has required local oil firms to maintain a higher inventory in the country.

The Philippines gets 32 percent of its oil requirements from Saudi Arabia.

Other countries supplying oil to the Philippines are Iran (26 percent), United Arab Emirates (20 percent), Oman (9 percent), Qatar (7 percent), and the rest from Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia.

Over the years, the Philippines has gradually cut down its dependence on oil for its power needs.

From a high of 60 percent ten years ago, it is now 11.75 percent today.

But the country remains heavily dependent on oil for transportation and cooking needs.

With the opening of the Malampaya in Palawan recently, the country has further cut down the importation of gas.

Cimatú said he will go to Kuwait Wednesday to visit Filipino workers in the oil-rich country.

Asked if he was proceeding to Iraq, Cimatú said he would if he could get a visa in Jordan.

Attacks show NPA is indeed a terrorist group, says Golez

National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez today said the attacks of the New People’s Army (NPA) at police detachments last week in Lopez, Quezon and now, in Bulacan only show that the NPA is indeed a terrorist group.

In a press briefing in Malacañang after the National Security Council meeting convened by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Golez said that police stations attacked by the NPA are civilian targets.

“Let me stress that a police station is a civilian target; therefore, under the international definition of terrorism, an attack on the police station may be considered a terrorist attack,” Golez said.

Golez said that the successive attacks of the NPA against police outposts are a reaction to their being classified as terrorists.

He noted that the NPA has been dealt a very serious psychological and moral blow when the United States declared it a foreign terrorist organization.

“All of a sudden, they lost their so-called moral ascendancy and this is backed by terrorist attacks,” Golez said, enumerating the liquidation of some officials that included a congressman, local executives and barangay officials.

Golez also said the attacks are NPA’s response to the fact that they have been losing militarily after the President declared an intensive campaign in terms of military and socio-economic sanctions against them early this year.

“They lost a lot of ground. They lost some barangays where they used to have their presence felt,” he said.

In terms of manpower, the NPA lost a total of 539 members by apprehension and surrender this year, a considerable increase from 420 members in 2001, Golez said.

Golez also said NPA members are being killed by as much as 30 percent more compared to the combined casualties of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police and the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU).

He further noted that the AFP is ahead three to one in terms of firearms ratio with the NPA.

“These are the very clear scores and now, what the CPP-NPA is doing is trying to reverse the actual situation by portraying that they’re very active,” Golez said.

“But they’re not going to be able to sustain this. They cannot move around in forces of 50, for example, and repeat what they did in broad daylight in Lopez, Quezon,” Golez added.

Earlier, the NPA Apolonia Mendoza Command raided the police station in Lopez, resulting in the death of the police chief and a junior officer.

The recent attack came amid efforts to resume peace talks between the rebels and the government that have been stalled for a year.

Golez said the while the NPA is engaging in terrorist acts, the government policy is still “to keep the doors open” for peace negotiations with the rebel group.

GMA orders creation of ACCs in Rizal towns

ANTIPOLO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the provincial government of Rizal and the Philippine National Police (PNP) to organize an Area Coordinating Center (ACC) in all the towns of the province to strengthen the government’s campaign against crime and terrorism.

In her impromptu speech, the President directed Rizal Governor Rebecca “Nini” Ynares and Rizal Police Provincial Office (RPPO) Director Senior Superintendent Carlito Dimaano to immediately organize the ACCs in the province.

The President explained that the ACC is similar to the Peace and Order Council (POC) which conducts a meeting regularly but the difference is that the ACC operates for 24 hours and is ready to respond to any problem arising in a particular area.

The President said that officers and members of ACCs should be local government executives in the different barangays and municipalities in Rizal.

According to President, the ACC has been very successful in Mindanao, particularly in Zamboanga City and Maguindanao.

The President motored here before proceeding to Clark Air Base in Pampanga for a two-day Cabinet workshop. She personally presented to media the two kidnapers of German national Fritz Walter Lange.

The President lauded the Teresa, Rizal Police Force for the arrest of the two abductors of Lange.

“Congratulations and keep up the good work,” the President told Teresa Police Chief Senior Inspector Jesus Fetalino.

The President identified the suspects as Reynaldo Ablay, leader of the Ablay kidnap-for-ransom gang, and Ronaldo Enteroso, both residents of Antipolo City.

The President also said that she was very saddened about the death of Chief of Police of Lopez, Quezon–Superintendent Cesar Santander, who was killed during the New People’s Army (NPA) attack on the municipal police station.

She also announced that she already asked her husband, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, to finance the education of the five children of Superintendent Santander.

Among those present in the presentation of the kidnap suspects were Governor Ynares, PNP Chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., Police Regional Office CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) Regional Director Chief Superintendent Enrique Galang Jr., and Senior Superintendent Dimaano.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: October 1, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030063944/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct01.htm>

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- **Palace sees no massive evacuation of Filipinos from the Middle East if war breaks out in Iraq**
- **Book on Culture and Terrorism launched in Malacañang**
- **Gov't ready to resume talks with the CPP-NPA if they stop terrorist attacks — Golez**
- **More Filipino returnees have rejoined employers in Sabah, says DOLE**
- **Gov't has no intention of taking over operations of NAIA terminal 3 — Palace**
- **GMA bestows highest awards in gov't service to 22 state workers**
- **Suspension of lethal injections to allow Congress to decide on death penalty law — Palace**

Palace sees no massive evacuation of Filipinos from the Middle East if war breaks out in Iraq

Malacañang today said that the government is prepared for any contingency in the Middle East although it believes that the war, if ever, would be limited to Iraq and, therefore, there will be no massive evacuation of Filipino workers from the region.

In an interview this morning, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez said that in its meeting Tuesday, the National Security Council (NSC) agreed that the impending conflict in the Middle East would not be as grave as the Gulf War in 1991.

“Ang tingin namin ay ito ay magiging mabilis at concentrated lamang sa may Iraq area. Kaya hindi masyadong maapektuhan iyong mga kababayan natin doon sa ibat-ibang lugar sa Middle East (What we foresee is a short war which would be concentrated in the Iraq area. That is why we don't believe that our countrymen in the surrounding countries in the Middle East would be affected so much),” Golez said.

Golez recalled that in the 1991 Gulf War, there were some 27,000 Filipino workers who have to be evacuated from Iraq and Kuwait. Now, there are only about a hundred Filipinos in Iraq that would be moved out in case of war, he added.

He also said that based on their assessment of the situation, it would be unlikely for the United States to attack Iraq this month or in November.

“But after November, we really don't know what will happen,” Golez added.

When asked what will be the stand of the Philippines in the event that the US would attack Iraq unilaterally or without the go-signal from the United Nations, Golez said that the NSC would meet again to discuss such development before coming up with the proper response.

Golez said that the NSC has affirmed the policy enunciated by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that the Philippines would continue to extend security, humanitarian and political support to the US in the fight against global terrorism “provided these will uphold the country's national interest.”

Book on Culture and Terrorism launched in Malacañang

A book entitled, “Culture and Terrorism,” was launched yesterday in simple ceremonies at the New Executive Building in Malacañang.

Sponsored by Presidential Adviser on Culture Leticia Ramos Shahani, “Culture and Terrorism” is a compilation of lectures and papers delivered during a two-day round table discussion on the relationship between culture and terrorism.

The round table was attended by some of the country's leading scholars and intellectuals that included Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus, Dr. Prospero Covar, Congressman Nereus Acosta, Dr. Elena Mirano, Dr. Melba Maggay, Dr. Bienvenido Lumbea, Dr. Patricia Licuanan, Dr. Emily Marahombsar, Datu Michael Mastura, Col. Victor Corpuz and Ms. Narda Camacho.

In her remarks, Shahani underscored the importance of the book, saying that Filipinos must train their minds and hearts to prefer peace over violence.

She also expressed the view that in certain situations force will have to be met with force because in the long run the military and police solutions to solve crime and terrorism are inadequate.

During the roundtable, the panelists recognized the importance of culture – that is, beliefs, values and institutions of society — in determining the prevalence of violence, conflict and terrorism in a community.

They also noted that indigenous pre-colonial Filipino culture was generally peaceful and non-violent because there was a balance between the basic needs and access to adequate resources during the early period of the country's history.

The group recommended that all Filipinos should learn to respect the rights of other ethnic Filipinos and return to the original Filipino values of peace, non-violence and tolerance while at the same time adjusting to the modern world.

Shahani said the panelists also recommended that Filipino textbooks should be thoroughly examined to ensure that there are no misrepresentations in them of the many ethno-linguistic groups in the country.

Gov't ready to resume talks with the CPP-NPA if they stop terrorist attacks — Golez

National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez today said that the government is still willing to resume negotiations with the communists if they would stop their terroristic attacks against civilian targets.

In a radio interview, Golez said that formal talks with the foreign-based leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) were called off last year after NPA cadres executed innocent civilians that included two congressmen and two mayors in the different parts of the country,

“Kaya yon ang dahilan kung bakit naudlot yong usapin. Ngayon ito na naman, mga civilian targets na naman and sinasalanta nila (That's the reason why we have to scrap the talks. Now, they are at it again, targeting civilians),” Golez said.

Golez was referring to the NPA attack last Friday of the police station in Lopez, Quezon killing the police chief and another policeman.

On Monday, another band of NPA guerrillas attacked the outpost of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in barangay Sampaloc, San Rafael, Bulacan but this time they were repulsed by the police.

According to Golez, the CPP-NPA is now engaged in a series of attacks to show that it still has some strength and, secondly, this could be their bargaining chip before going back to the negotiating table with the government.

He said that the CPP-NPA has suffered serious losses as a result of the massive military and socio-economic offensive embarked by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Golez said that from January to September this year alone, the NPA lost a total of 593 of its armed elements, 121 of them captured and 472 surrendered.

Compared to the same period last year, the CPP-NPA only lost some 420 guerrillas, indicating that they suffered a serious blow this year, Golez said.

The classification by the United States and other Western countries of the NPA as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) also dealt a serious psychological moral blow to the communists, Golez said.

More Filipino returnees have rejoined employers in Sabah, says DOLE

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said today that more and more Filipino returnees from Malaysia have rejoined their employers in Sabah after they were able to secure the necessary documents and working permits.

In a report, DOLE Regional Director Melencio Balanag, who is based in Zamboanga City, said that of the total deportees who arrived here during the past few days, about 14 percent have already been sent back to their employers in Sabah.

He said that today, another batch of 116 returnees left from Zamboanga City on board a commercial vessel to rejoin their former employers in Sabah. On Friday, another batch of returnees will leave for Sabah, Balanag said.

Balanag said that earlier, close to 700 returnees have been reunited with their employers in Malaysia.

“We are happy to be able to send back to Malaysia these people so that they can start earning their living again,” Regional Director Renegold Macarulay of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) said.

Macarulay said the latest batch of 116 repatriates were issued their complete travel documents, including their working permits, through the One-Stop-Shop Crisis Management Office for Sabah Returnees set up in Zamboanga City.

Balanag said that the DOLE is also assisting displaced returnees who do not have employers in Malaysia find jobs in Zamboanga City.

“We made references to different factories in the city. Some of them are already working as construction workers while others are in the canning factories,” Balanag said.

But this is only temporary employment since the returnees have expressed their desire to go back to Malaysia pending the release of the necessary travel documents and working permits, Balanag said.

Gov’t has no intention of taking over operations of NAIA terminal 3 — Palace

Malacañang today said that the government has no intention of taking over the operations and management of the Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) from the Philippine International Air Terminals Co (PIATCO).

In a phone patch interview this afternoon from Clark Special Economic Zone in Angeles City, Pampanga, Press Secretary Ignacio “Toting” Bunye said that what President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is interested in is to review certain onerous provisions of the flawed contract with PIATCO.

“Ngayon kung sa kanila nanggaling itong signals na ito, palagay ko mas mapapabilis ma-normalize ang operations. (Now, if all these signals come from the PIATCO management, I believe its normal operations will be fast-tracked),” Bunye said.

Bunye said that even pending the review or the termination of the review of the various contract provisions, PIATCO operations could have a soft opening by December this year.

Asked on the Palace reaction on the separate investigation being conducted by the civil society group on the President Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard project which could include some Malacañang officials, Bunye said the President's position on the issue has been very clear.

The President said the parties who are probably involved should be exposed, and if warranted, they should be prosecuted, Bunye said.

GMA bestows highest awards in gov't service to 22 state workers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today conferred the two highest awards in the civil service to 22 exceptional state workers in simple ceremonies held at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang.

In her remarks during the awarding ceremonies, the President congratulated the 22 awardees for "consistently rendering their duties with the highest integrity, morality and decency."

"And those of you who are here today have passed that test. May you continue to serve as models and trailblazers for the rest of the bureaucracy, for the rest of the government," the President said.

The President also called on civil servants to focus on issues rather than on personalities. "Let us focus on commonalities rather than on controversies. Let us focus on a broad front of service rather than on parochial interests," she said.

It is important for government workers to set a good example to the people that they are serving, the President said.

"I am glad that among the criteria used in the selection of the awardees is simple living or simple lifestyle, because we must have a dignified lifestyle," the President said.

Twelve government employees, including a barangay tanod and a barangay captain, received the Presidential Lingkod Bayan Award for outstanding work performance while 10 others, including a laborer, were conferred the Dangal ng Bayan Award for exemplary ethical behavior in public service.

Culminating the 102nd anniversary celebration of the Philippine Civil Service, the conferment of these prestigious awards formed part of the government-wide Honor Awards Program administered by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) primarily aimed at recognizing the "remarkable contributions and achievements of public servants."

The CSC conducts an annual nationwide search for outstanding public officials and employees.

Each of the awardees received P100,000 cash and will be automatically promoted to the next higher position. The CSC said if no position is readily available, the awardees will instead be given a salary increase equivalent to the next higher position.

The Lingkod Bayan awardees also received a gold gilded medallion and a plaque with the citation of the President.

Awardees of the Dangal ng Bayan Award, on the other hand, were given trophies designed by National Artist for Sculpture Napoleon Abueva.

This year's committee on Lingkod Bayan Awards was composed of CSC Commissioner J. Waldemar Valmores; Undersecretary and Acting Chief of Presidential Protocol Cecilia Rebong; Philippine Jaycees National Senior Executive Vice President Ismael Penado; Lawyer Katrina Legarda; and Ateneo School of Government Dean Henedina Abad.

The committee on Dangal ng Bayan Award had CSC Chairman Karina Constatino-David and Acting Ombudsman Margarito Gervacio, Jr. as co-chairmen, with Commission on Audit Chairman Guillermo Carague, Dr. Bella Villanueva of the University of the Philippines, and Amelia Anonuevo of the National Housing Authority, as members.

One of this year's recipients of the Lingkod Bayan Award is a Barangay Tanod Joaquin Morga of Barangay Telbang in Alaminos, Pangasinan. Morga was responsible from the conversion of the idle Bolo park into manmade fishponds which provided viable livelihood means to fisher folk in the barangay.

Chairman Aurelio Quilo of Barangay Guinicolalay in Dinas, Zamboanga del Sur was recognized for effectively sustaining peace and order, and causing the construction of several infrastructure projects in his barangay.

Three teachers graced this year's honor roll for Lingkod Bayan award: Cesar Acebedo, an elementary grade teacher from Aparri, Cagayan for his highly innovative teaching approaches; Evelyn Caja, a special education teacher from Ramon Magsaysay High School in Manila; and Carmen Salazar, a master teacher of the Bacolod City SPED Center.

Postman Romeo Pontipetra of Cagayan de Oro City was also honored for his exceptional integrity in handling more than P7 million worth of money order forms and stamps without a single centavo short.

A nurse of the Luis Hora Memorial Regional Hospital in Bauko, Mountain Province, Elena Tampican, was also cited for her unequaled dedication and zeal in rendering health services regardless of her patients' culture and social status, even giving priority to the poor, underprivileged and indigenous people of Mt. Province.

For his trailblazing researches on electricity that bore great national impact, Danilo Falgui also got Lingkod Bayan citation. Falgui, an assistant professor of Kalinga-Apayao State College, has the following notable projects: "Sito Electrification Program" that greatly helped in bringing light into the homes of hundreds of Filipino families especially the poor in remote communities.

For being the brains behind the Environment Management Research and Center for Agricultural Resources and Extension Services which showcases a comprehensive and integrated farming system Edgar Ricamonte also got a Lingkod Bayan award. As president of Quirino State College in Diffun, Quirino, Ricamonte unwaveringly pursued the improvement of the college's welfare and advanced the quality of education in the province.

Chancellor Alfredo Ramirez of the University of the Philippines-Manila is recognized for his dedication in alleviating the condition of public health care in the country. His remarkable contributions in this field included the establishment of the first Burn Unit at the Philippine General Hospital which significantly helped in the rehabilitation of burn patients and reduced mortality and morbidity rates.

From the judiciary, Judges Maria Cristina Cornejo and Clifton Ganay also received the Lingkod Bayan awards. Judge Cornejo presides over Regional Trial Court Branch 147 in Makati City and is cited for exemplifying the art of detaching natural bias in resolving cases by holding her judgment in abeyance until she was weighed the arguments raised by the parties.

Judge Ganay is an executive judge of Regional Trial Court Branch 31 in Agoo, La Union and was conferred the Lingkod Bayan award for his judicious resolution of cases, setting a national record of having only six pending cases at the end of 2001.

This year's Dangal ng Bayan awardees include:

Antonio Fabre, who despite his physical handicap has effectively enforced the Coconut Preservation Act of 1995 in the entire province of Bohol. A lowly laborer from the Philippine Coconut Authority in Tagbilaran City, Fabre was also instrumental in the mass production of a certain kind of fungus that resulted in higher coconut productivity.

Jose Benedicto Bautista, a postmaster of San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, for accommodating more mailers during lunch breaks and delivering mail for himself in place of absent letter carriers to prevent delay in postal services.

Niday Baybay of the Department of Labor and Employment in CARAGA who is recognized for her motivated efforts in pursuing illegal recruiters, resulting in the arrest and prosecution of 21 of them and saving some 200 would-be victims.

Ninie del Rosario, a master teacher in Sta. Ana Central Elementary School in Davao City, for developing science and technology instructional method which greatly eased student's learning of vague concepts, providing her co-teachers as well with knowledge and training on improving science teaching methods.

Estelita Nario from the Bureau of Customs in Parañaque, Metro Manila for apprehending numerous individuals, both local and foreign residents, for all kinds of illegal acts including the smuggling of jewelry, Korean medicine and shabu.

Basilio Saking, a senior jail officer of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) in Baguio City, for his genuine concern to transform the Baguio City jail into an educational and reformatory institution.

Fely Tabieros, midwife of Sanchez Mira, Cagayan, for being an exemplary civil servant traveling through farmlands and hiking mountains just to attend to patients in distress.

Baguio City State Auditor Nadelline Orallo for her vigilance and diligence that led to significant audit findings and substantial audit disallowances amounting to million of pesos.

Linda Fadriquelan, a secondary school principal of the Mabini National High School in Corcuera, Romblon, for being instrumental in the zero drop-out of students for the past 10 school years.

Emy Fler Esponilla, a district supervisor of the Division of City Schools, Pobcaran District, Caloocan City, for establishing school cooperatives long before the idea became popular. Such scheme provided financial assistance to teachers, and financed the scholarship of poor but deserving students.

Suspension of lethal injections to allow Congress to decide on death penalty law — Palace

Malacañang said today that the decision of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to suspend the execution of some death convicts by lethal injection is to give Congress a chance to decide once and for all on what to do with the death penalty law.

In a phone patch interview from the Clark Special Economic Zone in Angeles City, Pampanga, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that there are resolutions filed in both houses of Congress asking for the abolition of the death penalty.

“The President has made the judgment call and let us just wait. I think that is also a signal for the members of Congress to really finalize whatever action they would like to make on this issue,” Bunye said.

Bunye was reacting to comments attributed to Sen. Robert Barbers that the President suspended the implementation of the death penalty as a concession to the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin and the CBCP have strongly urged the government to scrap the death penalty.

Bunye said that if the members of Congress would approve the abolition of the death penalty law, then all questions “would be moot and academic.”

“So the President is just giving them time to really push through or not with their proposed legislation,” Bunye said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 2, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029130049/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct02.htm>

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- **GMA to gov't workers; be role models to the people you serve**
- **Gov't to push efforts in collecting share from GOCCs to reduce budget deficit**
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GMA to gov't workers; be role models to the people you serve

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has called on government workers to be role models to the people they serve as she stressed that an efficient and effective bureaucracy is an essential element in building a strong Republic.

In her speech during the conferment of the *Lingkod Bayan* and *Dangal ng Bayan* Awards in Malacañang Wednesday, the President said that a strong and dedicated civil service could contribute to good governance, which is an essential institution in a strong Republic.

The conferment of the awards to 22 public servants was the culmination of the 102nd anniversary celebration of the Philippine civil service.

The President said that the strong Republic that she envisioned in her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July has two basic characteristics.

The first, the President said, is that it should represent the people's interest and not just the interest of the dominant class or the powerful minority.

And second, the republic must have a capacity, represented through strong institutions and a strong bureaucracy, to implement its policies and deliver basic services to the people.

It is important, the President said, for government workers to safeguard the integrity and the good image of the agencies where they work.

"Tayo ay kinakailangan na maging mabuting halimbawa sa ating mga pinaglilingkuran (We should set a good example to the people we are serving)," the President said.

The President said that as shown by the achievements of the awardees, there is an abundance of good men and women in the public service as she commended them for rendering their duties with the highest integrity, morality and decency.

"May you continue to serve as models and trailblazers for the rest of the bureaucracy, the rest of the government, including us, public officials," the President said.

The President also said that the anniversary of the Philippine civil service should serve as an opportunity for government workers to rededicate themselves and reaffirm their oaths of office.

"Let us strengthen our commitment to uphold our responsibility of rendering efficient, effective and quality service to our people," the President said.

Awardees for the *Lingkod Bayan* Awards were Cesar Acebedo, a grade school teacher of West District, Aparri, Cagayan; Evelyn Caja, a special education teacher of Ramon Magsaysay High school in España, Manila; Maria

Cristina Cornejo, presiding judge of the Regional Trial Court Branch 147, Makati City; Danilo Falgui, assistant professor, Kalinga-Apayao State College, Tabuk, Kalinga; Clifton Ganay, executive judge, Regional Trial Court, Branch 31, Agoo, La Union;

Joaquin Morga, barangay tanod of Barangay Telbang, Alaminos, Pangasinan; Romeo Pontipetra, postman, Cagayan de Oro City; Aurelio Quilo, barangay chairman of Barangay Guinicolalay, Dinas, Zamboanga del Sur; Alfredo Ramirez, chancellor, University of the Philippines, Ermita, Manila; Edgar Ricamonte, president of Quirino State College, Diffun, Quirino; Carmen Salazar, master teacher, Bacolod City; and Elene Tampican, nurse of Luis Hora Memorial Regional Hospital in Abatan, Bauko, Mountain Province.

Awardees for the *Dangal ng Bayan* Awards were Jose Benedicto Bautista, postmaster of San Jose City, Nueva Ecija; Nida Baybay, stenographer of the Department of Labor and Employment of CARAGA Region; Ninie del Rosario, master teacher, Sta. Ana Central Elementary School, Davao City; Emy Fler Esponilla, district supervisor, Calocan City; Antonio Fabre, laborer of the Philippine Coconut Authority, Dampas District, Tagbilaran City;

Linda Fabriquelan, principal, Mabini National High School, Mabini, Corcuera, Romblon; Estelita Nario, customs officer, Bureau of Customs, Parañaque, Metro Manila; Nadeline Orallo, state auditor, GSIS, Baguio City; Basilo Saking, senior jail officer, Baguio City; and Fely Tabieros, midwife, municipality of Sanchez Mira, Cagayan.

Gov't to push efforts in collecting share from GOCCs to reduce budget deficit

The Department of Finance said it will push efforts in collecting its share on the income of government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCC) to shore up government finances and reduce the budget deficit.

The DOF said that under Republic Act 7656, all GOCCs are required to share a substantial amount of their net earnings to the national government in the form of dividends.

As of August 2002, the GOCCs have remitted a total dividend of P3.4 billion to the national government, as against the revised target of P4.3 billion for the whole year.

The DOF said that guarantee fees, which were collected by the DOF from the GOCCs for their borrowings, reached P5.4 billion as against the revised target of P5.8 billion for 2002.

Meanwhile, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho has said that the budget deficit has narrowed to an average of P10 billion in the last three months.

Camacho said that the budget deficit from June to August have improved, compared to the first five months of the year.

The budget deficit swelled to P107.7 billion in January to May, increasing further to P144 billion by August. The budget deficit in March was P25.3 billion, the highest during the five-month period.

Camacho said that in August 2002, the budget deficit was only P10.9 billion, the lowest so far.

He also said that the government hopes to report revenue surpluses by December as the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) beefs up tax collection.

Camacho said that he is hoping that there will be a month or two during the last four months when the government will experience a surplus.

Gov't extending all help to OFWs in Italy

The Philippine government is closely coordinating with Italian authorities in helping undocumented overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) avail themselves of Italy's latest regularization program or amnesty and to ensure the best possible treatment for them.

In a report to Malacañang, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said they have been conducting a massive information campaign to enjoin "irregular" Filipino workers to take advantage of Italy's offer to regularize their stay.

DOLE Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas has been apprised by DFA Assistant Secretary Jaime J. Yambao about developments and actions taken to assist Filipinos in Italy as disclosed by the Philippine Ambassador to Rome Philippe J. Lhuillier.

The Philippine Embassy in Italy and the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs) in Rome and Milan have conducted regularization information campaigns for OFWs that included announcements in radio programs, publications, flyers, and letters distributed to Filipino community groups.

In addition, the embassy's consular section has extended its office hours, remaining open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays, the "usual days-off" of Filipino workers in Italy.

Sto. Tomas said undocumented Filipino workers in Italy are expected to respond more positively to the current Italian regularization program compared to the amnesty offered in previous years.

Figures from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) showed that Italy has remained the top destination of OFWs in the European mainland after it absorbed 12,000 documented OFWs in the first six months of 2002.

Earlier, Ambassador Lhuillier expressed full confidence in Italy's capacity "to humanely treat migrant workers attracted to its economy" as he affirmed that Filipino workers in Rome enjoy "a very good reputation and a high level of respect."

"Perhaps they are the most appreciated among the foreign communities in Italy for being hardworking, trustworthy, reliable and honest," Lhuillier said.

He said, however, that the 130,000 estimate of undocumented Filipino workers in Italy is an inaccurate and unrealistic figure. This figure even exceeded the real number of Filipinos, either documented or undocumented, in the entire Italian peninsula.

He cited official records of the Italian Ministry of Interior that there are 64,215 Filipinos in Italy with legal documents, while those without "proper papers" may total 30,000 to 40,000.

Lhuillier said employers of undocumented workers were given from September 10 to November 10, 2002 within which to apply for their workers' regularization, with reports indicating that this has been extended by 15 days, or up to November 25.

"Under the regularization measure, foreigners working as domestic helpers or caregivers who have been working for at least three months (beginning June 2002) may avail themselves of this opportunity to regularize their stay," Lhuillier said.

Employers, and not workers, will make the application for regularization. Employers must be ready to pay the equivalent of three months' social security contribution in favor of their workers, and must provide them with suitable housing, Lhuillier said.

AFP, PNP undertaking measures to prevent repetition of NPA attacks on police outposts

The Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are undertaking measures that would prevent the occurrence of attacks by members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (NPA) on police outposts in the country.

In a press briefing after a joint command conference in Malacañang this afternoon, Interior and Local Government Jose Lina, Jr. said the measures would include closer coordination between the PNP and the AFP and other agencies.

"Measures are now being undertaken to further improve the preparedness of the police station in repelling possible future attacks," Lina said.

Lina, however, begged off from disclosing the specific measures discussed during the command conference, saying this will be counterproductive.

"But I would like to emphasize that the objective of the government is to prevent the occurrence of similar incidence in the future," Lina said.

Lina was referring to the attack on the police station of Lopez, Quezon where the police chief and another policeman were killed and the attack on the municipal hall and police station of Maco, Compostela Valley.

According to Lina, he presented measures during the command conference that would be undertaken by the PNP to protect municipal or police stations all over the country, particularly in those areas considered vulnerable to CPP-NPA attacks.

As secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Lina has direct supervision over the PNP.

Lina also revealed that the DILG has filed robbery-in-band case against the mayor of Maco, Compostela Valley for his alleged involvement in the raid by the NPA of the police station in the town.

The DILG chief also described the recent attacks made by the NPA as "desperate moves" on the part of the CPP-NPA to project that they are still in the fight.

He said that figures earlier released by National Security Adviser Roilo Golez showed that last year and this year, there had been consistent efforts on the part of the government, particularly the AFP, to defeat the CPP-NPA.

Lina also cited the four-pronged holistic approach adopted by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration in fighting the insurgency that includes first, the security component undertaken by the AFP and the PNP, and second, the socio-economic component undertaken by the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan or KALAHI.

The third component is the political initiative that is aimed at informing the people of the evils of terrorism and communism, while the fourth is the information dissemination program whose objective is to inform the people what the government is doing for them.

Malacañang condemns Zamboanga bombing

Malacañang today condemned the bomb attack Wednesday outside Camp Enrile, Malagutay, Zamboanga that killed a United States serviceman, a Filipino soldier and a civilian and wounded 23 others.

In a press briefing in Malacanang, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez said an investigation is now being undertaken by the police force, assisted on all fronts by civilian authorities led by Zamboanga City Mayor Ma. Clara Lobregat and the Southern Command forces.

Golez noted the treachery adopted by the perpetrators against the US serviceman, who was only here only for civic projects.

“We condemn this senseless act of violence and extend our heartfelt condolences to the family of the US serviceman,” Golez said.

Golez noted that it is tragedy to die but it is an even greater misfortune to die in a strange place — thousands of miles away from home.

“This is indeed very tragic, a very treacherous act on the part of the perpetrator because...you have to remember that this US serviceman is here to conduct activities that are connected with civic work,” Golez said.

The National Security Adviser said Philippine authorities immediately informed the US authorities about the bombing.

“Right now, the only thing that we can say is that an investigation is being conducted. The police force, the mayor of Zamboanga and the forces of Southcom are working together in order to find a quick solution to this problem and go after the perpetrator or perpetrators,” he said.

Another American soldier wounded in the attack is reportedly in serious but stable condition.

The American soldiers were part of a 260-man Special Operations support team doing humanitarian work after joint anti-terror operations ended in July against the Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group, officials said.

The team is based in the southern city of Zamboanga and Basilan Island.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 3, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029131409/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct03.htm>

The President's Day: October 4, 2002

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- **Palace to CPP-NPA: stop attacks so peace process can move on**
- **GMA visit to Albay to boost Pantao development**
- **GMA 7 Network execs thank President for safe release of crew**
- **Palace releases M.O. 77 restoring PNP control and supervision to Metro Manila mayors**

Palace to CPP-NPA: stop attacks so peace process can move on

Malacañang today called on the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) to stop its attacks, especially against civilian targets, so that the peace process can move on.

In an interview, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is sincere in pushing for the peace process and in pursuing programs that would improve the people's lives.

He said the government panel to the suspended peace negotiations with the foreign-based leaders of the CPP-NPA has prepared a draft agreement that has already been presented to the Cabinet oversight committee.

As soon as the President approves the draft, then it will be submitted to the CPP-NPA and hopefully, the formal peace talks could be resumed, Ermita said.

According to Ermita, the NPA has staged a series of attacks during the past few days to show that it is still capable of doing some harm. He added, however, that the insurgents' threat to sow more violence and attack non-combatant targets and facilities would only exacerbate the problem and could further derail the peace negotiations.

"Kapag ginawa nila iyan ay lalo nilang patutunayan na sila ay mga terorista. Talaga namang baka hindi matuloy ang ating usapan, dahil nga sa gumagawa sila ng mga bagay na nagpapatunay na sila ay mga terorista (If they do that, this will only prove that they are really terrorists. This could stop the resumption of the talks since what they are doing only confirms that they are terrorists)," Ermita said.

Ermita said that the killing of innocent civilians, destruction of utilities and resorting to extortion activities would only add to the misery of the people, especially those in the provinces.

"Harinawa ay mapigil na itong pakikibaka sa isa't-isa at magkaroon tayo ng puspusang katahimikan (I hope we can put an end to this struggle so that we can enjoy lasting peace)," Ermita said.

GMA visit to Albay to boost Pantao development

LEGAZPI CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's scheduled visit to Albay on Saturday to attend the Pantao Summit in Pantao, Libon, Albay augurs well for the fast tracking of the Pantao Port Development Project.

The Pantao Summit, through the initiative of Congressman Jose Salceda (Albay, Third District), seeks to fast-track the implementation of the Pantao Port Development Project which would develop a regional port in the region that would improve market and transport linkages for Bicol to the Visayas and Mindanao regions.

The Pantao Port Development Project was proposed in 1995 and was approved by the Regional Development Council (RDC) as one of the priority projects in the region.

The project would cost P350 million for implementation from 2002 to 2005 which will cover the following scope of work: construction of port facilities required for the five base ports, one terminal port and one new port. Also included in the project is the construction of the Libon-Pantao access road.

For 2002, the Philippine Ports Authority allocated an initial amount of P50 million, with subsequent allocations amounting to P150 million each programmed for 2003 and 2004.

The RDC found the initial allocation of P50 million as inadequate and requested the President to increase it to P300 million during the 7th Regional Cabinet Meeting held in Naga City last June 3.

GMA 7 Network execs thank President for safe release of crew

The GMA 7 Network today thanked President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) for the safe release of their kidnapped reporter Carlo Lorenzo and cameraman Gilbert Ordiales.

Lorenzo and Ordiales, accompanied by their bosses and family, paid the President a courtesy call in Malacañang and thanked the Chief Executive for their freedom.

Also present during the meeting were Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Benjamin Defensor and PNP Chief for Operations Edgardo Aglipay.

Lorenzo said he feels so lucky to get out from such a horrible experience. He also said that while in captivity, he and Ordiales sensed the fear felt by their captors because of the pressure from the military forces.

The two were kidnapped while trying to interview a former Muslim separatist guerilla leader near Indanan, Sulu.

GMA 7 President and Chief Executive Officer Felipe Gozon, who accompanied the freed hostages, thanked the President and her “hardworking” generals.

The President told Lorenzo and Ordiales that they now belonged to the group of journalists who were kidnapped.

Veteran journalist Jessica Soho, who was also present at the meeting, informed the President that “we’ve never paid a single centavo.”

Soho also thanked the President for the news blackout that was implemented during the period of the captivity.

The President replied that indeed, a news blackout in kidnap cases makes “a big difference.”

After meeting in Malacañang, the two journalists were brought to the St. Luke’s Hospital for medical tests.

Palace releases M.O. 77 restoring PNP control and supervision to Metro Manila mayors

Malacañang today released Memorandum Order No. 77 formalizing an earlier directive of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to return to Metro Manila mayors the operational supervision and control over all units of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in their areas of jurisdiction.

Under MO No. 77, however, operational supervision and control over the PNP could not be exercised by the Metro Manila mayors 30 days before and 30 days after any national, local and barangay elections.

The MO, which was signed by the President last October 1, directed the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) to empower the mayors of the cities and municipalities of the National Capital Region (NCR) “to effectively carry out their responsibility of maintaining peace and order in their respective territorial jurisdictions.”

This directive is based on Section 14 of Republic Act No. 6975, also known as the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990, that gives the NAPOLCOM administrative control and operational supervision over the PNP.

The MO is issued in pursuance to Section 16 of the Local Government Code of 1991, also known as Republic Act No. 7160, as amended, that provides that local government units shall ensure and support the maintenance of peace and order within their respective territorial jurisdictions.

In issuing the MO, the President said that the NCR, which is composed of 13 cities and four municipalities and home to some 10 million people “is uniquely situated in terms of law enforcement.”

“There is a need to institute mechanisms which will ensure and support the performance by the mayors of the cities and municipalities in the NCR of their functions relative to the maintenance of peace and order and to the exercise of operational supervision and control over the units of the PNP within their respective territorial jurisdictions,” the President said.

The NCR or Metro Manila is made up of the cities of Manila, Quezon, Pasay, Pasig, Makati, Caloocan, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Valenzuela, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, and Parañaque, and the municipalities of San Juan, Navotas, Pateros and Taguig.

The MO said that pursuant to RA No. 6975, as amended, the mayors of the NCR shall choose the chiefs of police, station commanders or district directors, respectively from the lists of qualified and eligible officers recommended by the district director of the NCR Police Office (NCRPO) director, preferably from the same city or municipality.

“The mayors may recommend to the district director or the NCRPO director, respectively, an eligible, who may be included in the list of eligibles,” the MO said.

The MO also said that the mayors of the cities and municipalities in the NCR shall be given prior notice of the transfer, recall, reassignment or detail of PNP members under their operational supervision and control.

The President announced her approval of the proposal of Metro Manila mayors to restore to them the operation control and supervision over the police during a joint meeting of the Regional Development Council and the Regional Peace and Order Council of Metro Manila held at the Manila Hotel last July 16.

During the joint RDC-RPOC meeting, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza thanked the President for the decision and assured a better crime rate the next time the council meets again.

“As mayors in the National Capital Region, Mrs. President, we would like to be fully responsible in the maintenance of peace and order conditions in each city and municipality,” Atienza said.

He added that having better control of each and every policeman on the beat, “then we should be able to present to you in the next meeting of the RPOC a much controlled and definitely a better picture.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 4, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029041712/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct04.htm>

The President's Day: October 5, 2002

05 OCTOBER 2002

- **GMA vows to step up police and military operations against the NPA, other criminal groups**
- **GMA welcomes Bush pledge to help AFP in fight vs local terrorists**
- **GMA releases P1M for SMEs, other amounts for livelihood projects in Pantao, Albay**
- **GMA congratulates CALABARZON police, intelligence unit for capture of wanted person**
- **RP, Qatar sign news exchange and cooperation pact**

GMA vows to step up police and military operations against the NPA, other criminal groups

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today vowed to step up police and military operations against the New People's Army (NPA) and other criminal groups and terrorists in the country.

In her weekly radio address aired nationwide this morning, the President described as "acts of desperation" the recent NPA attacks against police stations in Maco, Compostela Valley and Lopez, Quezon, and the burning of heavy equipment in Angat, Bulacan.

The President said these attacks are not surprising, saying that these are in retaliation for the losses that the NPA had suffered during the past nine months after intensive military and police operations against them.

She said this was compounded by the recent declaration by the United States that the CPP-NPA is a foreign terrorist organization and the withdrawal of support by the government of the Netherlands to its leaders who are now living in exile in that country.

"Kayo ay nakakatiyak na tuloy-tuloy ang police at military operations laban sa kanila (Rest assured that police and military operations against them would continue)," the President said.

The President also called on the citizenry to continue giving their support to the military and the police so that the government can wipe out all forms of criminality and terrorism in the country.

She cited the indignation rally at the funeral of the chief of police of Lopez, Quezon, who was killed during the NPA attack, as an example of a strong public support to the anti-insurgency drive of the government.

GMA welcomes Bush pledge to help AFP in fight vs local terrorists

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today welcomed the recent announcement by United States President George W. Bush that the US will continue to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the fight against local terrorist groups.

In her weekly radio address aired nationwide this morning, the President said the pledge of assistance by Bush, which was made in his letter to the US Congress, is part of America's global war against terror.

Also part of this global war on terror, the President said, is the US threat to attack Iraq.

"Sinusuportahan natin ang kaso laban sa Iraq na idinulog ng Estados Unidos sa UN Security Council, lalo na sa layunin nitong buwagin ang mga weapons of mass destruction, which are a threat to humanity (We support the case presented by the US against Iraq in the UN Security Council, especially in its desire to destroy all weapons of mass destruction, which are a threat to humanity)," the President said.

In her address, the President also expressed her condolences to the family of Sgt. Mark Jackson, an American serviceman who was killed during a bomb attack in Zamboanga City last Wednesday.

The President said that Jackson's death should be used as a symbol to further strengthen the bonds of cooperation between the US and the Philippines in the fight against terrorism.

She vowed that the government would not rest until the perpetrators of the crime would be apprehended and brought to justice.

In a related incident, the President also thanked Sulu Gov. Yusuf Jikiri and the provincial crisis management committee of Sulu for the safe release of TV reporter Carlo Lorenzo and cameraman Gilbert Ordiales from their kidnapers in Indanan, Sulu.

The President also lauded the media industry for its cooperation by not reporting about the incident that, she said, contributed to the early release of the two hostages.

“Ang hangarin ng ating pamahalaan ay siguruhin ang kaligtasan ng ating mga inosenteng mamamayan mula sa terorista na gustong maghasik ng karahasan sa ating bansa (The objective of our government is to ensure the safety of our innocent citizens from the terrorists who want to sow terror and violence in our country),” the President said.

GMA releases P1M for SMEs, other amounts for livelihood projects in Pantao, Albay

PANTAO, LIBON, ALBAY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today personally released the amount of P1 million for the “One Town, One Product, One Million Pesos” program for small and medium enterprises in the town of Libon.

The President, who made a brief visit to this barangay this morning, said the amount came from the President's Social Fund and is coursed through the Department of Trade and Industry-Albay Provincial Office.

The President has been distributing P1 million to towns nationwide for the development of SMEs as part of her efforts to boost domestic market.

A patrol boat costing P850,000 was also turned over by the President to the municipality. The boat is to be used by the local authorities in enforcing the rules and regulations of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

The awarding ceremonies were undertaken at the elementary school, where the Pantao summit that seeks to fast track the implementation of the Pantao Port Development Project was also held.

The President also distributed 115 bottom-set gill nets costing P85,000 each to the town's fisherfolk.

The Chief Executive also gave three checks amounting to P20,000 each from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office for the following hospitals: Josefina Belmonte Duran Memorial Hospital, Pantao District Hospital, and Pio Duran Memorial District Hospital. A fourth P20,000 check went to Klinika ni Gloria for its medical mission.

Prior to the program, Albay 3rd District Rep. Joey Salceda made a ceremonial switch-on of the O-Ilaw Project implemented by Mirantz Philippines.

The project represents the energization of the remaining 129 barangays in Albay.

A groundbreaking for the National Housing Authority Libon Resettlement Project was also held as part of the ceremonies.

The P20 million project is classified under the Resettlement Assistance Program for the local government units to benefit affected families, which would be displaced by the establishment of the Pantao Regional Port.

Later on, the President proceeded to the Fernandez Compound for a brunch with local officials and members of the local media.

The Pantao Port Development Project was proposed in 1995 and was approved by the Regional Development Council (RDC) as one of the priority projects in the region.

The project, which would cost P350 million and for implementation from 2002 to 2005, will cover the following scope of work: construction of port facilities required for the five base ports, one terminal port and one new port. Also included in the project is the construction of the Libon-Pantao access road.

For 2002, the Philippine Ports Authority has allocated for the port project an initial amount of P50 million, with subsequent allocations amounting to P150 million each, programmed for 2003 and 2004.

Other officials present at the occasion were Southern Luzon Commanding General Major Gen. Roy Kyamko, Presidential Assistant Tomasito Monson, PPA General Manager Alfonso Cusi, National Housing Authority Assistant General Manager Jopet Sison, Libon Mayor John Dycoco, and Albay Vice Governor James Calisin.

GMA congratulates CALABARZON police, intelligence unit for capture of wanted person

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the elements of the Regional Intelligence Office (RIO) and the Police Regional Office (PRO) of CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) for the arrest of Jaime Reyes, alias Jaime Singkol, one of the country's most wanted persons.

PRO Calabarzon Regional Director Enrique Galang presented Reyes to the President at the Villamor Airbase upon her arrival from a short trip to Pantao, Albay.

Galang told the President that the arrest of Reyes last October 3 at Barangay Luksuhin, in Alfonso, Cavite, was a result of several months of intelligence build-up from information provided by concerned citizens.

He said Reyes is facing charges of kidnap-for-ransom, murder, frustrated murder and robbery, and has several warrants of arrest.

Reyes is wanted for the kidnapping of Adelaida San Luis last April 14, 1996 in Sta. Cruz, Laguna and the murder of Special Police Officer 2 Teodoro Mamasig and Police Officer 3 Gerardo Alvarez on May 28, 1996.

Galang also said that Reyes is included in the list of the National Most Wanted Persons of the Philippine National Police Directorate for Intelligence.

The Department of Interior and Local Government, in its Memorandum Circular 97-184 dated July 31, 1997, offered a reward of P200,000 for those who can give information that would lead to the capture of Reyes.

Reyes is the subject of several warrants of arrest, namely: for kidnapping-for-ransom with serious illegal detention issued on Sept. 27, 1996 by Judge Zorayda Herradura Salcedo of Branch 26, RTC Fourth Judicial Region; for murder (2 counts) and frustrated murder (2 counts) issued on August 27, 1997 by Judge Arturo Bernardo of Branch 36, RTC, Third Judicial Region of Gapan, Nueva Ecija; and for robbery issued on April 25, 1996 by Municipal Trial Judge Francisco Go of MTC, Sta. Cruz, Laguna.

Reyes is in the custody of the RIO CALABARZON pending the processing of his papers prior to his turnover to the proper court.

RP,Qatar sign news exchange and cooperation pact

The Philippines News Agency (PNA) and the Qatar News Agency (QNA) signed Friday an agreement on news exchange and cooperation to promote understanding and friendship between the Philippines and Qatar.

The agreement was signed in Malacañang by Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye and Ahmed Jassem al-Hamar, QNA director and chief editor.

The PNA is under the Office of the Press Secretary.

Also present during the signing were Farouq Helmy, QNA bureau chief for the Far East; Director Lucita Sanchez of the News and Information Bureau; Vitorio Vitug, PNA general manager; and Robert Rivera, chief of staff of Secretary Bunye.

Under the agreement, the two news agencies agree to supply each other regularly with daily online news for their respective use.

The agreement also stipulates that the exchange of news and other information materials between the PNA and QNA will utilize existing equipment of the two agencies.

Each agency may carry some selected news from the other party for its local television, radio and newspaper outlets, provided that proper attribution or credit should be made.

The two agencies also pledged to make adequate coverage of national, regional and international events, as well as conferences and meetings, held in their respective countries.

Both the PNA and QNA also agree to exchange media and technical expertise and to provide assistance and facilities to visitors from each other whenever necessary and if condition permits.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 5, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029042537/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct05.htm>

The President's Day: October 6, 2002

06 OCTOBER 2002

- **Export earnings grow for fifth consecutive month**

Export earnings grow for fifth consecutive month

For the fifth consecutive month, Philippine exports grew in August, with the United States emerging as the No. 1 market and other Asian countries accounting for a significant part of the growth.

The Department of Trade and Industry and the National Statistics Office, in reports to Malacañang, said major markets for Philippine exports entered the buying season, with Christmas just weeks away, sending export earnings up by 14.1 percent to \$2.99 billion in August this year compared to \$2.62 billion during the same month last year.

The United States market shifted into higher consumption levels with the onset of autumn, accounting for more than one-fourth of the Philippines' export receipts in August.

Exports to the US totaled \$767.86 million, up 5.4 percent from last year's \$728.79 million.

Japan was the second biggest export market, with export revenues totaling \$412.42 million, up 12.3 percent from \$367.23 million a year ago.

Hong Kong posted the highest growth of 59.5 percent to \$220.44 million from only \$138.20 million last year.

"Hong Kong, the gateway to China, together with Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Korea and Thailand had a combined 32 percent market share that is growing at an average rate of 26 percent, making this group the largest growth factor to our business," said Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II.

"Improved economies and compatibility of our product offerings with consumer aspirations are the major factors to our good export performance in these markets," Roxas added.

Other top markets for August were the Netherlands (\$248.88 million), Taiwan (\$206.67 million); Singapore (\$195.02 million); Malaysia (\$134.85 million); Republic of Korea (\$116.22 million); Thailand (\$111.48 million); and Germany (\$106.58 million)

Accounting for 89.2 percent of the total receipts, exports of manufactured goods grew by 15 percent as sales reached \$2.666 billion, from \$2.318 billion during the same period a year earlier.

Income from agro-based products combined for \$127.1 million or 4.2 percent of the total export revenue. Compared to last year, aggregate revenue for this commodity group dropped by 7.7 percent from \$137.76 million.

Receipts from electronic components, accounting for 51.6 percent of the aggregate export revenue for the month, picked up by 17.7 percent to \$1.544 billion from \$1.312 billion last year.

Articles of apparel and clothing accessories remained as the country's second top earner with a combined share of 7.2 percent and an aggregate receipt of \$216.63 million or 2.2 percent higher than \$211.87 million a year earlier.

Roxas said garments registered positive growth rates for three consecutive months as the US market shifted into higher consumption levels normally associated with the fall and winter seasons.

Woodcrafts and furniture ranked third with total revenue of \$38.14 million, reflecting a 6.7 percent increase from \$35.75 million last year.

Ignition wiring set and other wiring sets used in vehicles, aircraft and ships ranked fourth with sales amounting to \$38.07 million, a year-on-year decline of 29.1 percent from \$53.70 million.

Giftware and holiday decors grew by 4 percent as retail orders came in preparation for the Christmas holidays while construction materials continued to grow at 4 percent due to home improvements, also for the holiday season.

Home improvements in the US and Europe continued to sustain business for exporters of home furnishings which registered a year-to-year growth of 8 percent, the DTI said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 6, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030063529/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct06.htm>

The President's Day: October 7, 2002

07 OCTOBER 2002

- **GMA prays for the Filipino people to have more faith in God and determination to move on**
- **O. 77 based on existing laws, says Palace**
- **GMA signs EO setting up Gabay sa Mamamayan Action Centers in all barangays nationwide**
- **GMA thanks Chinese-Filipino Business Club, youth for donation to Sabah returnees**
- **Japanese pledge of loan assistance to speed up infrastructure development in Mindanao – DPWH**
- **New WB loan to help more poor communities**

GMA prays for the Filipino people to have more faith in God and determination to move on

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has implored the Lord Almighty to grant the Filipino people more faith in God and determination to move on.

On the occasion of the 24th anniversary of the Jesus Is Lord Fellowship held Sunday night at the Quirino Grandstand, the President also prayed for more strength so that the nation could face the many challenges that confront it.

The President, who was tasked to lead the prayer capping to the anniversary program, also asked for God's protection so that the Philippines can defend itself from the evils of the land.

"I lift up to you the Jesus Is Lord Church on the occasion of its 24th founding anniversary. Oh Lord, bless and prosper this mighty body of Christ. Lord, I pray, as the leader of this nation, grant us an increase in faith and determination to move on. Strengthen us, O Lord, to face the many challenges that confront the nation. With the power of the Holy Spirit, lead us, dear Lord, to victory in the war against the evils of the land. All these, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen," the President prayed.

Religious broadcaster Dr. Pat Robertson, who was the guest speaker of the celebration, led a pray-over for the President.

With hands reached out to the President along with JIL founder Bro. Eddie Villanueva, Mrs. Dede Robertson and First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, Robertson called on God to give the President a special blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Robertson asked God to give the President unusual wisdom and discernment. "Surround her with wise advisers that she might administer justice to your people," he said.

Robertson also prayed for unity of the Filipino nation. "Unite the hearts of the Filipino people...that she might be a tower of strength and the mother of this nation," he added.

Aside from the President, key leaders of government and business were also present during the occasion.

Robertson is the founder and chairman of The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) Inc., and founder of International Family Entertainment Inc., Regent University, Operation Blessing International Relief and Development Corporation, American Center for Law and Justice, The Flying Hospital, Inc. and several other organizations and broadcast entities.

Founded in 1960, CBN was the first Christian television network established in the United States.

Today, CBN is one of the world's largest television ministries. It produces programs seen in 180 nations and heard in 71 languages including Russian, Arabic, Spanish, French and Chinese.

CBN's flagship program, The 700 Club, which Robertson hosts, is one of the world's longest running religious television shows. The program reaches an average of one million American viewers daily.

M.O. 77 based on existing laws, says Palace

Memorandum Order No. 77, which confers to mayors of the National Capital Region operational supervision and control of the Philippine National Police (PNP) units within their respective jurisdictions, is based on existing laws, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said today.

Bunye, in his regular press briefing, said the law in this case are the Local Government Code of 1991 and the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990, as amended by the PNP Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998.

"As far as we know, the M.O. 77 is based on the provisions of the Local Government Code and the PNP Reform and Reorganization Act," Bunye said.

"If it pursuant to these two existing laws, we don't see any reason why it should contravene the basic law," Bunye said.

Bunye noted that MO 77 was a result of the clamor of the Metro Manila mayors to have more control of the police in their area so that they would be more effective in fighting crime.

He said the Metro Manila mayors conveyed this desire during the joint Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) meeting held last July at the Manila Hotel.

The MO, which was signed by the President last October 1, directed the NAPOLCOM to empower the mayors of the cities and municipalities of the NCR "to effectively carry out their responsibility of maintaining peace and order in their respective territorial jurisdictions."

This directive is based on Section 14 of Republic Act No. 6975, also known as the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990, that gives the NAPOLCOM administrative control and operational supervision over the PNP.

The MO is issued in pursuance to Section 16 of the Local Government Code of 1991, also known as Republic Act No. 7160, as amended, that provides that local government units shall ensure and support the maintenance of peace and order within their respective territorial jurisdictions.

In issuing the MO, the President said that the National Capital Region (NCR), which is composed of 13 cities and four municipalities and home to some 10 million people, "is uniquely situated in terms of law enforcement."

"There is a need to institute mechanisms which will ensure and support the performance by the mayors of the cities and municipalities in the NCR of their functions relative to the maintenance of peace and order and to the exercise of operational supervision and control over the units of the PNP within their respective territorial jurisdictions," the President said.

The NCR or Metro Manila is made up of the cities of Manila, Quezon, Pasay, Pasig, Makati, Caloocan, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Valenzuela, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, and Parañaque, and the municipalities of San Juan, Navotas, Pateros and Taguig.

The MO said that pursuant to RA No. 6975, as amended, the mayors of the NCR shall choose the chiefs of police, station commanders or district directors, respectively from the lists of qualified and eligible officers recommended by the district director of the NCR Police Office (NCRPO) director, preferably from the same city or municipality.

“The mayors may recommend to the district director or the NCRPO director, respectively, an eligible, who may be included in the list of eligibles,” the MO said.

The MO also said that the mayors of the cities and municipalities in the NCR should be given prior notice of the transfer, recall, reassignment or detail of PNP members under their operational supervision and control.

GMA signs EO setting up Gabay sa Mamamayan Action Centers in all barangays nationwide

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has signed Executive Order No. 130, establishing in all barangays nationwide the *Gabay sa Mamamayan Aksyon* Centers to serve as the institutional link between the government and the people.

The centers would ensure the adequacy and accessibility of quality information about national government programs and services to the residents of the community.

Under the EO, the Aksyon Centers shall be an integral part of the Information and Reading Center, a basic unit that a barangay is expected to set up.

The Aksyon Centers would be headed by the *Punong Barangays*, who may appoint as Information Action Officers, the other members of the Sangguniang Barangay, Barangay Treasurer, Barangay Secretary, chairman of the Sangguniang Kabataan, members of the *Lupong Tagapamayapa* and representatives of the Parents-Teachers Association, Association of Senior Citizens, people’s organizations, non-government organizations and other community-based civic groups.

The EO also enjoins the city and municipal government to provide administrative, technical and financial assistance to the Aksyon Centers.

The national government, on the other hand, would provide the Aksyon Centers technical assistance through the conduct of training, ensure the supply of agency brochures and other reference materials responsive to the information needs of community residents.

The national government should also promote the Aksyon Centers as convergence mechanism for government services at the barangay level.

Parents-Teachers Associations, Associations of Senior Citizens, people’s organizations, non-government organizations and other community-based civic groups, which are committed to the spirit of volunteerism, are also encouraged to provide technical assistance to the Aksyon Centers.

In issuing the EO, the President said “access to information about government programs and services, particularly among the disadvantaged sectors of society, is critical in community empowerment as well as in addressing poverty.”

GMA thanks Chinese-Filipino Business Club, youth for donation to Sabah returnees

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked and commended the Chinese Filipino Business Club (CFBC) and the Chinese-Filipino youth for their generosity and civic consciousness in donating two truckloads of relief goods to alleviate the plight of thousands of Filipino returnees from Sabah.

“Gusto kong magpasalamat sa mga kabataang Tsino community dahil sa napakagandang pagtutulong ninyo sa ating mga kapatid na bumalik mula sa Sabah (I wish to thank the youth from the Chinese-Filipino community for the help you are extending to the returnees from Sabah),” the President said in accepting the donation.

The President said the donation from the Chinese-Filipino community is truly a big contribution to the government’s program to help returning Filipinos from Sabah.

“Kapag iniisip natin mga non-government organizations, mga civil society, iniisip natin iyong nagpapataksik ng pamahalaan na masama. Pero hindi lamang iyon ang trabaho ng civil society. Ang mas trabaho ng civil society... ay matulungan ang mga kapus-palad ng ating bansa (When we think of non-government organizations, of civil society, what comes to mind is the ouster of corrupt governments. The greater task of civil society, however, is to help the needy and underprivileged),” the President said.

The handover of the donation was held at Malacañang’s Ceremonial Hall after the President had a luncheon meeting with senior citizens at the Heroes Hall in celebration of the Month of the Elderly.

CFBC president Aw Peng Lam, along with the teachers and student representatives from 22 Chinese schools, turned over the relief goods.

The donation from CFBC is part of the socio-civic organization’s initiative to support the civic projects of the President.

According to lawyer Daniel Y. Loagan, executive vice president of CFBC, the donation is part of “Operation Brotherhood,” a civic project through which the club has sponsored free cataract operations for underprivileged patients, given financial assistance to wounded men in uniform, and distributed relief goods and housing units to fire victims in Albay and Baseco in Manila.

Loagan said Operation Brotherhood “has always been at the forefront when there is a calamity,” and has also donated school buildings, computers and books to public schools under the Paaralang Pambarangay program.

During the ceremony, Aleli Jillian Sia, a student of the Chang Kai Shek College, expressed the youth’s concern for the welfare of Filipinos who have suffered since being cast out of Malaysia.

Sia also personally conveyed to the President her happiness at being of service to her marginalized brethren.

Among the schools represented during the ceremony were Ay Shin Academy, Chang Kai Shek College, Grace Christian High School, Hope Christian High School, Jubilee Christian Academy, Makati Hope Christian School, Manila Patriotic School, Paco Citizen Academy Foundation, Philadelphia School, Philippine Academy of Sakya, Philippine Buddhacare Academy, Philippine Cultural High School, Philippine Institute of Quezon City, Philippine Jin Nan Institute, Philippine Pasay Chung Hua Academy, Philippine San Bin School, Philippine Su Kuang Institute, St. Peter the Apostle School, St. Stephens High School, Samantabhadra Institute, Tiong Se Academy and Uno High School.

Japanese pledge of loan assistance to speed up infrastructure development in Mindanao – DPWH

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said the pledge of more financial assistance by the Japanese government would speed up infrastructure development in Mindanao, including those in the former conflict-affected areas.

In a report, DPWH Secretary Simeon Datumanong said that in his recent meeting with Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Kojiro Takano, the Japanese government expressed its interest in providing loan assistance for infrastructure projects in Level 3 areas in Mindanao.

Level 3 areas are areas in Mindanao with unstable peace and order situation.

Datumanong said the Japanese government had already sent a study mission for a proposed road project in Cotabato.

He said the Japanese loan assistance and other investments for infrastructure projects in Mindanao would spur the development of the resource-rich island and would benefit its residents.

Roads and bridges and other support infrastructure contribute to the success of the Philippines' long-term national strategy to sustain and promote economic growth, maintain peace and order and contribute to the overall welfare of its people, Datumanong said.

"We cannot win the fight against insurgency that has compounded poverty in Mindanao unless we develop the area," Datumanong said.

Among the Philippines' foreign partners, the Government of Japan has remained as the largest source of official development assistance (ODA), provided through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), Datumanong said.

Among the major ongoing infrastructure projects in Mindanao funded by JBIC and implemented by the DPWH are the Philippine-Japan Friendship Highway Mindanao Section Rehabilitation Project, the Rural Road Network Development Project-Phase 2 in Compostela Valley and Misamis Oriental Provinces, and the Lower Agusan Development Project Stage 1-Phase 2.

New WB loan to help more poor communities

The Philippine government and the World Bank signed today a loan agreement for the US\$100 million loan for the KALAHI Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS) Project.

The project, approved last month by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors, was signed by Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho and the World Bank's Country Director, Robert Vance Pulley.

The project will strengthen local communities' capacity to design, implement, and manage development activities. Such activities may include basic infrastructure like new or rehabilitated roads and bridges, barangay (village) schools and clinics, and water supply and sanitation facilities.

Communities will prioritize their development needs, design activities, seek technical expertise and make informed choices on how resources are used for sustainable poverty reduction.

More than 5,300 poor barangays in 193 municipalities in 40 of the poorest provinces nationwide are expected to benefit from this project. These will be mostly in rural areas, where most poor Filipinos live.

In addition to the immediate benefits to the communities, the investments are also expected to have a longer term impact as the local communities are given the opportunities to participate in the development process.

Specifically, the project will:

- Empower communities to access better services from local governments.
- Improve local governance by strengthening formal and informal institutions to become more inclusive, accountable, and effective.
- Provide resources for community investment programs, which will be designed, implemented and managed by local communities.

The loan will be at the Bank's standard interest rate for fixed-spread loans, currently about 2%, with a maturity of 20 years, including an eight-year grace period. Implementation is expected to be over a period of six and a half years, closing in June 2009.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 7, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030150638/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct07.htm>

The President's Day: October 8, 2002

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- **M. O. 77 could help stamp out jueteng, says Palace**
- **Palace cites importance of setting up Aksyon Centers in all barangays**
- **Top communist leader arrested, presented to media**
- **GMA calls for politics of reform, consultation**
- **GMA praises 2 Filipino students for winning top spots in ASEAN Quiz**

M.O. 77 could help stamp out jueteng, says Palace

Malacañang today said that Memorandum Order No. 77 that restored operational control and supervision over the police to city and municipal mayors, initially in Metro Manila, could help the government stamp out gambling, particularly the numbers game popularly called *jueteng*.

In an interview, Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said that under the MO, it would be easy to pinpoint responsibility in the drive against illegal gambling in a certain locality unlike now when there is buck-passing as to who is really responsible in going after *jueteng* operators.

"Tingnan natin, we hope na itong ganitong sistema ay makatulong sa pagsawata ng jueteng (We will look into this, we hope this new system would help stop jueteng)," Bunye said.

In reply to criticisms from some sectors that MO 77 could be unconstitutional or illegal, Bunye appealed to them to give the new system a chance to work.

"Seguro ay bigyan na muna natin ng pagkakataon na mag-work iyong system bago natin i-question iyong legality (Perhaps we should give this system a chance before we question its legality)," Bunye said.

Earlier, Bunye said that MO 77 is based on the provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991, also known as Republic Act No. 6975, and the Interior and Local Government Code of 1990, as amended by the PNP Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998.

"If it is pursuant to these two existing laws, we don't see any reason why it should contravene the basic law," Bunye said.

Bunye said that MO 77 was a result of the clamor of the Metro Manila mayors to have more control of the police in their areas so that they would be more effective in fighting crime, including illegal gambling.

He said the Metro Manila mayors conveyed this desire during the joint Regional Development Council-Regional Peace and Order Council (RDC-RPOC) meeting held last July at the Manila Hotel.

The MO, which was signed by the President last October 1, directed the Napolcom to empower the mayors of the cities and municipalities of the NCR "to effectively carry out their responsibility of maintaining peace and order in their respective territorial jurisdictions."

The NCR or Metro Manila is made up of the cities of Manila, Quezon, Pasay, Pasig, Makati, Caloocan, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Valenzuela, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, and Parañaque, and the municipalities of San Juan, Navotas, Pateros and Taguig.

Palace cites importance of setting up Aksyon Centers in all barangays

Malacañang today cited the importance of the setting up of *Gabay sa Mamamayan Aksyon* (GMA) Centers in all barangays, saying that this will make the members of the community well-informed of what their government is doing for them.

In an interview, Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that the GMA Centers are basically information and reading centers where people could go and read periodicals and other informative materials that would enrich their lives.

The setting up of these centers, as envisioned by Executive Order No. 130, is based on the principle that “an informed citizenry is an effective citizenry,” Bunye said.

Bunye brushed off criticisms from the opposition that the setting up of these reading centers could be the start of the campaign for the presidential polls in 2004.

“*Seguro ay hindi dapat bigyan ng malisya iyan dahil ito ay isang basic na gawain ng pamahalaan, to inform the citizenry* (Perhaps, we should not inject some malice here since it is the basic function of the government to inform the citizenry),” Bunye said.

Bunye said that the Aksyon Centers would serve as the institutional link between the government and the people.

He said that under the EO, the Aksyon Centers would be a collaborative effort on the part of the national and local government and the private sector that would include people’s organizations (POs), non-government organizations (NGOs) and community-based civil groups.

In issuing the EO, the President said that “access to information about government programs and services, particularly among the disadvantaged sectors of society, is critical in community empowerment as well as addressing poverty.”

Top communist leader arrested, presented to media

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presented to the media a top-ranking official of the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines-Rebolusyunaryong Hukbo ng Bayan (MLLP-RHB) who was captured last Saturday by combined elements of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP).

The President motored to Camp Aguinaldo this afternoon to personally congratulate Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Benjamin Defensor and the PNP chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. for their integrated efforts and swift action that led to arrest of Miel Gracilla Laurenaria.

Defensor told the President that Laurenaria was arrested at the periphery of Maypajo Market in Dagat-Dagatan, Caloocan City last Saturday afternoon on the basis of arrest order for kidnapping with serious illegal detention under Criminal Case Numbers 2258 and 90-293 filed in the Candelaria (Quezon) Municipal Trial Court and Lucena City Regional Trial Court, respectively.

Defensor informed the President that Laurenaria, 49, is a former executioner of Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder Jose Maria Sison when she was a regular central committee member of the CPP.

He said that the successful operation leading to the arrest of Laurenaria was an offshoot of the new Operations Plan “Gordian Knot,” a coordinated effort of the AFP and the PNP, with the involvement of a vigilant citizenry, in pursuing members of the CPP-NPA.

Defensor said that during her stint as the Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee (STRPC) Secretary, Laurenaria was ordered by Sison to implement the Operation Missing Link (OPML) which resulted in the torture

and slaughter of hundreds of New People's Army (NPA) regulars, sympathizers and ordinary citizens who were suspected by the CPP of being deep penetration agents of the government in the Southern Tagalog area.

The capture of Laurenaria is definitely a "big blow" to the CPP-NPA, which has recently been tagged as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States, Defensor said.

After the CPP split in 1993 because of the disillusionment of several old cadres over the leadership of Sison, Laurenaria remained with Sison. However, she felt betrayed that in spite of her dedication to the organization under Sison and having spent the best part of her life fighting for the CPP-NPA-NDF, she was continuously maligned by the party.

On February 1998, Laurenaria became executive committee member of MLPP-RHB, a breakaway group organized by Frank Pascual.

Defensor also added that until her arrest, Laurenaria was actively engaged in party building activities of the anti-Sison group by forming new mass bases and persuading pro-Sison groups to join the MLPP.

GMA calls for politics of reform, consultation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called for a shift from a politics of personality and patronage to a politics of reform and institutionalized consultation with the people.

In inducting the national officers of the Liberal Party (LP) at the Rajah Sulayman Park in Malate, called on the members of the LP, whom she called political pioneers, to carry on the ideas of the party's founding fathers, whether in government or in the promotion of the new politics.

"Let us continue to create together. Let us never fight. Let us win the future together for the people," said the President, who is honorary chairperson of the LP, which is aligned with the ruling coalition.

The country can never with the war against poverty unless the character of Philippine politics is changed, the President said.

The Chief Executive said that as a member of ruling coalition, she was calling on the members of the LP and other allied parties to lead the way towards a more productive 21st century.

"We have to find a way of ending the decades-old adversarial but also often horse-trading relationship between Congress and the Presidency," she added.

The President also said that the first decade of the 21st century should see the final demise of bossism, and the guns, goons and gold that characterized state politics of the last century.

"True democratic representation means rationality in the electoral process. Citizens must be given the tools for rationale choices and their votes must be precisely counted," she said.

She said electoral leaders must be more and more put to task whether they are truly representing the people or only their own or their friends' interests.

The Liberal Party's National Executive Council conferred the LP Honorary Chairmanship on the President during its meeting at the Club Filipino last July 24.

Rep. Florencio Abad of Batanes, who was inducted as LP president, said the LP named the President as honorary chairman in recognition of her ties with the party. Her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, served as LP president and was elected under the LP banner.

The other LP officers the President inducted included Manila Mayor Jose Atienza, Jr. as Executive Vice President; Rep. Benigno Aquino III as vice president for Luzon; Rep. Antonio Eduardo Nachura, vice president for Visayas; Rep. JR Nereus Acosta, vice president for Mindanao; Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council Chairman Michael Defensor, vice president for the National Capitol Region; Rep. Danton Buesser, vice president for sectors; Rep. Rodolfo Bacani as secretary general; Rep. Junie Cua as deputy general secretary; Rep. Rafael Nantes as treasurer; Rep. Joey Hizon as deputy treasurer; Eleazar Quinto as director general; Senator Francisco Pangilinan as chairperson of the parliamentary caucus and Samar Gov. Raul Daza as chairperson of the caucus of local chief executives.

Former Senate President Jovito Salonga is the party's chairman emeritus.

GMA praises 2 Filipino students for winning top spots in ASEAN Quiz

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today praised the two Filipina champions of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Quiz, saying she hopes the two will be among the future experts of the region.

During the ASEAN Quiz finals in Bangkok, Thailand last October 3, 2002, Retchell Suratos Catambay, a fourth year student of St. Albert the Great School in Dagupan City, won first place in the individual competitions of the ASEAN Quiz Regional Finals while Glorian Saavedra Concepcion, who is in her senior year at the Zamboanga National High School, placed second in the individual competition.

Catambay was awarded \$500 as champion while Concepcion got \$400 as second placer. Concepcion also got part of the \$1,500 as member of the Blue Team that bagged the first prize in the group competition.

The two bested all (Individual Level) participants from ASEAN, with two contestants from each country.

"This is a great day for the Philippines," the President told the two during their meeting.

She also encouraged the two to enter the Philippine Foreign Service in the future.

"So, you're now our ASEAN experts," the President added.

The President asked the two on the categories used in the contest. Among the fields adopted in the regional test which the two answered were ASEAN treaties and declarations, ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) and the ASEAN Summit Meetings.

The two were accompanied to Malacañang by their academic adviser, Vic Agbayani, and Catambay's parents, Julian and Mary Catambay.

The ASEAN Quiz is a project of the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information and is implemented in cooperation with the 10 ASEAN member-countries.

It is a competition on knowledge of ASEAN among fourth year students of both public and private high schools. Its aim is to elicit the spirit of healthy competition among ASEAN youth in a friendly quiz game that exposes them to ASEAN cultural, political, economic and social information.

Through ASEAN Quiz, it is envisioned that the ASEAN youth will be more aware of the organization and its member-countries.

The Philippine leg of the ASEAN Quiz was held at the NBN Studio in Quezon City last August 5 and 6 and was televised nationwide on August 7, ASEAN Day.

The National Finals, which were organized by the Office of the Press Secretary in coordination with the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs, brought together 28 contestants representing different regions in the Philippines.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 8, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029214245/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct08.htm>

The President's Day: October 9, 2002

09 OCTOBER 2002

- **GMA restates RP commitment to support U.S.-led war against global terrorism**
- **GMA cites two main concerns of gov't in case a new Gulf war erupts**
- **GMA lauds U.S. for development assistance to Mindanao**
- **GMA still mum on 2004 plans, reveals 8-point work program for next 6 months**
- **GMA determined to bring RP-U.S. ties to new era of stronger, more equitable partnership**
- **GMA cites importance of Islamic countries in Philippine foreign policy**
- **GMA cites EPPI for expansion, providing jobs to people**

GMA restates RP commitment to support U.S.-led war against global terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today restated the Philippines' commitment to support the United States-led war against global terrorism even as she called on the United Nations Security Council to consider the US case against Iraq for the sake of humanity.

In her policy speech delivered this morning before the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP) at the Mandarin Hotel in Makati City, the President said the alliance between the Philippines and the US has become more important "in our righteous fight against terrorism and poverty."

The President said that today the war against terrorism has reached another defining moment as the issue of Iraq sharpens in focus.

"It is a moment for the Philippines to calibrate, recalibrate its foreign policy so that we can continue to achieve our goals of peace, prosperity and stability in the context of the realities lying today in the international and regional environment," the President said.

According to the President, the current Philippine-US alliance is a moral partnership that is governed by the common belief in strong democratic institutions that will create peace and freedom for peoples everywhere.

"We are determined to fight terrorism to the end. We have offered political, security and humanitarian assistance to the US in the pursuit of her most vital interests against terrorism which coincide with our own," the President said.

As part of the commitment to fight global terrorism, the Philippines also supports the case brought by the US against Iraq in the UN Security Council, the President said.

"The UN Security Council must give these charges the most urgent and serious consideration for the sake of the whole world," the President said.

When pressed in the open forum on what the Philippines would do in case the US attacks Iraq, the President said "tactically, we have to cross the bridge when we come to it."

She said that the main concern of the government right now is preparedness for Filipinos in the Middle East and energy security of the country in the event that the US attacks Iraq.

In rejecting criticisms that the Philippines is "being slavish" to the US by siding with Washington in the issue of Iraq, the President said: "Our motivation is not about pleasing America on this issue. Our motivation is working with the world to save mankind against the perpetuation of terror."

The President said that the “strategic partnership” between the Philippines and the US has reached a high point during the RP-US military training exercise, called *Balikatan 02-1*, held in Mindanao.

“The tenacity of our soldiers coupled with the superior technological assistance of the US ripened into the correct strategy that has severely decimated the Abu Sayyaf and kept them on the running,” the President said.

GMA cites two main concerns of gov’t in case a new Gulf war erupts

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited two main concerns of the government in the event that the United States pushes through with its threat to attack Iraq.

In her policy speech this morning before the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP) at the Mandarin Hotel in Makati City, the President said the first concern of the government is on how to ensure the safety of Filipino workers in the Middle East.

The second concern, the President said, is energy security for the Philippines in the event that another Gulf war breaks out.

On the first concern, the President said, she supports the stand of former AFP Chief, retired Gen. Roy Cimatu, now special envoy to the Middle East, that a relocation, rather than evacuation back to the Philippines, is the more appropriate measure to take.

The President, however, said that for workers who would like to be repatriated to the Philippines in case of war, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) would provide them with assistance.

On energy security, the President said, the stockpile of oil firms today is good for 62 days even if the government has only asked them for a 40-day stockpile.

According to the President, in the past, the oil firms’ stockpile included those that are still in transit but today’s stockpile pertains to what is in the country.

In addition to that, the President said, she has also asked Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. to help look for possible new sources of oil, like Russia.

“This will be a new fresh source of oil for the Philippines,” the President said.

GMA lauds U.S. for development assistance to Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the United States, particularly the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), for its assistance in the development of Mindanao.

In her policy speech this morning before the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP) at the Mandarin Hotel in Makati City, the President said for the fiscal year 2002, the USAID extended some P4 billion in assistance to the Philippines and more than half of this went to economic and social projects in Mindanao.

“This assistance to Mindanao is more than double what the USAID has provided for the island last year,” the President said.

She said that the USAID’s growth with equity program in Mindanao has helped strengthen the competitiveness of Mindanao’s fishery, fruit and vegetable industries.

The President said that the agency's livelihood enhancement and peace program, or LEAPP, has also helped former combatants of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in reintegrating into the local economy. This program has already benefited some 13,000 former MNLF fighters, she added.

Aside from helping MNLF returnees in their livelihood projects, the USAID is also engaged in improving the quality of family planning and rural health services in the rural areas in Mindanao.

"Efforts are also being exerted to help local governments in combating illegal fishing and logging," the President said.

She said the *Bayanihan* assistance program of the US, which runs from August 1 to December this year is aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of Basilan and Zamboanga.

The US is earmarking \$2 million for the construction of hospitals, medical clinics, school buildings, water wells and water treatment facilities in Basilan and Zamboanga, the President said.

GMA still mum on 2004 plans, reveals 8-point work program for next 6 months

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today refused to categorically reveal her plans for 2004, stressing that she would rather concentrate on solving the country's problems and focusing her energies on effective governance.

"You know, I don't spend my time introspecting about 2004. I spend my time looking at the problems, trying to see them in a strategic framework, working out the strategic directions to address them," the President said at the open forum of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP) held this morning at the Mandarin Hotel in Makati City.

The President said she is focusing on an eight-point work program of her administration for the next six months.

She enumerated only five of the eight-point agenda for action which, she said, would be the topic of another policy speech she will deliver this coming Friday.

In reply to a persistent query on whether she would run in the presidential polls in 2004, the President said that as a politician, she is a fatalist. "I think that the presidency is made in heaven, and that's up to God," she said.

When pressed on when she would announce her plans for 2004, the President replied: "I don't know. The Lord's timing is always perfect. So, I'll leave that up to Him," she said.

The President then enumerated her agenda for action.

First in the work program, the President said, is to push for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to strengthen the domestic market and to wean the country from too much dependence on the export market.

The second, the President said, is to further boost the housing industry because of its multiplier effect and getting the private sector to go invest more in housing by removing bottlenecks.

The third is how to reduce cargo rates from Mindanao to Luzon, with the Development Bank of the Philippines putting together a P30-billion master plan for this purpose, the President said.

She said that the fourth item in the work program is to develop Makati City into an urban tourism destination for tourists, especially working Japanese single women who like to go shopping.

The fifth is to decongest Metro Manila traffic by getting off the ground such projects as the North Rail Project in Central Luzon as well as the rail system in going to CALABARZON (Calamba, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) growth area and to the Port of Batangas.

Although she kept mum on her 2004 plans, the President, however, thanked politicians endorsing her for 2004, referring to statement of support aired Tuesday by leaders of the Liberal Party.

“But on my part, as President of the Philippines, my primary focus is on governance and that is why I’ve given myself an eight-point work program for the next six months,” the Presidents said.

GMA determined to bring RP-U.S. ties to new era of stronger, more equitable partnership

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today restated the administration’s eight-point foreign policy, emphasizing her determination to push Philippine-US relationships forward to a new era of a stronger and more equitable partnership.

Speaking at a luncheon meeting with the officers and members of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines at the Mandarin Hotel in Makati, the President said the drive to bring Philippine-American relationships to a higher level derives “its main promise in greater security and stability for our nation, for the region and the world.”

“We are living in trying times,” the President said. “Close partnership and alliances and imperative for peace, security and democracy. This is the strategy of survival.”

“This strategy,” she added, “stands on the determination to shape our relations with America in consonance with existing treaties, with our shared goals but, most of all, with our Filipino interests.”

The President said the current Philippine-US alliance is a moral partnership which is governed by the common belief in strong democratic institutions that will create peace and freedom for people everywhere.

She said the administration’s efforts at modern democratic governance have been undermined by a climate of incessant conflict and the determination to bring progress to the nation has been tested by fanatical armed groups who find every ideological excuse to block development.

“These (fanatical groups) include the terrorists in the radical left who have lost all moral force to lead any revolution for the poor,” she added.

“The truth and reality is that we are at war,” the President said. “We are at war with an enemy that is as tenacious and incorrigible as ever in its evil designs.”

The President, in redefining Philippine foreign policy, said that one reality is that more and more policy decisions have really been made in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

“Thus, soon after (the) September 11 (terrorist attacks in the US) last year, we initiated a trilateral agreement with Indonesia and Malaysia to check terrorist incursion in our common seas. Thailand has agreed to join this agreement,” the President said.

The second reality, the President added, is that the international Islamic community will continue to be important for the Philippines. “We continue to pursue broad interfaith dialogues to promote Christian and Muslim solidarity,” the President said.

Third, the coming years will see the growing importance of multilateral and inter-regional organizations to promote common interests such as the strengthening of the United Nations.

“Thus, the Philippines supports the case brought by the United States against Iraq before the UN Security Council,” the President said.

Fourth, the President said that the defense of the nation’s sovereignty and the protection of its environment and natural resources can be carried out only to the extent it asserts its right over maritime territory and gets others to respect those rights.

Saying this is unrelated to the war against terrorism, the President expressed gladness that the case against the Chinese fishermen has come to a satisfactory conclusion.

Fifth, the President said, the country’s economic growth will continue to heavily involve direct foreign investments, giving a strategic importance to the country’s relations with Europe which is now a major investor.

Sixth, the President said that a country like the Philippines can benefit most quickly from international tourism. “Thus, we deplore that our bid to attract investments and tourism have been sabotaged by those who relish the notoriety brought about by barbaric acts such as hostage taking, political assassination, destruction of property and senseless murder,” she said.

Seventh, the President emphasized, overseas Filipinos will continue to play a critical role in the country’s economic and social stability.

“Thus, even in the shadow of conflict in Iraq, it is our duty to all Filipinos in the Middle East to prepare for any contingency and be able to move them to safer ground at a moment’s notice,” the President said.

And the last but of utmost importance, the President said China, Japan and the United States and their relationships will be the determining influence in the security situation and economic evolution of East Asia.

The President said the Philippines’ moral partnership with America extends beyond military cooperation. “It is a partnership that sustains the most important battles in our own land – the battles against poverty, ignorance, disease and social injustice,” the President said.

GMA cites importance of Islamic countries in Philippine foreign policy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the importance of the Islamic countries to the Philippines, saying it is included among the eight realities that she must deal with in formulating the nation’s foreign policy.

Answering questions from members of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP) during a luncheon meeting at the Mandarin Hotel in Makati, the President said the Islamic world is a very important host to Filipino workers.

She said the Islamic world is not only an important source of energy, but more than anything, it has been very helpful to the Philippines in its peace process in the South.

“That’s why even as we seek to find our place in the global alliance against terrorism, part of the 14 things I enumerated in the FOCAP last year in the fight against terrorism, is to broaden our interfaith dialogue,” the President said.

Instead of a religious war which is the aim of the terrorists, the President said the opportunity must be used to deepen religious understanding.

“So we have continued our dialogue with the Islamic countries, and I am very gratified that they continue to be very supportive of our efforts in Southern Philippines, as well as in being a good host to our Filipino workers,” the President said.

The President, in her eight point foreign policy, said that the international Islamic community will continue to be important for the Philippines.

“Thus, we continue to pursue broad interfaith dialogues to promote Christian and Muslim solidarity,” she said.

This is also among the programs of the Christian Democratic International of which Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. is a vice president, the President said.

GMA cites EPPI for expansion, providing jobs to people

LIPA CITY, Batangas – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked the investors of Epson Precision Philippines Inc. (EPPI) for their continued expansion of operations in the country and for providing stable jobs to almost 5,000 workers.

In her brief remarks during a tour of the EPPI plant at the Lima Technology Center in Lipa, Batangas, the President cited the computer printer manufacturing firm for its contribution to the Philippine economy and the administration’s efforts to provide jobs for Filipinos.

“Thank you for bringing continuous employment in our country and we are looking forward to the possible expansion of your company in the Philippines,” the President told EPPI executives led by Motoharu Komatzu, president of Epson Philippines, and Hideaki Yasukawa, chairman of Seiko Epson.

Despite heavy rains, the President motored to the EPPI plant here from her luncheon meeting with the Foreign Correspondent Association of the Philippines in Makati City.

Upon her arrival here, the President received a warm welcome from the officials and employees of EPPI.

The President, accompanied by Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II and Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos, then made an inspection tour of the plant.

During the tour, the President was given an update by Komatsu on EPPI’s expansion since the company started producing mini-printers in its first plant in Cabuyao, Laguna on September 1995.

Komatsu informed the President that the EPPI plant in Lipa is the largest in Asia.

He also told the President that EPPI in Lipa is the main provider and producer of terminal printers and other printer parts that are exported to the United States, East Asia and other countries.

Among the local officials who welcomed the President here were Mayor Santos, Rep. Oscar Gozos of the Fourth District of Batangas, Chairperson Lilia B. de Lima of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority, and Chief Superintendent Enrique Galang, regional director of the Philippine National Police in Southern Tagalog.

EPPI was incorporated in December 1994 as a subsidiary company which is 100 percent owned by Seiko Epson Corporation of Japan.

In September 1995, EPPI set up a plant in Cabuyao for the manufacture of mini-printers.

In September 1998, the Lipa plant was established in Batangas.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 9, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029212652/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct09.htm>

The President's Day: October 10, 2002

10 OCTOBER 2002

- **International Board of Advisors hails GMA's efforts in tackling economic issues**
- **GMA orders Health Dep't to check sale of iodized salt in markets**
- **GMA lauds law enforcement agencies for burning of seized illegal drugs**
- **GMA names SolGen Marcelo as new Ombudsman**
- **GMA orders Roxas to be more vigilant in monitoring prices of basic items**
- **Toyota informs GMA of plans to expand operations in RP**
- **GMA urges Sectoral Representative Council to campaign among people who are now tired of peace talks with reds**

International Board of Advisors hails GMA's efforts in tackling economic issues

The International Board of Advisors to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, composed of global business and political leaders, has recognized that the Macapagal-Arroyo is working diligently to tackle some "very significant" challenges to the Philippine economy amidst serious developments in the global economic arena.

In a statement issued after a two-day series of off-the-record meetings with the President, members of her Cabinet, and selected private sector representatives, the Advisors counseled the President "to do whatever is possible to work with Congress to speed up the process of reform."

During the meeting, the Board also recognized the progress that the government has made in promoting economic growth but said it was critical for the reform program to be pursued with vigor if the Philippines is to meet its important economic targets.

"The Advisors believe that volatility in the global economy will continue to present challenges to developing economy such as the Philippines and that the government must continue its program of reform and liberalization as well as taking responsible steps towards promoting Philippine integration into the global economic system," the statement said.

The Advisors said that they believe the Macapagal-Arroyo administration has made some significant accomplishments, such as creating a policy environment that is generating real economic growth.

The Advisors participated in a series of discussions on the state of the Philippine economy, its prospects and the government's ongoing efforts to promote economic development, generate increased level of foreign investment, and enhance the international competitiveness of Philippine goods and services.

Commenting on the meetings, the President said: "The Advisors, with their extensive experience leading major international corporations, organizations, and governments and related agencies, offer important perspectives to those of us charged with developing and implementing economic policies and programs to generate increased levels of trade and investments and to strengthen our country's financial position. They are also very influential messengers of goodwill for us in the global business community aside from major investors themselves in the country."

The meeting was preceded by an Experts Group Roundtable on the challenges and opportunities presented by China's accession to the World Trade Organization and its emergence as a global economic power.

The roundtable, organized by the Carlos P. Romulo Foundation, was participated in by leading academics from China, Taiwan, Australia, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines.

The experts concluded that the positive and adverse impact of China's opening up on the economies in ASEAN would depend on how individual economies structure themselves to be competitive. The emerging trend seems to be a regional production network with China as the hub and ASEAN economies occupying niches in this production value chain.

The Board of Advisors was also briefed on the conclusion of the roundtable, on the Philippines' economic performance and progress in implementing its development plan.

Private sector presentations on the information and technology (IT) sector, port operations and the Subic-Clark Alliance Development (SCAD) were also given to show areas where the Philippines has achieved global competitiveness.

Representing the government in these discussions were Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II, Presidential Adviser on Job Creation Luis Lorenzo and Tourism Secretary Richard J. Gordon.

Private sector participants included Rizalino S. Navarro, chairman of RCBC and Clark Development Corp.; Enrique Razon, Jr. and Noel Mirasol, chairman and senior vice president and chief financial officer of the International Container Terminal and Services, Inc. (ICTSI) respectively; Ramon Dimacali and Gil Guanio, chairman and founder and chief executive officer of Software Ventures International (SVIC) respectively.

The International Board of Advisors is comprised of Maarten van den Bergh, chairman of Lloyds TSB Group plc; Stephen W. Bosworth, senior advisor to J.P. Morgan and Dean of Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University; Antony Burgmans, chairman of Unilever N.V.; E. Gerald Corrigan, managing director of Goldman, Sachs & Co.; Xabier de Irala Estevez, chairman and CEO of IBERIA Lineas Aereas de España, S.A.; Marce Fuller, president and CEO of Mirant Corporation; Dr. Victor Fung, chairman of Li & Fung Group; Maurice R. Greenberg, chairman and CEO of American International Group, Inc.; Andrea Jung, chairman and CEO of Avon Products, Inc.; Paul Keating, former Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia; Minoru Makihara, chairman of Mitsubishi Corporation; Masanobu Suzuki, president and CEO of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation; Laura D'andrea Tyson, dean of London Business School; and Dr. Stephen Zuellig, chairman of Zuellig Group.

GMA orders Health Dep't to check sale of iodized salt in markets

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, expressing concern for the health of the Filipinos, today instructed the Department of Health (DOH) to go to market starting Monday next week to make sure that retailers sell only iodized salt as part of its "Patak sa Asin" nationwide campaign.

The President also urged the health department to coordinate with local government units to ensure the success of this campaign.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit and Marikina Mayor Marides Fernando will lead the local government officials in making the rounds of markets in Marikina next week and post stickers of approval on the stalls of retailers who sell iodized salt and issue warning notices to those who vend non-iodized salt.

Health department and local officials will seize non-iodized salt being sold in stores and stalls and replace these with iodine-treated merchandise.

"We should be vigilant if we want to see results," Dayrit said.

Dayrit said the health department is bent on making all vendors sell only iodize salt.

The Asin Law, or Republic Act 8172 passed in 1995, directs all salt manufacturers, including producers, importers, traders and retailers, to iodize salt both for human and animal consumption and for food processors and food establishments to use only iodized salt.

Health authorities said that vendors all over the country caught selling non-iodized salt will be given warning notices on the first and second offenses. For a third offense, they will be fined not less than P1,000.

According to health officials, the department will be conducting weekly market inspections to monitor the sale of iodized salt.

Health and local officials will be checking on some 2,225 public, private and satellite (talipapa) markets nationwide starting Monday, armed with 41,077 salt test kits.

The health chief stressed that the lack of iodine can affect the intelligence quotient (IQ) of an individual. A person loses 10 to 15 IQ points if he/she lacks iodine in his/her system.

“Iodine works like the telecommunication system inside the brain. The system is more effective the more cell sites there are. In the same manner, having enough iodine can be compared to having many cell sites in the country so that getting your message across is very easy even if we are separated by islands. The iodine makes our brain function efficiently by interconnecting the different parts of our nervous system. That’s why we have children who are quick and fast learners. On the other hand, the lack of it may explain why there are children who are slow learners,” Dayrit explained.

Experts said that the latest National Nutrition Survey of the Food and Nutrition Research Institute revealed that 35.8 percent of 6-12 years old children suffer from moderate to severe iodine deficiency disorder.

Health officials said that “although there is a high awareness of iodized salt (87%), the utilization rate is still low (23.8%).” They attributed this development to the fact that non-iodized salt is widely available in markets and iodized salt is slightly more costly.

GMA lauds law enforcement agencies for burning of seized illegal drugs

CALAMBA, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the country’s law enforcement agencies, particularly the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), for institutionalizing the destruction of seized and surrendered illegal drugs.

True to her vow to step up the campaign against drug trade, the President led here the public burning of seized methamphetamine hydrochloride, more popularly known as shabu, and marijuana.

In her second State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered last July, the President elevated the drug menace in the country to the level of a national security problem.

“In this war with the drug trade, there will be no compromise, no quarter, nor fear or favor,” the President said in her SONA.

The event, held at the compound of the Integrated Waste Management in Barangay Puting Lupa, was attended by members of the Dangerous Drugs Board, Congressional Oversight Committee on Dangerous Drugs co-chairmen Sen. Robert Barbers and Cebu City Rep. Antonio Cuenco, Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuno, and other local officials.

Destroyed under the supervision of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) were 198.60 kilograms of shabu and 111 kilograms of marijuana.

The drugs were under the custody of the Philippine National Police Crime Laboratory and the National Bureau of Investigation. The courts have given permission for the destruction of the dangerous drugs.

According to the PDEA, the ceremony is the first-ever burning of seized, confiscated or surrendered dangerous drugs under the new law, Republic Act 9165, otherwise known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

Of the shabu burned, 191.94 kilograms came from the PNP Crime Laboratory, while 6.65 kilograms originated from the NBI while 101 kilograms of the marijuana destroyed came from the PNP Crime Laboratory and 10.14 kilograms came from NBI.

In a statement, the PDEA said the seized drugs covered a total of 251 cases filed in court involving shabu, 94 from the PNP and 157 from the NBI, while a total of 16 cases involving marijuana, 7 from the PNP and 9 from the NBI.

According to the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act, the PDEA shall take charge and have custody of all dangerous drugs, plant sources of dangerous drugs, controlled precursors and essential chemicals, as well as instruments/paraphernalia and laboratory equipment confiscated, seized or surrendered for proper disposition.

GMA names SolGen Marcelo as new Ombudsman

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today appointed Solicitor General Simeon V. Marcelo as the new Ombudsman, replacing Ombudsman Aniano Desierto, who retired from office.

Marcelo's appointment was announced by Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in his regular press conference this afternoon in Malacañang.

Marcelo, 49, was appointed by President Macapagal-Arroyo as Solicitor General in February 2001.

Marcelo, who earned his Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of the Philippines, has been a consistent scholar and a dean's lister during his student days. He placed fifth in the 1979 bar examinations.

Marcelo was a partner in the Carpio, Villaraza and Cruz Law Offices from 1982 to January 2001. He was also an associate of the ACCRA Law Offices from 1980 to 1982. In 1974, Marcelo was a professorial lecturer at the Nueva Ecija Doctors Colleges.

Other positions he held included the following: chairman of the National Committee on Legal Aid of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, from 1997 to 1999; director for Legal Aid Planning of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines from 1999 to 2001; corporate secretary of the International Chamber of Commerce-Philippines, Inc., from 1999 to January 2001; and director and chairman of the committee on constitution and by-laws of the Philippine Bar Association, from 1998 to January 2001.

GMA orders Roxas to be more vigilant in monitoring prices of basic items

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered Secretary Manuel Roxas II of the Department of Trade and Industry to be more vigilant in the monitoring of prices of basic commodities so that the traders will not take advantage of the current situation.

Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said the President is really concerned with the prices of basic goods and that is the reason why she directed Roxas not to concentrate on the price ceiling but to tightly watch the basic commodities.

“Maybe not price ceiling but what the President wants is close monitoring of prices. That’s why the directive or the instruction for Secretary Roxas is to be more visible and more active in the actual price monitoring,” Bunye said in his regular news briefing this afternoon.

Bunye said the purpose of the President’s instruction to Roxas is to keep traders from taking advantage of the increase in the price of oil products.

Malacañang was reacting to reports that the price of *pan de sal* would increase by 50 percent, to P1.50 per 30 grams from the current P1, according to the Philippine Federation of Bakers (PFB).

PFB vice president for Luzon Luisito Chavez earlier reported that the continued rise in the price of wheat in the world market due to the shortfall in United States, Canada and Australia, will force bakers to raise the prices of various bread products, including *pan de sal*.

But Roxas has assured the public that the price of *pan de sal* and other bread products will not increase after getting an assurance from the Philippine Flour Millers Association (PFMA) that importers are still able to buy flour at lower prices.

Meanwhile, the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) explained that while the prices of noodles and flour have gone up, the prices of other basic goods and commodities such as canned sardines, coffee and detergent bars have remained stable despite the recent fuel price increases.

The NPCC assured consumers that the government would closely monitor price movements and supplies of agricultural products, manufactured food items, medicines and petroleum-based products.

Toyota informs GMA of plans to expand operations in RP

STA. ROSA, Laguna – Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) executives informed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today of its plans to further expand operations in the Philippines.

The President thanked the Toyota executives for their continued confidence in the administration and their trust in the skills of the Filipino workers who are benefiting from the planned expansion.

“*Maraming salamat sa magagaling na Pilipinong manggagawa dito sa Toyota* (I am grateful to all of the very hardworking Filipino workers here in Toyota),” the President said amid cheers and applause from the workers at the Toyota plant here.

The TMC executives later handed over to the Office of the President its newest automobile which runs on a “hybrid system,” an environment-friendly technology developed by the motor company.

TMC president Fujio Cho, in turning over to the President the key to a (light aqua metallic opal) Toyota Prius, explained that the sedan runs on both electric and gasoline power.

Aside from Cho, among those who welcomed the President here were Toyota Philippines Chairman George Ty, Toyota Japan Managing Director Akio Toyoda and Auto Parts Philippines president Nobuharu Tabata.

The car, valued at \$20,000 (inclusive of taxes), is at present available only in the Japan, United States, and some parts of Europe.

According to Cho, TMC have been donating “hybrid system” cars to heads of states in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other regions to show Toyota’s dedication to make the industry more environment-friendly.

Under the arrangement, the OP will utilize the donated Toyota Prius.

The Toyota Hybrid system uses a battery to store energy that is ordinarily wasted while driving or stopping and then applies the stored energy to supplement engine power for starting and accelerating.

As result, the battery recharging cycle is entirely self-contained so you don't have to plug anything in.

According to TMC, some Prius users report they can drive for long periods without the gasoline engine turning on. TMC also said the "hybrid system" technology works best in urban stop-and-go driving situations.

The Toyota Prius utilizes an average of 29 kilometers per liter of gasoline.

GMA urges Sectoral Representative Council to campaign among people who are now tired of peace talks with reds

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the Sectoral Representatives Council (SRC), who presented her this afternoon with a resolution in support of peace negotiations, to go out and campaign among the 95 percent of the citizenry who are now tired of formal peace talks with the communist rebels.

In an *en banc* meeting with the members of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) in Malacañang, the President said: "You have to build up a peace constituency because there is only five percent peace constituency right now."

The President, at the same time, stressed that "we want peace talks, we want the NPA (New People's Army) to lay down their arms" but raised doubts about the motive of the communists in holding negotiations.

"Now they want peace talks but I doubt if they are ready to lay down their arms," the President said. "They want to use it for propaganda," she added.

During her luncheon meeting yesterday with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines, the President said the government panel has been conducting peace talks through back channels in the absence of formal negotiations, which were suspended in June last year.

The President, however, said that recent developments such as the NPA raids on government installations and private facilities have changed the policy on the insurgents.

The policy is that we are not at the negotiating table right now, she said.

The NAPC sectoral resolution called on the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines, as well as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, to return to formal peace talks and pursue them, building on the gains already achieved in previous peace talks and agreements.

"We urge all parties to integrate the social reform agenda of the basic sectors into the peace agreement and thus address the concerns long raised in the National Unification Commission processes," the resolution said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 10, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029212456/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct10.htm>

The President's Day: October 11, 2002

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- **GMA lauds Philippine team for admirable performance at ASEAN Skills Competition**
- **GMA names Vistan special assistant for private sector housing**
- **Keeping fares down, stimulating SMEs, jumpstarting housing top GMA's 8-point work agenda for 6 months**
- **GMA lauds Toshiba for continued confidence in RP economy**

GMA lauds Philippine team for admirable performance at ASEAN Skills Competition

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today extolled the Philippine team that went to the recently concluded fourth ASEAN Skills Competition in Jakarta, Indonesia for bagging three gold medals, three bronze medals and nine diplomas of excellence in 10 trade areas of competition.

The President personally congratulated the members along with Technical Education and Skills Development Authority Director General Dante V. Liban at the EDSA Shangri-La Hotel, where the President delivered a speech before the 28th Annual Conference of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX).

The President also conferred cash gifts to the participants in the ASEAN Skills Competition for their admirable performance.

With technical guidance from four officials and 12 experts, the 24 young Filipino competitors engaged in skills encounters with counterparts from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei and Vietnam. The Philippines' best vied in 12 trade areas opened for competition.

Jerrick Raul, Jeffrey Sulit and Edilbert Mendez bagged gold medals in the Computer-Aided Design Drafting, Information Technology and Cabinet-Making events respectively. Raul garnered a score of 550 points, earning him the Best in Country award.

Bronze medals were won by Ramil Tagaytayan (Plumbing), Elgie Paz (Cabinet Making), and Anabelle Flores (Ladies' Dressmaking).

Those who finished with Diplomas of Excellence in various trade areas were Troadio Paman, Richard Bestre, Lito Desacula, Michael Malazarte, Alfie Abanes, Lito Auro, Eugene de la Cruz, Arman Dabbay and Janice Exim.

In brief remarks, the President enjoined TESDA to likewise conduct training for call centers and care-giving as the two fields are among the most suitable areas of concentration of Filipino workers.

The President noted that the technology of call centers is getting very modern, as video will soon be attached to the audio calls in the near future.

The President also noted that Filipino workers could serve as care-givers to the aging population of some countries.

The President noted that technical skills are an advantage as she said that Toyota Motor Corp. plans to expand further its transmission plant in the country. She noted that 95 percent of the plant caters to exports and that it will soon export transmissions to Japan.

According to Liban, the Philippines fared well in the competition, especially in information technology, an area in which the President has continuously showed concern.

“This good showing is an indication of the responsiveness of technical education and skills development to the priorities identified by the administration,” Liban said.

The Philippine participation in the ASEAN Skills Competition was made possible through the concerted effort of the TESDA, private institutions, regional and provincial skills competition bodies and the local government units with support from the Office of the President and the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation.

GMA names Vistan special assistant for private sector housing

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she has asked banker Deogracias Vistan to be her special assistant for private sector housing.

The President made the announcement during her remarks at the 28th Annual Conference of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX) at the EDSA Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong.

“I have asked Sonny Vistan to be special assistant for private sector housing,” the President said.

She said the primary objective of Vistan is to put up a package whereby he will make available the inventory of government-owned land, which shall serve as the government’s equity for housing for government employees.

The President said these lands would be made available to the private developers.

“With government land being the equity, that should make housing truly affordable,” the President said.

The appointment of Vistan follows the announcement of the President that she will jumpstart the housing sector as part of her eight-point economic agenda for the next six months.

The former president of Equitable-PCI Bank, Vistan holds an MBA degree from the Wharton Graduate School of Business in Philadelphia.

Keeping fares down, stimulating SMEs, jumpstarting housing top GMA’s 8-point work agenda for 6 months

To keep transportation fares down, reduce transport costs from Mindanao to Luzon, stimulate small and medium enterprises, jumpstart housing, stimulate private investments in agriculture, continue building infrastructure to decongest Metro Manila, make the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) contribute to the fiscal resources, and make Makati City a specific tourist destination.

These make up the eight-point work program of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for the next six months.

In her speech before the 28th Annual Conference of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX) at the EDSA Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong, the President said a key point of focus of her work agenda is the upward trend in oil prices.

“I am determined to undertake all reasonable means to keep transport costs down,” the President said.

The President said she has instructed Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza to explore ways and means to stem the upward pressure on fares.

She said that on her orders, Metro Rail Transit (MRT) 3 and Light Rail Transit (LRT) 1 and the Philippine National Railways are not going to increase ticket charges.

She said that while imported crude oil now accounts for a mere 11.75 percent of the power generation requirements, the country's transportation sector continues to be heavily dependent on oil imports.

Thus, the social impact of transport costs cannot be overstated, she said.

She said Mendoza is in constant dialogue with various groups in the transport sector to explore other forms of reasonable relief from rising costs other than just raising transport fares.

The President also assured that the supply of oil and oil products are more than sufficient and adequate. "We have a highly diversified source of oil and its products. Thus, any possibility of a supply shortage is negligible," she said.

She noted that upon her instructions, Energy Secretary Vicente S. Perez is monitoring even more closely the inventory levels of oil and petroleum products in the country.

"Our country inventory remains within the normal range, within 50 to 65 days' supply which in itself is sufficient to see the country through any of the foreseeable scenarios in the case of a war against Iraq," the President said.

On efforts to reduce cargo rates in the country, she said the government is promoting competition at the ports, addressing reported overcharging in cargo handling tariff, reducing the government share of port fees from 40 percent to 10 percent and rationalizing the bidding terms of reference for cargo handling services.

The President said she has instructed Development Bank of the Philippines president Vitaliano Nañagas to go full blast and concentrate on the development of progressive, long-haul shipping to constitute the country's national backbone in the transport of bulk products and the development of the roll-on, roll-off ferry and road network to link Mindanao to the growth centers of the country.

The DBP has put in place a P30-billion credit facility to fund measures to bring down cargo rates.

On moves to jumpstart housing, the President said her administration is giving banks policy signal incentives to fund developers on their own and get bureaucracy out of their way.

The President revealed that she has asked Deogracias Vistan, former president of Equitable-PCI Bank, to be a special assistant for private sector housing, whose primary job is to make available the inventory of land owned by the government institutions, which shall serve as the government's equity for housing for government employees.

For infrastructure to unclog the streets of Metro Manila, the President said her efforts will focus on beginning construction on the commuter links between Metro Manila, the Northrail system and the toll road all the way to Batangas port in the south.

Within Metro Manila, she said she is monitoring the smooth start of the final linkage of MRT with LRT.

She said has also ordered Metro Manila Development Authority Chairman Bayani Fernando to sit down with Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon Datumanong and Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. president Ephraim Genuino to review the DPWH's infrastructure program for Metro Manila. "The mission is to ensure that the program makes sense and will produce visible results quickly," she said.

The President said she has also instructed Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz to work with PCGG Chair Haydee Yorac to expedite the release of the \$600-million Marcos' deposits with the Philippine National Bank and liquefy the coconut levy's remaining 27 percent of the San Miguel Corp., which is sold through bidding, to generate substantial dollars and funding for our system.

On making Makati City a primary tourist destination, the President cited a recent study by a Hawaii-based expert who discovered that Makati offers more than what Honolulu does.

“Makati, with its compact, easy to secure location, world-class malls, entertainment facilities and cheap shopping, can be promoted as an attractive destination perhaps with a side trip to Boracay or similar resorts as part of the package,” the President said.

The President also ordered Presidential Adviser on Agricultural Modernization Angelito Sarmiento and Presidential Advisee on Jobs Creation Luis Lorenzo to work with the Departments of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform to remove the biggest obstacle to the free flow of private sector investments into agriculture, which is the rigidity of second round land transfer under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

GMA lauds Toshiba for continued confidence in RP economy

BIÑAN, Laguna—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Toshiba Corporation of Japan for its continued confidence in the Philippine economy and for providing jobs to Filipinos.

In her short remarks during a visit to the plant of Toshiba Information Equipment (Phils), Inc. at the Laguna Technopark here, the President personally thanked Tadashi Okamura, president and chief executive officer of Toshiba Corporation in Japan, for the company’s contribution to the economy and its continued operation in the country despite the economic slowdown brought about by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States.

“What I can say now is thank you for your continued stay in the Philippines and right now we are looking for the possible expansion of Toshiba’s operation here in our country,” the President said.

Upon her arrival at Toshiba plant, the President received a warm welcome from the top executives and employees of the company.

Before touring the plant facilities, the President met with Okamura; Naoki Kubo, executive assistant to the president of Toshiba Corp., Japan; and Kenichi Ohashi, corporate representative for Asia and managing director of Toshiba Asia Pacific Pte., Ltd., based in Singapore.

Okamura briefed the President on the successful operations of Toshiba in the country and later accompanied her in the plant tour.

On Wednesday, the President also visited the Epson manufacturing plant in Lipa City, Batangas. Yesterday, the President visited the Toyota plant at the Sta. Rosa Industrial Estate in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

The President’s visits to various plants is part of her investment promotion program to attract more foreign investors to the country.

Since the Toshiba Information Equipment Philippines, Inc. (TIP) was established in July 1995 by Toshiba Corporation, one of Japan’s largest electronics and energy companies, the company received three consecutive awards for being the top exporter of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) from 1997 to 2000.

In the year 2001, Toshiba Information Equipment Philippines, Inc. (TIP) got its Hall of Fame Award and was cited as Top Environmental Performer Award by PEZA.

Fully equipped with state-of-the-art technology and facilities, TIP is primarily engaged in producing information devices and equipment for personal computers and multimedia products, such as motherboards for PC, hard disk drives and CD-ROM drives, which are distributed in the key cities in Japan, the United States and Europe.

The TIP plant in Biñan is also manufacturing lap top computers which are exported it to Japan, US and Europe.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 11, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029212520/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct11.htm>

The President's Day: October 12, 2002

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- **No change in price, size of pan de sal, GMA assured by flour millers, bakers**
- **GMA congratulates police for arrest of red vigilante kidnap-slay gangman, woman, man in another kidnap-slay**
- **GMA reiterates call for energy conservation as Middle East tension grows**
- **GMA stresses need for strong republic to reduce poverty nationwide**
- **Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**

No change in price, size of pan de sal, GMA assured by flour millers, bakers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stepped in to ensure that the price and size of pan de sal remain unchanged.

During a visit to the General Milling Corp. (GMC) plant in Pasig, the President met with members of the flour milling industry and got their assurance of a steady supply of flour and wheat in the country.

The President said the Philippine Association of Flour Millers and the Chamber of Flour Millers Association also assured her that they would not raise the prices of the commodity.

She also said the Philippine Federation of Bakers Association, which has some 10,000 members nationwide, also made their pledge to keep the price and size of pan de sal unchanged as part of their commitment to the consumer. October, incidentally, is consumer Welfare Month.

The President also said the Philippine Flour Miller Merchants Association assured her that they do not foresee a shortage of flour and wheat in the market.

"Sabi kasi sa media, P1.50 na ang pan de sal. Hindi ito totoo, piso pa rin ang pan de sal sa karaniwang sukat (According to the media, pan de sal now costs P1.50 each. This is not true, It remains at P1 each at its regular size)," the President said after the meeting.

The President said that although the price of flour in the domestic market slightly increased last July and the price of wheat increased following last year's dry spell in North America and floods in Europe, this year is a new beginning for the industry.

She said the price of wheat is expected go down following the good harvest this year.

The President noted that if raising prices becomes inevitable, the groups promised her that they would first confer with the government.

With the President during the GMC plant visit were Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Trade Undersecretary Adrian Cristobal, Leonardo Figueroa and Luisito Chavez of the Philippine Federation of Bakers Association, Alfonso Uy, Carmelo Sison and Amado Guranggo of the Chamber of Philippine Flour Millers, GMC Executive Director Romeo Sangalang, GMC Corporate Affairs Director Ric Pinca and GMC Director Jojo Dumlaog.

GMC is the nation's bigger flour miller. The combined capacities of its Lapu-Lapu and Ugong flourmills aggregate 55, 500 sacks a day. It produces a wide variety of high-quality flour products, from bakery to noodle flour. Its clients range from large-scale food manufacturers and bakery chains to household end-users.

The Philippines has 12 flour milling companies, which import 2 million metric tons of wheat a year.

GMA congratulates police for arrest of red vigilante kidnap-slay gangman, woman, man in another kidnap-slay

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the police for the arrest of a member of the notorious Red Vigilante Gang of kidnapers, killers and robbers, and two other suspects in a kidnapping with murder case.

The President dropped by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group office in Camp Crame, headquarters of the Philippine National Police, to personally congratulate the officers and men responsible for the latest successful strikes against notorious groups and individuals.

Presented to the President during her brief visit to the office of the CIDG head, Chief Superintendent Eduardo Matillano, were

Lorenzo Hidalgo, a member of the Red Vigilante Group believed involved in kidnapping, murder and robbery cases for the past three years;

Josephine Beredo and Sotero Gamab alias "Turing" who were linked to the kidnapping and murder of Ronaldo Taming, whose body was recovered two days after he went missing.

According to the police, Hidalgo was arrested through the strength of two warrants of arrest for kidnapping with murder issued by Judge Teodulo Ronquillo of the Municipal Trial Court of San Miguel, Bulacan. No bail was set for Hidalgo.

According to Deputy Director Police Supt. Charlemagne Alejandrino, the Red Vigilante Group has been linked to the kidnapping for ransom of father and son Julio and Julius Alejo of Bongabon, Nueva Ecija in October last year; the murder of Talavera ex-barangay captain Romy Ferrer and the kidnapping and murder of Michael Nuera, Florentino Pablo, Ferardo Pablo, Geronimo Andres, Dindo Fernando and Manolo Santos of Gapan, Nueva Ecija whose bodies were found dumped in San Miguel, Bulacan.

The group was also responsible for the kidnapping of a Pangasinan businessman and the abduction and murder of two Muñoz, Nueva Ecija residents.

In the case of the two other suspects, the police said Taming's brother Rogelio sought police assistance last October 8 after Beredo came to his Makati City residence asking for P20, 000 in exchange for the safe return of his brother.

Police Supt. Paterno Orduna, who worked on the case, immediately tasked operatives to follow up the lead and coordinate their movement with the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (PACER) and the Batangas Provincial Police Office.

Orduna said Ronaldo, who drives a Starex van was reportedly hired by a certain "Abet (later known as Albert Oliman) last October 7 for a trip to Batangas City. Since then, nothing was heard of him until Beredo went to the Taming residence in Makati demanding the amount.

In her statement, Beredo said Abet and Ronald were to meet Turing in Batangas City. She claimed that Abet is a drug courier who purposely took the trip to Batangas to deliver P20,000 worth of shabu to Turing.

Beredo further said that during the delivery by Abet and Ronald, Turing was not satisfied with the quality of the stuff delivered. Turing then demanded that they return his money right away.

Abet who is now the object of a CIDG manhunt, asked that he be allowed to go back to Makati to produce the amount to be reimbursed, leaving behind Ronald, but Turing fumingly said that he'd better go fast "or else Ronald would not be seen alive again.

Beredo's account led operatives and the Batangas police to the El Grande Hotel in Lipa City where Gamab was arrested October 9. That same day, the body of Ronald was found inside his Starex in Barangay Tinga in Batangas City.

GMA reiterates call for energy conservation as Middle East tension grows

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the nation to conserve energy as tension in the Middle East continued to grow.

In her remarks during a visit to a flour mill in Pasig City, the President said that the people should use oil and oil products wisely.

"Magtipid sa paggamit sa mga produkto ng gasoline (Let us use oil products wisely). Let us try to plan our trips and go for car pools," the President said.

Besides, the President said, carpooling "decongest our streets and reduce air pollution."

The President said one of her important priorities is to prevent a rise in transport fare prices.

She said she continues to confer with members of the transport industry to thwart fare increases.

The President assured that the Metro Rail Transit, the Light Rail Transit and the Philippine National Railways would not raise their transportation fees.

The Chief Executive also assured that she has asked local government executives to put off any planned increases for terminal and parking fees because these are normally passed on to the passengers.

She also said that dialogues continue among the Department of Trade and Industry, the National Price Coordinating Council and manufacturers of prime commodities to ensure a steady supply of products as well as minimize increases in prices.

"Habang pinapanatili nating matatag ang mga presyo, gagawin din nating lahat ang nararapat upang pigilan ang sinuman nagsasamantala sa mga pangamba ng ating kababayan (while we are ensuring steady prices, we will also do all to prevent those who might take advantage of the fears of our countrymen)," she said.

"Nauunawaan ko ang pagkabahala ng publiko at hindi dapat palalain ng hoarding or profiteering (We understand the worries of the public and we should not allow hoarding or profiteering)," she added.

GMA stresses need for strong republic to reduce poverty nationwide

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night stressed the need for a strong republic to reduce the poverty incidence not only in Quezon City but the whole of the Philippines.

Speaking at the first-ever Gawad Parangal sponsored by the city government of Quezon City at the Celebrity Sports Complex, the President said a strong republic needs strong institutions that have an effective governance, from the local government to the bureaucracy.

The President also expressed the belief that the relationship between the Presidency and Congress should not be adversarial and that horse trading should not be used to pass the needed laws of the present administrations.

The President led in presenting medals and special citations to a former President, a national scientist, a former education minister, a chess grandmaster and a former chief of staff-turned defense secretary who were among those

chosen as Quezon City's outstanding citizens. The presentation of awards was the culminating activity for the celebration of Quezon City's 63rd foundation anniversary Friday night.

Leading the list of awardees was former President Corazon Aquino, who was unfortunately not around to accept her award. The former President was cited for her contribution in the area of government service.

Mrs. Aquino, who is residing at 55 Times Street, was cited by President Macapagal-Arroyo as having done a lot for the country up to the present.

The President said Mrs. Aquino is still giving her advice, specially on how to take care of the overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East, in case war breaks out

The President, assisted by Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, Jr. and Vice Mayor Herbert Bautista, presented the Gawad Parangal to nine other awardees namely: Rosa Rosal for social work, Gina Lopez, community service; Justice Milagros German, judiciary; Dr. Fe del Mundo, medicine; Dr. Onofre Corpuz, education; Eugene Torre, sports; Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, military service; Mel Tiangco, mass media; and Dr. Reynaldo Punongbayan, science and technology.

The awardees, all Quezon City residents, were cited for their invaluable contribution in the task of enhancing not only the city's growth and development but in propelling the nation to progress,

The President also presented a special citation to business tycoon Henry Sy, who has been named as Quezon City's biggest employer and taxpayer, in recognition of his contribution to the economic growth of the city.

The search for QC's outstanding citizens was conducted by the committee on foundation day celebration chaired by City Treasurer Victor Endriga. Dr. Ligaya Perez, a noted writer, was named chairman of the awards committee.

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

Our position on this issue has already been made clear. While we are hoping for a peaceful resolution, we are preparing for any contingency affecting our nationals in the Middle East.”

I just had a dialogue with bakers, flour millers and dealers of wheat this morning. I am anxious about the rising price of pan de sal. They assured me the problem is not as bad as it seems.

Flour prices have actually gone up in the local market since July this year, when the supply of wheat in the world market started to go down in the face of increasing world demand for the commodity.

But the Philippine Association of Flour Millers and the Chamber of Flour Millers Association have just assured the government that the supply of flour is more than adequate to meet demand. They further committed that they will not increase the price of flour until the end of October. The Philippine Federation of Baker Association, with its 10,000 members, have also expressed their solidarity with consumers and the government.

The flour millers and the bakers will be in close coordination with the DTI and assess the situation after October.

The dealers of flour represented by the Philippine Flour Merchants Association see no change at all in the cost of their services due to the adequate supply in the market.

We commend these different sectors for rising above their interests for the benefit of consumers.

Also this week the price of LPG went up. I know the house wives are burdened by this development. We are doing all we can to mitigate its impact on the public.

As tension rise in the Middle East, the prices of oil is also rising. My priority is to hold the line on transport prices. We will also have to work hard to keep down the costs of prime commodities and other critical public services.

We are conducting dialogues with representatives of the transport sector, to stave off, as much as possible, the rise in fares. The LRT, MRT and the Philippine National Railways are not going to increase fares. We are also asking the local governments not to increase terminal or parking fees because these costs are passed on to the riding public.

I think it is high time for everybody to get into energy conservation mode. Let us control our use of gasoline products. Let us try to plan our trips and form car pools. This would also decongest our streets and reduce air pollution. We can save more and it's better for our health.

The DTI National Price Coordinating Council is in continuing dialogue with manufacturers of prime commodities, to keep the supply and price stable. I would like to thank our manufacturers for their social conscience and their solidarity with the government and the public.

As we try to stabilize prices, we shall undertake all means to stop those who will exploit the situation to the detriment of the public interest. I can very well understand the worries of our people, which should not be aggravated by hoarding or profiteering.

Nevertheless, I would like to assure everybody that we have more than enough crude oil for our needs. We buy our oil from 15 different countries. The Energy Department is in constant coordination with local oil companies to ensure a steady and stable supply under any adverse circumstance. We will keep a stable inventory of oil products at all times. We will keep alternative sources of oil ready for any contingency.

At the same time, we will not relent in pursuing our most vital development projects. I have set out my priorities for the next six months. Among these are the soft opening of the new NAIA Terminal, the North rail from Metro Manila to Clark that will also run South to Batangas Port, more low cost housing projects, and the promotion of Makati and Roxas Boulevard as prime tourist spots.

I am also focusing on strengthening the domestic economy through the Isang Bayan, Isang Produkto, Isang Milyong Piso program that will shore up our small and medium industries. We are also looking forward to the P30 billion Sustainable Logistics Development program based mainly on Ro-Ro ferry network, to support the agricultural sector and small industries in the countryside. This will also reduce transport costs from Mindanao to Manila and further stabilize food and commodity prices.

Together, we can overcome the problems we are facing. We just have to trust each other and focus on the most important things to do.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 12, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071116011953/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct12.htm>

The President's Day: October 13, 2002

13 OCTOBER 2002

- **GMA to pursue development projects**
- **GMA convenes security council tomorrow; Bunye, Ople denounce Indon bombings**

GMA to pursue development projects

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today the administration will continue to pursue its development projects, particularly those meant to benefit the poor, even as its gears up contingency measures in the event of a flareup of the Middle East situation.

The President said during her weekly radio address to the nation that there will be no letup in development efforts as she detailed anew her priority concerns and work agenda for the next six months.

“We will remain focused on the growth and expansion of the economy through the ‘Isang Bayan, Isang Produkto, Isang Milyong Piso’ program that will benefit small and medium enterprises,” the President said.

In pushing for SMEs, the President aims to strengthen the domestic market and wean the country away from too much dependence on the export market.

The President also said her priority programs for the next six months include the startup of the North Rail project from Metro Manila to the Clark Economic Zone; the upgrading of the transportation system from the metropolis to the Southern Tagalog growth area and the Batangas port; and the transformation of Makati and Roxas Boulevard into primary tourist destinations.

The President expects to decongest Metro Manila through the rail and road projects and cause the expansion of economic activities in the towns and cities along the routes of these transport systems.

“This will also make housing projects outside Metro Manila, where land is cheaper and the lifestyle more conducive to family, viable,” the President said earlier at the conference of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines.

Another priority in her program of action for the next six months is the reduction of the cost of moving cargo from Mindanao to Luzon, the President said.

She said she is banking on the support that will be given by the Development Bank of the Philippines which has made a P30-billion credit facility available for a sustainable logistics development program for a Ro-Ro (roll-on-roll-off) ferry and road network that would link Mindanao to the growth centers of the country.

“This will further stabilize food and commodity prices,” the President said.

Her work agenda also covers moves to keep down transportation costs, jumpstart housing, stimulate private investments in agriculture, and make the Presidential Commission on Good Government contribute to the fiscal resources.

The President, at the same time, reiterated her call on the people to help conserve the nation's energy resources.

She urged the people to plan their trips and form car pools, which would decongest the streets and reduce air pollution.

In the case of basic commodities, the President said the Department of Trade and Industry is holding continuing dialogues with the National Price Coordinating Council and manufacturers to ensure the stability of prices and supply of prime goods.

She thanked the producers and dealers for their social conscience and cooperation with the government and the public in maintaining the level of prices and supply of goods.

At the same time, the President warned hoarders and profiteers that the government will not hesitate to take action against anyone who takes advantage of the current situation brought about by the tension in the Middle East.

GMA convenes security council tomorrow; Bunye, Ople denounce Indon bombings

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presides tomorrow over a meeting of the National Security Council in Malacañang in the wake of the rising tension in the Middle East, a bomb explosion outside the Philippine Consulate-General in the northern Indonesian city of Manado and two bombing incidents in Bali, also in Indonesia, where more than 400 people were killed and injured.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye and Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople immediately denounced the Indonesian bombing incidents.

“We denounce these unprovoked attacks on our Consulate in Manado and those two others in Bali that followed and which killed or injured dozens of innocent people, many of them tourists,” Ople said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs, at the same time, informed Malacañang that it has instructed all of its posts overseas, particularly the Philippine Embassy in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, to take extra precautions against possible terrorist attacks in light of the recent bombing of the Philippine Consulate General in Manado, North Sulawesi province, and the bombing incidents in Kuta and Denpasar, Bali.

Bunye said the Indonesian incidents, the United States Congress’ authorization for President George W. Bush to use military force on Iraq and a review of the contingency measures in case of a Middle East flareup top the National Security Council agenda.

While the Philippines remains committed to the US-led global war on terrorism, the administration remains hopeful of a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the Middle East conflict.

Meanwhile, Ople ordered the Philippine Embassy in Jakarta to closely monitor the developments in Bali and immediately report if any Filipino was injured in the bombing.

Philippine Ambassador to Indonesia Rafael Seguis said no Filipino casualties have so far been reported in Bali, adding that the embassy is still closely monitoring the situation.

On the Manado incident, initial reports from the Philippine Embassy in Jakarta revealed that an unidentified person or persons threw a bomb at 6:45 last night, which landed just outside the gate of the Philippine Consulate General.

Except for some broken windows, there was no major damage and no one was injured.

Manado is a mainly Christian city located in the northeast of the world’s most populous Muslim nation. The city is a jumping-off point for the southern Philippines.

A few hours later, two other bombs went off in Bali. One bomb destroyed Sari, a popular nightclub located at the tourist-oriented Kuta Beach and a second, less powerful one exploded 100 meters away from the premises of the United States Consulate.

Indonesian officials said it was not immediately clear if the attack on the Philippine consulate was related to the blasts in Bali.

The attack was the second on Philippine property in Indonesia in recent years. A car bomb exploded two years ago in front of the Philippine ambassador's residence in Jakarta, killing two people and injuring dozens, including Filipino Ambassador Leonides Caday.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 13, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100704232153/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct13.htm>

The President's Day: October 14, 2002

14 OCTOBER 2002

- **NSC reaffirms gov't support to U.S.-led war on terrorism**
- **GMA orders medical team to help in Bali**
- **NSC adopts 'selective and voluntary' relocation plan for OFWs in Middle East**
- **Top-level team to get European nations to declare CPP-NPA as terrorists**
- **Benipayo appointed as Solicitor General**
- **RP offers to host int'l meet on terrorism**
- **NSC adopts contingency measures to fight terrorism in wake of Bali carnage**
- **Supply of oil, oil products adequate, Perez assures Filipino people**
- **Need for national I.D. system imperative as anti-terrorism measure, says NSC**

NSC reaffirms gov't support to U.S.-led war on terrorism

The National Security Council (NSC), the highest policy-making body of the government on issues concerning national security, today reaffirmed the administration's support to the United States-led war against global terrorism.

In a press briefing in Malacañang after the NSC meeting, the second held within the month, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez said the NSC also responded positively to the resolution of the US Congress authorizing US President George W. Bush to use force, if necessary, against Iraq.

"The response of the Philippine government is that we feel that this is in accordance with the expected timetable and, therefore, we are maintaining our current policy and its framework as already enunciated on September 17 by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and reiterated and supported and adopted by NSC in its meeting last October 1," Golez said.

The President also convened the NSC last October 1 to primarily discuss contingency measures in the event of an attack by the US on Iraq.

Golez said that the national government "is basically prepared in supporting the fight against terrorism and honoring the process in the UN and is prepared to extend security, humanitarian and political support to the US."

The NSC head, however, refused to answer how the Philippine government would react in case the US unilaterally attacks Iraq, saying "this is highly hypothetical at the moment."

He said if this event happens, there will be another NSC meeting where the consequences of such a development and possible response by the Philippine government would be discussed.

According to Golez, today's meeting of the NSC provided an overview of the security situation in Iraq and an assessment by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) of the UN Security Council action in light of the US congressional authority for the US to use force in Iraq.

Ambassador Roy Cimatu, head of the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT), briefed the NSC on the situation of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Middle East.

Cimatu, who just returned from a visit to several countries in the Middle East, presented which countries are considered to be relatively risky and countries less risky where OFWs could stay put in case the US attacks Iraq.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez also made a presentation on the conservation and stockpiling of oil in the event that the situation in the Middle East worsens.

In the NSC meeting, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), reported about the measures undertaken by the PNP to secure vital installations and other possible targets of international terrorism.

Among those who attended the NSC meeting were former President Fidel Ramos, former President Corazon Aquino, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr.; Senators Ramon Magsaysay, Jr., Loren Legarda, Manuel Villar, Juan Flavio and Tito Sotto; and Congressmen Neptali Gonzales, Jr., Raul Gonzales, Agapito "Butz" Aquino, Gerry Salapuddin, Apolinario Lozada and Prospero Pichay.

From the Executive Department, aside from Golez, Cimatú and Perez, those who attended were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro Baja, Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, Presidential Legislative Liaison Office head Gabriel Claudio, Presidential Management Staff Chief Silvestre Afable, Jr., Presidential Adviser on Regional Development Paul Dominguez, and National Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco.

GMA orders medical team to help in Bali

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the Department of Health (DOH) to send a Filipino medical team to Bali, Indonesia as part of the Philippines' humanitarian gesture to a friend-country now in grief and needing assistance.

The President made the announcement during the National Security Council (NSC) meeting this morning to assess the situation after the terrorist bombing attack in Bali on Saturday night and the overall security situation in the Middle East.

Press Secretary and Acting Presidential Spokesman Ignacio "Toting" Bunye said the assistance is being given by the Philippines "as our humanitarian gesture to a friend who is now in need." Indonesia, like the Philippines, is a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which groups them together with Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos.

"As to size of the medical team and when the medical team would be leaving (the country), we leave that to the DOH," Bunye said.

The resort island of Bali was the scene of what Indonesian officials described as the worst act of terror in the country's history, where more than 400 people were killed and wounded in a bombing attack.

With regards on the bomb explosion near the Philippine Consulate in Manado, on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said Philippine authorities they are still awaiting the results of the investigation being conducted by Indonesian authorities before making any comment.

"We cannot make any conclusions at the moment on who are the ones responsible or whether this (Manado explosion) is connected to the Bali incident," Golez said.

NSC adopts 'selective and voluntary' relocation plan for OFWs in Middle East

The National Security Council today adopted the "selective and voluntary" relocation plan presented by former AFP Chief retired Gen. Roy Cimatú, head of the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT), to be the guiding principle in the government's contingency plan in case of war in Iraq.

Cimatú recommended, however, that the Filipinos in Iraq, all 106 of them, should be evacuated in advance, meaning they will be moved out of Iraq before the start of the hostilities.

In a press briefing after the NSC meeting in Malacañang, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said that Filipinos in other parts of the Middle East who wish to be relocated to safer grounds may do so voluntarily.

“In which case our concern will be to help in their travel requirements by way of assistance in the provision of exit visas, transportation and safety in transit,” Golez explained.

Overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who will opt to stay will be advised of their situation, and, in cooperation with their employers and the host governments, they will be given all the necessary assistance to ensure their welfare, before, during and after the conflict, Golez added.

In the case of Kuwait, it will be basically “stay put” with some voluntary relocation in the areas that are very close to the Iraq border, Cimatú said.

The approved course of action for OFWs in other Middle East countries such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Egypt, Iran, Lebanon and Syria is for them to remain in their areas of employment.

According to Cimatú, majority of the 1.4-million Filipino workers in these countries would like to stay put.

Top-level team to get European nations to declare CPP-NPA as terrorists

Government representatives led by Foreign Secretary Blas Ople are visiting the capitals of the European Union to seek the declaration of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) and its front groups, as a terrorist organization and thereby undeserving of any political or material support or sanctuary.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, in his regular briefing, said Ople will be joined by Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, and Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable Jr. who is in charge of back-channel negotiations.

“It’s clear to them that they’re there to conduct diplomatic initiative to, of course, end the current hostilities and withdraw support from the CPP-NPA and, hopefully, force them to the negotiating table as early as possible,” Bunye said.

According to a Palace statement, the GRP (Government of the Republic of the Philippines) mission is based on the principle that terrorism is a universal threat that must be countered and contained by the collective action from all democratic and freedom-loving nations.

The statement added that such collective action is considered one of the effective means by which terrorist groups, if these have not yet reached the point of absolute incorrigibility, to embrace peaceful and democratic struggle to attain their political ends.

“There is no doubt that the CPP-NPA and its front groups comprise a terrorist organization. It operates clandestine cells engaged in planning and executing terrorist activities. It strives to achieve political power by force. Its actions are directed at fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures,” the statement said.

The statement said further: “Jose Ma. Sison has command and control of the CPP-NPA from within Europe. He issues orders in the conduct of terrorist actions under his true name and under the aliases Amado Guerrero and Armando Liwanag. Many of his pronouncements and interviews have been projected globally.”

The government has ample documentary and testimonial proof of terrorist acts perpetrated by the CPP-NPA and the NDF over the past 30 years, all designed to overthrow the duly-constituted government and the democratic system, the statement added.

“These include the assassination of local political leaders and representatives of Congress, the violation of electoral processes through intimidation of candidates and ballot box snatching and the mass killing of revolutionary cadres suspected of turning their backs on the underground movement,” the statement said.

It went on:

“The CPP-NPA and the NDF has also been involved in kidnapping, extortion, bank robbery, arson, the destruction of public transport facilities and attacks on commercial establishments.

“They have recruited minors for combat and planted land mines that have harmed civilians.

“The GRP is one with the international community in proscribing the use of violence and terrorism, whether to attain political or plain criminal ends, whether done by communists or other ideologically oriented groups. Europe is one of the centers of civilization where the communist movement has fully entered the mainstream of democratic discourse.

“This in the model the GRP envisions in the conduct of its peace processes.

“The GRP maintains open, informal lines of communication with the CPP-NPA-NDF. This is not inconsistent with its position that the revolutionary movement is a terrorist organization. For even in the face of the most brazen acts perpetrated by the movement, the GRP cannot totally close its eyes to the search of a peaceful solution of an ideologically-based conflict involving the Filipino people themselves – in the hope of ending the employment of violence and terrorism as a means to attain political ends, and to achieve national unity and reconciliation under the Constitution.

“Even as the GRP conducts armed counterforce against the revolutionary left and extends the hands of peace to those in it who may wish to return to the fold of democracy, it must exhaust all diplomatic means to end the violence and terrorism perpetrated by the CPP-NPA, which adversely affects the economy, prejudices employment, aggravates poverty and deepens the suffering of our people.”

Benipayo appointed as Solicitor General

Malacañang today formally announced the appointment of former Commission on Elections Chairman Alfredo Benipayo as the new Solicitor General, replacing Simeon Marcelo who is the new Ombudsman.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, in his regular press briefing, said Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz has transmitted Benipayo’s appointment papers to Justice Secretary Hernando Perez.

The appointment papers, signed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, were dated October 11, Bunye noted.

Bunye said the selection of Benipayo was based on the recommendations of a search committee.

Before he was Comelec chairman, Benipayo was Supreme Court administrator.

Benipayo was a regional trial court judge in Manila from 1983 to 1987 and later associate justice of the Court of Appeals for nine years.

He started serving in the judiciary in 1974 as district judge and vice executive judge of the Court of First Instance in Malolos, Bulacan.

In 1976, he became district judge of the CFI in Manila.

He was also an associate professor in the Faculty of Civil Law at the University of Santo Tomas.

He finished his law studies in UST and graduated cum laude in 1962 and was accepted to the Philippine bar in 1963.

RP offers to host int'l meet on terrorism

The Philippines will soon be offering to host an international conference on anti-terrorism, recognizing the fact there may be some threats to the Southeast Asian region by international terrorist organizations.

In a press briefing in Malacañang after a meeting of the National Security Council, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said the conference will be participated in not only by countries in Asia but also by the United States and possibly Australia.

Golez pointed out that one possible agenda for discussion during the conference will be on how to combine effort in the fight against terrorism.

The conference will recognize the fact that the fight against terrorism is not a fight by a single country but the collective effort of all the countries threatened by international terrorism, Golez said.

Former President Fidel V. Ramos, who is a member of the National Security Council, suggested the holding of the international conference on terrorism.

The conference will be favorable to Indonesia and the United States in light of the recent Bali bombing and the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

“We must offer our hosting as we did in 1996,” Ramos said, to which the members of the NSC consented.

NSC adopts contingency measures to fight terrorism in wake of Bali carnage

The National Security Council (NSC), in its meeting this morning presided over by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, has adopted contingency measures against terrorism in the wake of the terrorist bombing in Bali, Indonesia that killed almost 200 foreign tourists and local residents.

In a press briefing in Malacañang after the NSC meeting, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez said the three-pronged contingency plan was presented by Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

Golez said that the first component of the contingency plan is intelligence gathering or the ability of government security agencies to predict any terrorist act.

He said that on the recommendation of Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., who was among those who attended the NSC meeting, there is a need to augment the intelligence budget of the PNP, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) so that they can effectively respond to terrorist threats.

The second component, according to Golez, is “target hardening,” which means providing physical security to particular targets, and this would involve not just personnel provided by the PNP and the AFP but also by in-house security of possible targets of terrorist attacks.

The third, Golez said, is incident management, which is going to be handled at the local government level with the support of national agencies in the event that there is an actual terrorist attack.

He said that the barangays would also be utilized in the actual handling of any terrorist attack.

“This has been the policy already of the government in the aspect of prediction of any terrorist threat as well as protection of some possible targets and, of course, even in incident management,” Golez said.

The NSC meeting was attended by former President Fidel Ramos and former President Corazon Aquino, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives led by Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker de Venecia, Jr. and top Cabinet members.

Today’s NSC meeting was the second held within this month. The NSC also met last October 1 to discuss contingency measures to ensure the safety of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Middle East in case of the outbreak of another Gulf war.

Supply of oil, oil products adequate, Perez assures Filipino people

Energy Secretary Vicente Perez today assured the Filipino people that the supply of oil and oil products in the Philippines is adequate and that the possibility of a shortage is “negligible.”

The assurance was given by Perez to the National Security Council (NSC) during its meeting this morning in Malacañang.

Later in a press briefing in Malacañang, Perez said the Department of Energy (DoE) has been closely monitoring the inventory levels of oil and refined products in the country in the wake of renewed threats to peace in the Middle East.

According to Perez, the supply level of oil and refined products this week is good for 62 days, which “is sufficient to see the country through any of the foreseeable scenario in the case of military conflict in Iraq.”

Perez also emphasized that during the last 30 years, there has not been any incidence of serious interruption to the world’s oil supply even during the Gulf War of 1991.

He explained that the Philippines imports its refined diesel and gasoline products from 15 different countries, and only three of these countries are in the Middle East. “The rest are mainly in the Asia-Pacific region,” Perez added.

Perez said that the major local downstream oil industry players have continuously assured the government that they have arrangements in place to ensure a steady and sufficient supply of oil in case of a military conflict in the Middle East.

He said that the DOE will continue to pursue arrangements with oil suppliers for alternative deliveries of products “that would provide us with uninterrupted supply in the unlikely event that these contingencies would be needed.”

On oil conservation efforts, Perez said that starting next week, the DOE will be disseminating gas-saving tips to motorists through the media and gasoline stations all over the country.

One of these is the “anti-idling” campaign where drivers would be discouraged to keep their engines running while waiting for passengers or their bosses or while parking, Perez said.

Need for national I.D. system imperative as anti-terrorism measure, says NSC

The National Security Council today said that there is a need a national identification (ID) system, with the Social Security System (SSS) as the basis, as part of the government’s precautionary measures against terrorism.

“One very important aspect in the fight against terrorism is identification, to be able to identify people so that they will not come up with multiple personalities or multiple identification, considering that many IDs are very easy to produce,” National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said in a briefing in Malacañang after the NSC meeting.

Golez said the ID system is a must “if we are to fight international terrorism in light of the recent bombings in Mindanao and the latest carnage in Bali, Indonesia.”

Also during the briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said the proposal to adopt a national ID system came from Senator Ramon Magsaysay, Jr. and was endorsed unanimously by the National Security Council.

Bunye said that during the NSC meeting, Senate President Franklin Drilon gave valuable inputs on how to package the ID system so that it could be acceptable to the public.

Drilon said the information that would be needed for the ID system would be the same information contained in the SSS card. “This is public information anyway,” he said.

Golez also explained that the ID system idea would not be intrusive. “It would not invade people’s privacy,” he added.

The details of acquiring a national ID will be threshed out later, Golez said, emphasizing that one governing principle here is to make sure that human rights are not going to be violated.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: October 14, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030150159/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct14.htm>

The President's Day: October 15, 2002

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- **GMA institutionalizes giving of awards to foreign employers of OFWs**
- **Transport groups agree to defer fare hike petition**
- **GMA lauds PNP for rescue of kidnap victim, arrest of seven 7 kidnappers**
- **GMA expresses sympathies to Megawati as RP sends medical team to Bali**
- **GMA orders gov't agencies to study proposals from transport groups to prevent fare hikes**
- **Teehankee named Gov't Corporate Counsel**
- **German gov't expresses support for RP stand declaring CPP-NPA as terrorist group**

GMA institutionalizes giving of awards to foreign employers of OFWs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has issued Proclamation No. 270, institutionalizing the International Employers Awards (IEA) to honor foreign employers, principals, and companies who have promoted the employment of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and advanced their interest and welfare.

Under Proclamation No. 270, the President created the International Awards Committee to administer the conferment of the IEA on deserving employers.

The committee will be chaired by the secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). Committee members would include the administrators of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and the Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA), and a duly designated representative of land-based industry associations.

Earlier, DOLE Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas announced that the first awardees of the IEA would be accorded by the Philippine government to outstanding employers of OFWs at the opening of a two-day international gathering to be held at the Manila Peninsula on Nov. 21-22, 2002.

The President is expected to personally confer the presidential awards of distinction during the Grand Awards Night in ceremonies to be held in Malacañang Palace on Nov. 22.

According to the President, the OFWs' continued employment abroad would not have been possible without the indispensable cooperation of foreign companies, principals, employers, and overseas employment providers (OEPs) who continue to recognize the proficiency, competence and skills of the Filipino workers.

The President said that her administration has already recognized the vital role both being played by the OFWs and OEPs, including their contribution in uplifting the lives of OFW families and in boosting the country's economic development.

While the government has given official recognition to OEPs, it has yet to recognize foreign companies, employers, and principals who have provided employment to thousands of OFWs, the President said.

In pushing for the recognition of those entities abroad, the President ordered the awards committee to "immediately organize itself and prescribe the rules to the outstanding employers awards."

Transport groups agree to defer fare hike petition

The country's transport groups, particularly operators and drivers of passenger buses and jeepneys, have agreed to defer the filing of fare hike petitions until the price of diesel fuel reaches P15.50 per liter, from their current self-imposed ceiling of P15.00 per liter.

Communications and Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Chairman Dante Lantin of the Land Transportation, Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) today reported to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the Cabinet that members of the transport groups have agreed to defer their plan to seek a fare increase after Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Michael Defensor offered them the “live now, pay later plan,” in the Montalban Housing project.

According to Secretary Mendoza, some 300 units are now available under the HUDCC program.

The DOTC said that they are also acting and referring to other agencies for action the other measures suggested by the transport groups as alternative options to fare hike. These are:

- Reduce by P1.00 the tax on oil products for public utility vehicles (PUVs); freeze road users tax; increase in supervision fees, registration fees, common carrier tax, etc. for PUVS only. According to the Department of Finance, these measures would require legislations;
- Freeze exorbitant fees charged by local government units on PUVs, like common terminal fees, parking fees, etc;
- Intensive drive against against colorum, out of line and illegal PUVs and illegal PUV operations, including FX;
- Identify provincial buses and other PUVs through markings, to prevent them from entering Metro Manila;
- Rationalize routes and operations of different modes of services so that they will complement and not compete with one another;
- Rationalize FX operations;
- Develop other sources of oil and use in research findings of Filipino scientists;
- Tax-free importation of spare parts;
- Suspend emission testing; and to Rollback of toll fees paid by PUVs in South Luzon Expressway to the December 31, 2001 rates.

GMA lauds PNP for rescue of kidnap victim, arrest of seven 7 kidnappers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the police for the rescue of a 26-year-old kidnap-for-ransom victim Jimmy Ting along the boundary of Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur as well as the arrest of seven suspects in the kidnapping.

Among the items recovered were P679,000 in various denominations representing part of the total P1,680,000-ransom money paid to the kidnappers.

Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. reported the results of the operation to the President.

The mother of the victim reported the case to Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (PACER) immediately after the abduction last October 8 in Barangay Libtong, Meycauayan, Bulacan.

The rescue of Ting and the arrest of four suspects was made at the checkpoint in Badoc, Ilocos Norte, which had been set up to intercept the kidnappers who were riding a Mitsubishi Lancer GLXi with plate number UJH-480. Arrested with the victim were Fernando Gascon, Efren Gascon, Ricardo Salazar and Elmer Valenzuela.

Follow-up operations resulted in the arrest of the three other kidnap suspects on board a maroon Tamaraw FX with license plate TTE-334 at about 3 a.m. today at the Shell Station in Carmen, Rosales, Pangasinan.

The three suspects arrested in Pangasinan with the ransom money were Jay Gregorio, Rolando Estrella and Danilo Bergonia.

Police elements were able to track down the vehicle used during the pay-off.

The group of kidnapers arrested in Ilocos Norte was tasked as caretakers of the victim, while the three others negotiated and arranged for the ransom payment. Two of the suspects surnamed Gascon are brothers.

Aside from the ransom money, several high-powered firearms were also recovered from the suspects.

Appropriate charges against the suspects are being prepared. The suspects are currently being held at the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (PACER) Detention Center in Camp Crame.

In a statement released to the media, the President said the rescue of Ting and the arrest of his suspected kidnapers was the result of joint operations of PACER and the Ilocos Norte Police Provincial Office as they applied the three-tiered United Action Defense System, which has been used in the anti-kidnapping campaign since last year.

The President said this positive development is proof once more that the tried and proven formula (TTF) of community cooperation, professional police action and responsible media works well.

With the arrest of the seven suspects, the total number of arrested KFR suspects is now 104. The official figures show a clear downtrend in the number of KFR cases. As of today, there is a 32 percent decrease from the same period in 2001.

“We have taken aggressive steps against kidnapers and other criminals. We will not stop until we have them all behind bars,” Ebdane said.

GMA expresses sympathies to Megawati as RP sends medical team to Bali

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has expressed her sympathies to Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri in the aftermath of the Sunday bombing in Bali that left about 180 people dead, most of them foreign tourists and local residents.

In a telephone conversation Monday night, the President also informed the Indonesian leader that the Philippines is sending a four-man medical mission to Bali to help in attending to the medical needs of those injured. Most of the victims suffered severe burns in the worst bombing incident in Indonesia.

In his regular press briefing this afternoon in Malacañang, Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said the President has also instructed the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to convey the Philippine government’s position supporting the United Nations resolution sponsored by Indonesia and Australia declaring the Jemaah Islamiyah as a terrorist group.

Although no group has yet claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack in Bali, Australia has identified the Jemaah Islamiyah, which has links with Usama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda terror group, as the prime suspect in the attack.

Bunye said that the medical team organized by the Department of Health would soon leave for Bali.

The medical team, Bunye said, will be flying to Denpasar international airport and will be met by Philippine Ambassador to Indonesia Rafael Seguis and the Indonesian minister of health.

Bunye said the medical team is composed of Dr. Hector Santos and Direck Demiar, consultant and nurse respectively of the burn unit of the East Avenue Medical Center; and Dr. Placido Calimag and Teresita Fernandez, plastic surgeon and nurse, respectively, of the Quirino Memorial Medical Center.

The Philippine medical team will be based in a government hospital in Denpasar and will attend to patients in about 12 surrounding hospitals, Bunye said.

In a related development, Bunye also announced that the President is sending Presidential Adviser Paul Dominguez, senior consultant for Mindanao, to Indonesia to negotiate for possible oil importation from that country.

GMA orders gov't agencies to study proposals from transport groups to prevent fare hikes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed several government agencies to act on the proposals of transport groups that they have forwarded in lieu of filing fare hike petitions.

In his regular press briefing this afternoon in Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President has ordered Secretary Leandro Mendoza of the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) to submit to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) a list of spare parts requested by operators of public utility vehicles (PUVs) that may be granted reduced tariffs.

Bunye said that the President likewise directed Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to use his "moral suasion" in convincing local government units to freeze exorbitant terminal and parking fees being charged by local government units (LGUs).

The President also directed the Land Transportation, Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) to study the proposal to stop the rerouting of PUVs, Bunye said.

"Also, the Department of Energy was asked to encourage different bus companies to coordinate with oil companies on the possibility of putting up gas stations and pumps within bus terminals to avail of savings," Bunye said.

During the Cabinet meeting, Mendoza also informed the President that the transport operators and drivers have agreed to defer the filing of fare increase petitions for as long as the price of diesel fuel remains below P15.50 per liter.

Earlier, the transport groups threatened to file fare hike petitions if the price of diesel fuel goes up to P15.00 per liter.

Teehankee named Gov't Corporate Counsel

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today designated Justice Undersecretary Manuel Antonio J. Teehankee as Acting Government Corporate Counsel in the Department of Justice vice Amado D. Valdez.

Press Secretary Ignacio "Toting" Bunye announced Teehankee's designation in a press briefing this afternoon at Malacañang.

A lawyer by profession, Teehankee joined the government service after 16 years of private practice.

He obtained his Bachelor of Laws degree from the Ateneo Law School in 1983. He finished his Bachelor of Arts in Economics also at the Ateneo de Manila in 1979.

After his graduate studies in Michigan and the London School of Economics, Teehankee spent 10 years in New York with the international litigation departments of Baker and McKenzie and LeBoeuf Lamb Greene and MacRae.

Teehankee also participated in major arbitrations before the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal in The Hague and before the International Court of Arbitration of the ICC in Paris.

Teehankee's Philippine law practice focused on international commercial matters. He is also a regular lecturer on private international law and GATT-WTO law at the Ateneo Law School.

German gov't expresses support for RP stand declaring CPP-NPA as terrorist group

The Philippine diplomatic mission to the European Union (EU) has reported to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that Germany will support efforts within the EU to include the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) in the list of foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) maintained by the United Nations.

In his regular press briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said the Philippine diplomatic mission headed by Foreign Secretary Blas F. Ople held talks in Berlin Monday with German State Minister for Foreign Affairs Christoph Zoepel and Fritz Rudolf Kopper of the German Ministry of the Interior.

"The German government has given the assurance to the Philippine mission that Berlin would assist the Philippines in persuading other EU countries to declare the CPP-NPA as a terrorist group," Bunye said.

In his report to the President, Ople said that Germany itself does not have an FTO list but submits the names of terrorist organizations, along with that of the EU, to the UN.

"What is significant is that Germany does, in fact, and by its action recognizes the CPP-NPA as a terrorist organization," Ople said.

Bunye said that from Berlin, the Philippine group would also be visiting Oslo, Norway and then Denmark and finally Brussels to meet with the foreign ministers of these countries and officials of the EU.

Aside from Ople, the Philippine mission is composed of Ermita, Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales, and Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable Jr. who is in charge of back-channel negotiations with the CPP-NPA and its political organization, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

According to a Palace statement, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) mission is based on the principle that terrorism is a universal threat that must be countered and contained by the collective actions of all democratic and freedom-loving nations.

In his report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, through Executive Secretary Alberto G. Romulo, Ople said the highlights of his discussions with the German officials are as follows:

"In response to my representations for Germany not to give asylum to CPP-NPA-NDF members, including Jose Luneta, Germany said that it is more than willing to expel or extradite terrorists as long as there is no death penalty in the country of destination. It appears that, in many cases, Germany would have wanted to expel or extradite terrorists but were unable to do so because their constitution prohibits the transfer of terrorists to countries with death penalties. I told them that I fully understand their situation and said that in the future, with regard to the Philippines, Germany may not have to face the same dilemma.

"Germany is very interested in any possible linkage between the CPP-NPA-NDF and Islamic extremists in the Philippines. I told them that there has been a tactical and battlefield alliance between the two, implying that they cooperate on an operational level in their terrorist activities.

"Germany is very interested in engaging in counter terrorism cooperation with the Philippines and would like to conclude a bilateral agreement to this effect. We agreed to begin informal talks on this matter."

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 15, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030151143/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct15.htm>

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- **Germany ready to enter into counter terror cooperation agreement with RP, Ople tells GMA**
- **GMA unveils natural gas vehicle program**
- **GMA pays tribute to courage of marines**
- **Main goal in attending APEC summit in Mexico is to help generate jobs for Filipinos — GMA**
- **GMA rejects collector Templo's resignation**
- **CARAGA tribal folk to benefit from P15-M KALAHI project**
- **GMA to tap Osmeña in master plan to disperse gov't functions**

Germany ready to enter into counter terror cooperation agreement with RP, Ople tells GMA

The German government recognizes the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) as a terrorist organization and is very interested in engaging in counter terrorism cooperation with the Philippines and would like to conclude a bilateral agreement to this effect.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople, in a report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo from Europe, said he held talks yesterday (Manila time) with German officials who assured him that their government will support any effort within the European Union to include the CPP-NPA in the list of terrorist organizations maintained by the United Nations under UN Security Council Resolution 1373.

Ople is currently at the head of a top-level Philippine mission to win support within the European Union for the inclusion of the CPP-NPA in the UN list of foreign terrorist organizations.

Aside from Ople, the Philippine mission is composed of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales, and Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afaible Jr. who is in charge of back-channel negotiations with the CPP-NPA and its political organization, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Ople and the other members of the mission will be proceeding to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Spain to get these countries' support in the global fight against terrorism and the listing of the CPP-NPA as a terrorist organization.

Ople said that in his meeting with German State Minister for Foreign Affairs Christoph Zoepel and Parliamentary State Secretary Fritz Rudolph Koepper of the Ministry of the Interior, the German government assured that it would issue "a public statement supporting our request for the recognition of the CPP-NPA as a foreign terrorist organization."

The Foreign Affairs Secretary also informed the President of Germany's readiness and willingness to expel or extradite terrorists in that country.

Ople added, however, that Germany was unable to do so "because their constitution prohibits the transfer of terrorists to countries with death penalties."

"I told them that I fully understand their situation and said that in the future, with regard to the Philippines, Germany may not have to face the same dilemma," Ople said in his report to the President.

Ople added that Germany is "very interested in any possible linkage between the CPP-NPA-NDF and Islamic extremists in the country."

“I told them that there has been a tactical and battlefield alliance between the two, implying that they cooperate on an operational level in their terrorist activities,” Ople said.

GMA unveils natural gas vehicle program

To make public transportation less vulnerable to the volatility of world oil prices, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today unveiled the government’s natural gas vehicle program for the country’s public transportation.

The unveiling was undertaken during ceremonies at the Department of Energy Compound in Makati City on the occasion of the first anniversary celebration of the Malampaya Camago Deep Water Gas to Power project.

According to the President, it will be the policy of her administration to promote activities in the downstream industry, especially in the transport sector.

She said her administration has diversified fuel requirements for the power generation mix where natural gas now accounts for 18 percent as of the third quarter of this year.

“I want to pursue the same program for the transport sector by having alternative fuels, particularly CNG (Compressed Natural Gas),” she said.

She noted that widespread utilization of natural gas, which is a clean and environmentally friendly fuel, is a move towards the government’s policy of diversification of fuel sources at a time when there is a threat to energy security from the looming Iraq crisis.

The natural gas vehicle program for public transport outlines the government’s policies and strategies in developing the commercial use of natural gas in the transport sector.

The President said the Malampaya consortium has agreed to supply natural gas to be used as transport fuel at a 50 percent discount compared to prevailing diesel prices. The Malampaya Consortium is composed of Shell Philippines Exploration B.V. Chevron-Texaco and the Philippine National Oil Co. Energy Development Corp. (PNOC-EOC).

To lower the cost of converting existing vehicles into gas-fed vehicles and thus encourage the use of natural gas vehicles, the President announced that the Department of Trade and Industry will consider classifying natural gas conversion kits, which are imported materials needed to convert a diesel-fired engine into a gas-fuelled engine, as automotive spare parts.

“One percent *lang ang taripa* (The tariff is only one percent),” she said.

At the same time, the President urged the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) to promote and develop locally manufactured conversion kits that will be readily available in the market.

The President also said the Board of Investments is working to enhance the existing incentive package for investors who would be engaged in the supply and purchase of natural gas vehicles conversion kits, Original Engine Manufacturer and other related facilities.

Likewise, the President said the Department of Transportation and Communications, through the Land Transportation Office, is expected to grant exemptions to public utility vehicles running on natural gas from securing certificates of compliance with emission standards.

The DOTC, through the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), plans to privatize the granting of bus franchises for natural gas bus fleets. Two of these new franchises will be for the Batangas-Manila route and another one for the Batangas-Bicol route.

“There’s already a bus company that intends to undertake a pilot project involving up to 100 buses next year using compressed natural gas,” she said.

To accelerate the establishment of the necessary infrastructure and facilities related to the natural gas vehicle such as the refueling stations, the President ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to fast-track the issuance of Environment Compliance Certificates (ECC) for natural gas-related infrastructure facilities.

She said that the DOST will also promote and develop locally manufactured conversion kit.

The President added that Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman Bayani Fernando would consider opening C-5 to buses that would use compressed natural gas.

Shell Philippines Exploration B.V. and First Gas Power Corp. are currently undertaking studies to establish refueling stations to meet the projected gas demand for natural gas vehicles.

The President also ordered the Department of Energy to spearhead all these efforts and coordinate these initiatives with all relevant government agencies, international institutions and the private sector.

GMA pays tribute to courage of marines

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today paid tribute to the courage and gallantry of the 11 Marines killed in a clash with the Abu Sanyaf rebels in Patikul, Sulu, saying the Filipino nation is proud of them.

The President went to Fort Bonifacio this morning to visit the remains of the eight Marine troops killed in action in Sulu, expressing her sympathies to the families of the soldiers and assuring them of government support for the heroism shown by their loved ones.

The President also conferred medals on the soldiers for their gallantry, saying “Ipinagmamalaki natin ang kagitingan nila, ang paglilingkod nila hanggang sa katapusan doon sa Mindanao sa Sulu (We are very proud of them, of the sacrifice they made until the end in Sulu).”

The eight Marine honored by the President were Privates First Class Reneo Herrera, Felix Baltazar and Alberto Cabrela; Corporals Joey Silva and Salvador Daniel; Technical Sergeant Oscar Mislang; and Staff Sergeants Rofilio Lequip and Aurelio Liberan.

The remains of three more soldiers are still in Zamboanga City. They are S/Sgt. Filbert Gadia, Cpl. Benedict Cabe and Pfc. Allan Tang.

After expressing her condolences and sympathies to the families of the soldiers, the President handed over P100,000 in financial assistance to each of them.

Aside from the monetary assistance, the President conferred posthumous promotions to the soldiers and assured the families that the benefits they would get would be commensurate with their higher rank.

The President at the same time announced an initial increase in the pay of soldiers effective this month as result of the administration measure to make the soldiers’ salary commensurate with the teachers’ pay.

“Sana iyan ay magbigay pa sa inyo ng high morale dahil maraming inaasahan ang ating mamamayan sa inyong magigiting na pagseserbisyo (I hope that this would give you high morale because the people expect much from you),” she said.

Main goal in attending APEC summit in Mexico is to help generate jobs for Filipinos — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said her main goal in attending the summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) scheduled in Mexico City on October 26 and 27 is to promote the Philippines as an investment destination and thereby help in creating jobs for the Filipino people.

In an informal luncheon with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said the bottom line in all her actions is to look for jobs.

“To me that’s the bottom line of every single act I make because that’s the number one part of my medium-term plan. To fight poverty, you must create jobs through investments, specially,” the President said.

The President also said leaders of the APEC member economies would be discussing ways to help one another’s economies’ survive and even move forward “during this difficult period of continuing terrorism.”

According to the President, she will be having bilateral meetings with heads of states who, she said, she may not have a chance to meet otherwise or talk on the phone.

For example, the President said, she has a scheduled one-on-one with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“Because I would like to develop Russia as the new source of oil for the Philippines, I will be meeting with him,” the President said.

The President also said that while in Mexico City, she would be meeting with her counterparts in the US-ASEAN Business Council where they will be reviewing the investment promotion framework that had been worked out when she visited Washington, D. C. last year.

She said that it is also possible that she will be meeting with Australian Prime Minister John Howard to discuss trade issues.

The President said that although Australia is one of the country’s major sources of official development assistance (ODA), the government is “quite disappointed” that Australia is putting up non-tariff barriers on Philippine bananas and pineapple exports.

As a whole, however, relations between the Philippines and Australia are “very good,” the President said.

“We are one of the favorite beneficiaries of Australia for their ODA. And then we buy a lot of dairy products from Australia,” the President said.

GMA rejects collector Templo’s resignation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she is turning down the resignation of Customs District Collector Celso Templo of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) even as she admired the latter for resigning without being asked.

In an informal luncheon with some members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said that during a command conference in Malacañang attended by officials of the Bureau of Customs (BoC) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), there were four district collectors from the BIR and two from the BoC.

The President said that the six district collectors were asked to explain their performance record and only Collector Templo had the delicadeza to resign even if he was not fired.

“So, for this reason, I am not accepting his resignation. When have you heard of a Customs man giving up his position without being sacked?” the President asked.

The President also acknowledged that Collector Templo's performance last year "was not so bad."

"It is only just now. So, maybe he's burned out and he needs a vacation," the President said, adding that she has instructed Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo to allow Templo go on "a short vacation and then come back refreshed."

The President explained that during the command conference in Malacañang, she did not ask a single official to resign. "I was hammering performance into them," she said.

CARAGA tribal folk to benefit from P15-M KALAHI project

Tribal folk from three municipalities in the CARAGA Region (Agusan del Sur, Agusan del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Surigao del Norte) will benefit from the P15 million worth of projects sponsored by the participating agencies of the Rural Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (Rural-KALAHI) project.

The Rural-KALAHI, an anti-poverty reduction program of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, had its caravan recently in the municipalities of Loreto, Agusan del Sur; Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte; and Gigaquit, Surigao del Norte.

During the caravan, National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Undersecretary Veronica Felix Villavicencio disclosed the projects to be funded by the social fund of President Gloria Macapagl-Arroyo.

These are dried fish processing; coffee, banana and abaca plantation and production; carabao dispersal; a floating day-care center; and a tribal house that will serve as the community center of the indigenous people.

Most awaited by the tribal folk was the distribution of land titles of their ancestral domain and the signing of a P12-million palm oil plantation in Loreto, Agusan del Sur.

The different line agencies also gave their commitments.

Participating agencies present during the caravan were the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Commission on Indigenous People, Department of Health (DOH) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

The CHED provided scholarships to all deserving tribal members.

GMA to tap Osmeña in master plan to disperse gov't functions

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she would ask former Cebu Governor Lito Osmeña to actively help her administration, specifically to work on a master plan to disperse government functions.

In an informal luncheon with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said that although Osmeña has been her adviser on economic affairs since January 20 last year, this time she would be asking the former governor to help her in her plan of dispersing the various activities of government.

For instance, the President said, agriculture or defense could be in Mindanao, and then tourism and trade in the Visayas while infrastructure could be somewhere in Luzon or Metro Manila.

"It is not like transferring the whole capital from Karachi to Islamabad, or Sydney to Canberra. It is rather dispersing the various agencies where their services are most relevant," the President explained.

The President said this would be the main function of Osmeña, adding that the master plan is funded by some P30 billion, with the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) lending P20 billion.

She also disclosed that Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao, who is coming back October 23 from a study leave in Japan, would be assuming the post of chief of staff.

The President also said that she would be moving the “war room” from the Department of National Defense (DND) to Malacañang.

She said that the “war room,” which will have a secretariat to be headed by an official with a Cabinet rank, will keep track of all the various government programs and projects as well as issues like those involving internal security.

Aside from Tiglao, the President said, she will also tap Philippine Information Agency head Rene Velasco and her chief aide, Col. Charlie Holganza, in the operations of this “war room.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: October 16, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030150743/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct16.htm>

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- **GMA willing to submit a bill on proposed national I.D. system**
- **Fight poverty the 'kapit-bisig' way, GMA exhorts people**
- **GMA congratulates SOLCOM, PNP for foiling NPA attack on Camarines town police station**
- **CPP-NPA should renounce political assassinations for talks to resume — Ople**
- **Palace condemns Zambo bombings, asks citizens to help gov't in fight against terrorists**
- **GMA distributes livelihood assistance in Bicol**
- **AFP overruns new MILF camp in Lanao Del Sur**

GMA willing to submit a bill on proposed national I.D. system

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said that she is willing to submit a draft legislation to Congress on the proposed national ID system if this could not be done through an executive order.

The President told Malacañang newsmen Wednesday that she has already ordered National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez to work on the details of the national ID system as a means of fighting terrorism in the country.

“So, I’m having Roy Golez to study. Either we will produce an executive order that doesn’t need a legislation or we will submit a draft bill for legislation,” the President said.

The President recalled that during the term of former President Fidel Ramos, he also tried to implement an ID system through an executive fiat but the Supreme Court ruled that this should be done through a legislation in Congress.

A survey conducted nationwide by the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) showed that majority of the people want a national ID card system. The PIA is an agency under the Office of the Press Secretary.

“So, people want a strong Republic. Our people are tired of the use of democratic space to promote anarchy and to promote destabilization and to promote the government downfall,” the President said.

Some sectors have expressed opposition to the proposal, saying that this could lead to possible violation of human rights.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., an opposition stalwart, has supported the administration proposal, saying that it is a basic requirement for peace and progress.

Pimentel has urged both houses of Congress to act with dispatch on Senate Bill 1989, which he authored, establishing a National Identification System or NIS.

According to Pimentel, an efficient NIS will enhance security measures against terrorists and help ordinary citizens in transacting business with both government and agencies.

Fight poverty the 'kapit-bisig' way, GMA exhorts people

SAN JOSE, LUPI, Camarines Sur—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today renewed her call for the people to unite and lock arms (*kapit-bisig*) in fighting poverty and improving their lives.

In her brief remarks at the National KALAHÍ (*Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan*) Day and the launching of the KALAHÍ program in this town, the President said that poverty, like terrorism, can be eradicated.

“Isipin natin na ang kahirapan, tulad ng karahasan, malulunasan kung tayo ay magtutulongan, malulunasan kung tayo ay kikilos bilang tunay na magkalahi, kapig-bisig (Let us think that poverty, like terrorism, can be remedied if we are united, if we act as one race with arms locked,” the President said.

The President acknowledged that the basic needs of the people, like food, shelter, education, and jobs, are still not being provided to people in some areas, like in the town of Lupi in Camarines Sur.

She said that it was providential that the KALAHI National Day or a National Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty was celebrated in this town, which is also celebrating its foundation day.

The President said that she is the only chief executive that has visited the town, known as one of the poorest in the country.

According to the President, some of her advisers thought of launching the KALAHI National Day somewhere in the CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) area but she objected, saying that CALABARZON is the most affluent region outside of Metro Manila.

She then asked the organizers to launch the program in the country’s poorest of the poor region so that these people “can see the face of government.”

As part of the KALAHI program, the President called on the local residents to take advantage of the jobs fair being organized in the town. She said that out of the 2,060 available jobs, only 405 were applied for, leaving an excess of some 1,655 jobs.

GMA congratulates SOLCOM, PNP for foiling NPA attack on Camarines town police station

LUPI, Camarines Sur – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM), led by Maj. Gen. Roy Kyamko, and the Philippine National Police for foiling an attack by communist terrorists on the police station of Siruma town in this province.

President cited in particular Col. Jacinto Cordero, Tactical Brigade commander of the Army’s 902nd Brigade, and his men who led the encounter against New People’s Army (NPA) rebels at Barangay San Roque in Tinambac last October 15.

She also congratulated Philippine National Police Region 5 Director Chief Superintendent Rodolfo Tor for the PNP’s assistance and cooperation with the military in repelling the NPA attack.

“Congratulations, General Kyamko, Colonel Cordero and General Tor. Keep up your good work and close coordination,” the President said.

During a ceremony held at the Alanao Elementary School here upon her arrival from Manila, Kyamko and Cordero presented to the President the documents, newsletters, Garand rifle, carbine and two M14 rifles seized from the rebels during the encounter.

The barangay residents played a key role in the repulsion of the NPA attack. It was learned that at 8:25 a.m. last October 15, the residents of Brgy. San Roque tipped off the elements of 42nd Infantry Battalion on the presence of armed NPA terrorists.

The military-police report said the 25 fully-armed communist terrorists were waiting in the barangay for their other comrades to regroup and launch an attack on the Siruma Municipal Station.

After she inspected the documents and firearms recovered from the terrorists, the President walked to the nearby Barangay Center for the launching of Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHATI) project, her administration's priority program to address the problem of poverty.

CPP-NPA should renounce political assassinations for talks to resume — Ople

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople said the Philippine government would only resume talks with the National Democratic Front (NDF), the political umbrella of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA), if the communists renounce political assassinations.

In a report from Oslo, Norway, Ople was quoted today as saying that the government wanted the communist rebels to renounce violence and political assassinations "before we can renew the peace talks" earlier hosted by the government of Norway.

Ople made his comments after meeting with his counterpart, Norwegian Foreign Minister Jan Petersen.

The Oslo talks between panels of the Philippine government and the leaders of the CPP-NPA-NDF now living in exile in the Netherlands, were suspended last year by the government after rebel death squads assassinated several local politicians.

Ople heads a top-level diplomatic mission to win support within the European Union for the inclusion of the CPP-NPA in the United Nations list of foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs).

Members of the Ople mission are Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales, and Presidential Management Staff head Silvestre Afable, Jr.

Earlier in Berlin, the German government assured the Philippine mission that it would assist the Philippines in persuading other EU countries in declaring the CPP-NPA as a terrorist group.

In his report to the President, Ople also said that Germany is interested in forging a counter-terrorism cooperation agreement with the Philippines, adding that the two sides have agreed to start informal talks on this matter.

Palace condemns Zambo bombings, asks citizens to help gov't in fight against terrorists

Malacañang today condemned the bombing this morning of two shopping centers in Zamboanga City that killed five people and injured more than 100 others.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Undersecretary Roberto Capco also appealed for the cooperation of the citizenry in the fight against all acts of terrorism.

"We need the cooperation of everyone, and every citizen should participate in this campaign against terrorists," Capco said.

In Zamboanga City, newly-installed Southern Command (Southcom) chief, Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya also called on everybody "to counter this senseless act."

Abaya also said that it was just unfortunate that the incident happened on the day that he assumed the post of commanding general of the Southcom. "Terror strikes anywhere, anytime. It just happened in time for my assumption as Southcom chief," he said.

Capco said that citizens should report to police authorities suspicious looking persons or suspicious parcels or boxes placed near shopping malls or other populous areas so that incidents like what happened in Zamboanga and recently in Kidapawan, North Cotabato could be averted.

He also said the Zamboanga City bombing is being treated as a “local incident.

The first bomb exploded at around 11:30 a.m. in the Shop-o-Rama department store, and this was followed a half-hour after by another blast at the adjacent Shoppers Central shop.

Police said they found a third bomb in the area and were in the process of trying to defuse it.

GMA distributes livelihood assistance in Bicol

LUPI, Camarines Sur – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today visited the remote barangay of San Jose (formerly Alano) here to formally launch the Kapit-Bisig sa Kahirapan (KALAHI) in the Bicol region and witness the distribution of livelihood assistance to the people here.

The President’s presence here to provide assistance to the Bicolanos in uplifting their lives coincided with the nation’s commemoration of National Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty (NDOEP) and the town’s 284th foundation anniversary.

In her speech, the President prodded the residents to participate in the Jobs Fair put up by Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) as she noted that only 405 applied for the 2,060 jobs made available during the fair.

After her speech, the President witnessed the distribution of a check for P150,000 check, representing the first tranche of P300,000, to Lupi Mayor Roberto Matamorosa and San Jose Barangay Captain Alipio Villalin by National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) lead convenor Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles to jumpstart the water system in San Jose and nearby barangays.

Mayor Matamorosa also received another check for P300,000 from the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC) for livelihood assistance to the people of Lupi.

He also received an additional check for P200,000 from the Department of Agriculture to complete the release of the P1 million for the upgrading, widening and concreting of the Colacling-Tible farm-to-market road.

The residents of the eight barangays of Lupi also received assorted garden tools and vegetable seedling.

Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Villafuerte got a separate check for P1 million to finance the “P1 Million, One Product, One Town” program of the President on behalf of the municipality of Lupi.

Under the program, Governor Villafuerte will choose one business establishment to expand investment in Lupi.

Among the Cabinet officials who joined the President in her visit here were Budget Secretary and Cabinet Officer for Regional Development Emilia Boncodin, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina, Jr., NAPC lead convenor Quintos-Deles, Presidential Advisor on Jobs Creation Luis Lorenzo, TLRC Director General Federico Laxa and Rep. Rolando Andaya, Jr. of the First District of Camarines Sur.

The barangay captains of Ipil and Ibuga also received two checks for P150,000 each for the establishment of day-care centers in their barangays.

In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly declared October 17 as World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty and called for its observance by all countries. In response to the UN's call, former President Fidel V. Ramos in 1998 declared October 17 as National Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty.

AFP overruns new MILF camp in Lanao Del Sur

The military today announced the capture of a newly-built camp of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) deep in the jungles of Lanao del Sur after a week of heavy fighting that left 46 guerillas killed and scores wounded.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Benjamin Defensor, Jr. said the MILF camp, occupying an area of about 15 to 20 hectares in the town of Sultan Gumander, is complete with 40 concrete fortified bunkers with running trenches and foxholes.

Troops from the Army's 4th Infantry Division commanded by Maj. Gen. Alfonso Dagudag engaged the combined rebel forces of the MILF and Abu Sayyaf terrorists group in seven days of fierce fighting.

Quoting a report from Dagudag, General Defensor said at least 46 MILF and Abu Sayyaf bandits were killed and many wounded in the fighting.

The capture of the new MILF camp confirmed intelligence reports that the MILF has been building up its forces two years after all their 46 camps, including Camp Abubakar, were captured by government troops two years ago.

Defensor said Philippine Air Force (PAF) OV-10 light bombers and 520 MG helicopter gunships pounded the newly-constructed MILF camp with bombs and air-to-ground rockets during the week of heavy firefight.

The camp was virtually a duplicate of Camp Abubakar which was captured by the military during the war in Central Mindanao in the summer of 2000, Dagudag said in his report.

The camp, the headquarters of the 304th Brigade of the MILF, could easily accommodate 400 fighters.

Government troops are now occupying the MILF camp, Dagudag said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 17, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030151235/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct17.htm>

The President's Day: October 18, 2002

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- **Emulate unity of the Zamboanguenos in face of bomb attacks, GMA tells people**
- **GMA leaves Oct. 24 for APEC summit**
- **Businessmen still optimistic economy to grow even in difficult times**
- **Fight terrorism as one, GMA tells Filipino people**
- **GMA appoints Azcuna to high court**

Oct. 31, Nov. 2 declared special non-working days

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today issued Proclamation No. 277, declaring October 31, which falls on Thursday, and November 2, a Saturday, as special non-working days throughout the country.

November 1 or All Saints Day, which is a nationwide special day, falls on Friday.

The President said she issued the proclamation "to give full opportunity to our people to properly observe the day with all its religious fervor, which invariably requires them to travel to and from different regions of the country."

The President also said that she gave the order following the recommendation of Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon that the two days may be declared as special days without detriment to the interest of the public.

The President signed the proclamation today.

Emulate unity of the Zamboanguenos in face of bomb attacks, GMA tells people

ZAMBOANGA CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the Filipino people to emulate the example shown by the residents of this city for being united in the aftermath of the two bombing incidents that killed seven people and injured more than a hundred.

The President arrived at the Edwin Andrews Air Base here at 10:00 a.m. to condole with the relatives of the victims and commiserate with the wounded who are still being treated in hospitals.

"Let us emulate the unity shown by the people of Zamboanga not just to address terroristic acts but also to prevent their occurrence not only in Zamboanga but all over the Philippines," the President said in her remarks after a closed-door briefing held at the base.

Immediately upon her arrival at the base, the President got a briefing on the bombing incidents from military and local officials led by Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, AFP Chief of Staff, Gen. Benjamin Defensor, newly-installed Southern Command chief, Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya, Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat and Zamboanga Congressman Celso Lobregat.

Also in the briefing were Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit and Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza.

On the recommendation of Mayor Lobregat, the President also ordered the military and the police to implement stricter measures in all ports and airports in the country, especially in checking incoming and outgoing foreigners.

The President then visited the bombing sites, the Shop-O-Rama on Governor Lim Avenue and the nearby Shoppers Central on Nunez Brillantes street. From the bombing sites, the President visited the injured, which included children, in a hospital.

She then proceeded to the Merced Memorial Homes where the victims are now laid and expressed her condolences to the relatives.

The President said that yesterday's deadly bombing attacks "showed the dastardly manner by which criminal elements are truly destroying the lives of our people."

According to the President, the innocent victims of the latest bombing attacks in this city are both Muslims and Christians. Among the seven dead, three are Muslims and four Christians.

"This only shows that the terrorists are no longer singling out any group or organization but anybody who unfortunately happens to be at the area at the time of the attack," the President said.

The President said the terrorists want to send a message in carrying out their bombing attacks and that is to sow fear and anxiety among our people.

Before returning to Manila, the President also visited the nine wounded soldiers who are recuperating at the Camp Navarro Hospital at the Southcom headquarters.

The soldiers, who suffered injuries after a fierce gunbattle with Abu Sayyaf terrorists in Sulu last week, also received Gold Cross medals and financial assistance from the President.

GMA leaves Oct. 24 for APEC summit

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will leave on October 24 for the Tenth APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) Leaders' Meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico.

Along the way there and back, the President will be stopping over in Honolulu, Hawaii and key cities in California such as Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose and San Francisco to meet with key US officials and members of the local Filipino communities.

The President will be in Hawaii on October 24 and 25, where she will hold meetings with US Sen. Daniel Inouye and Admiral Thomas Fargo, Commander in Chief of the US Pacific Command.

Inouye is a good friend of the Philippines and a strong advocate of Philippines interests in the US legislature while Fargo's Pacific Command works very closely with the Armed Forces of the Philippines in activities under the Philippines-United States Mutual Defense Treaty.

The President will also meet with Filipino-American Gov. Benjamin Cayetano, who will show to the Chief Executive the new \$15-million Filipino-American community center in Hawaii.

She will leave Hawaii on October 25 for Los Cabos.

In the summit meeting in Mexico, the President will push for the holding of a high-level meeting on maritime security in next year's conference.

This is in order to address poverty, which is the breeding ground for the recruitment of terrorism and as the Philippines' contribution to region-wide efforts to secure trade and as the lead shepherd in the APEC Transportation Working Group.

This Philippine initiative seeks to lay the groundwork for a burden-sharing scheme among the developed and developing economies in APEC from which the Philippines would benefit.

This initiative would include such items as port-to-port security, cargo handling, and customs procedures as well as consider sustainable development of marine resources.

Also, the President will take the opportunity to hold bilateral talks with her counterparts on the fringes of the APEC Leaders Meeting. Among these leaders would be Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Russian President Vladimir Putin and New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark.

The President will also be joining the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting with U.S. President George W. Bush.

Aside from the bilateral and multilateral talks, the President will address the summit and other meetings of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), United States Chamber of Commerce and the United States-ASEAN Business Council.

On October 27, the President will proceed to San Diego, California for a brief visit and meet with the local Filipino community, Filipino war veterans and Filipino-American youth leaders.

The next day, the President will move on to San Jose for a roundtable discussion with the Chief Executive Officers of Semiconductor Industry Association member companies and of top Bay Area companies.

She will also have a one-on-one meeting with the CEOs of companies with incoming investment projects in the Philippines as well as with the Commonwealth Club Silicon Valley program.

She will also visit the Intel headquarters while in San Jose.

On October 29, the President will be in San Francisco where she will have meetings with the leaders of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations as well as the local Filipino community.

She will be back in Manila on Nov. 1.

Businessmen still optimistic economy to grow even in difficult times

Leaders of the local business community have remained optimistic that the economy could still grow as projected this year even in these difficult times.

This affirms the results of a survey conducted by the Business World-Roper ASW Business Confidence Index that business confidence level in the Philippines in early October recovered from the previous month's gloomy position.

Makati Business Club Executive Director Guillermo Luz said that business confidence has recovered as economic indicators have been moving in positive trend with inflation down, foreign exchange stable, exports up and higher gross domestic product (GDP).

Luz, however, noted that during the past five days, several things happened locally and internationally and these could affect business confidence level.

He said that the Middle East problem, that is resulting in the continued rise of world oil prices, is aggravating the situation.

But the fluidity of a situation is not actually all negative and that if it is managed very well, then business confidence can swing to a very high level, Luz said.

Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) president Donald Dee said business condition has become difficult because of these domestic and external factors.

“These problems may weigh down business confidence. But, not at all times, because there is someone on top who will manage the economy well even in this very difficult situation,” he said.

“During her first 18 months in office, there is no question on the performance of President Arroyo how well she managed the economy,” he added.

Dee said despite domestic problems and the Middle East situation, the economy is still expected to post robust growth this year.

“We are not worried as long as overseas contract workers’ remittances are there. Exports are also still doing well, though slowing down, because of uncertainty,” Dee said.

According to Dee, sincere efforts of the government to contain the widening budget deficit will also help boost the economy.

Sergio Ortiz-Luis, president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), said improved business confidence was a result of higher-than-expected economic growth in the second quarter.

GDP, the sum of the value added of agriculture, industry and services less net factor income from the rest of the world, grew 4.5 percent in the second quarter from 3.8 percent in the first quarter.

“This leads to a buoyant economic outlook for the Christmas season,” he said.

Ortiz-Luis, who is also the president of the Philippine Exporters Confederation, said one major factor driving up businessmen’s confidence is the improved exports figure.

Exports posted a 7.8 percent growth from January to August to \$22.85 billion. It is estimated that a three percent increase in exports perks up GDP by one percent.

Fight terrorism as one, GMA tells Filipino people

ZAMBOANGA CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo flew today to this city, scene of two mall bombings that killed at least seven people and injured more than a hundred other innocent people, and called on all members of society to join hands with the law enforcement agencies and fight terrorism as one.

“Terrorism cannot survive for long in an unfriendly environment. Let us give terrorism that unfriendly environment. It is time to share in the action and passion,” the President said.

The President, who had then just come from a briefing by military and police commanders on the bombings, visited the dead, condoled with their relatives, and viewed the sufferings of the wounded, including some children, said the two bombs that exploded in the city “should be a challenge for us, the whole country, to show that we can be one.”

“The people of Zamboanga have shown us that they are one. If we are one, if we stay together, we will survive,” she said in her opening statement during a press conference here.

“I want all the communities in the entire country to follow their example,” the President said.

She said the bombings show that the people of Zamboanga care for the victims and are taking steps to prevent all terrorism.

The President then ordered law-enforcement agencies and the Armed Forces of the Philippines to be stricter with regards to those entering Zamboanga City.

She ordered the Maritime Command and the Coast Guard to mobilize and inspect all incoming passengers in the port of Zamboanga.

She also ordered the Avsecom to strengthen security at the airport.

The President, at the same time, commended city officials, the AFP, the Philippine National Police and other agencies for working together for the immediate solution of the terrorism problem in the city.

She also commended the Area Coordinating Center as one of the most successful, expressing the hope that it can be replicated in other parts of the country.

The President also noted that even after the bombing, business is going on as usual in the city.

“When I went to the mall where the first bomb exploded and I asked the owner whether he was open for business, he said he was just waiting for me to finish my inspection and then he will open for business,” the President said.

In carrying out their campaign to sow fear and anxiety among the people, the President said “the terrorists are no longer singling out any group or organization but anybody who will unfortunately be in the area that they want to destroy.”

“They are challenging not only the AFP and the PNP,” the President said. “They are threatening entire communities...They are testing the strength of our soul as a people.”

By doing so, the President added, the terrorists “have heightened the anger of local leaders, elite groups, and all peace-loving citizens who are now uniting and cooperating with our law-enforcement agencies in addressing this mere threat.”

GMA appoints Azcuna to high court

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has appointed Adolfo Azcuna as the new associate justice of the Supreme Court, Press Undersecretary Roberto Capco today announced.

Capco noted that on Wednesday, October 16, the Judicial and Bar Council submitted the names of five nominees for the vacancy in the Supreme Court following the retirement of Justice Santiago Kapunan last August 12.

Aside from Azcuna, the nominees were Court of Appeals Justices Cancio Garcia, Delilah Vidallon Magtolis, Ruben Reyes and Court Administrator Presbitero Velasco Jr.

Azcuna placed first in the number of votes in the Supreme Court with 10 out of 14 votes. Meanwhile, he placed second in the number of votes in the JBC with 6 out of 7 votes.

Under the Constitution, any vacancy in the Supreme Court must be filled within 90 days. The deadline created by the retirement of Justice Kapunan will expire on November 10, 2002.

A professor at the Ateneo Law School, Azcuna placed fourth in the 1962 bar examinations with a grade of 86.6 percent.

He was a partner at the Azcuna Arroyo Chua Caedo Law Office.

He held the positions of chairman in the Philippine National Bank in 1991 and as director at the Development Bank of the Philippines in 1990.

He used to be President Aquino's Chief Presidential Legal Counsel from 1987 to 1990 and was also a member of the Constitutional Commission from 1986 to 1987.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 18, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029130115/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct18.htm>

The President's Day: October 19, 2002

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- **Next year's P84.9 billion budget support for Mindanao to help solve its peace and order problem**
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- **GMA issues 10-point plan to counter terrorists threat**
- **Gov't to employ 'Oplan Kapkap' and 'Police Marshal System' to address terrorist threats**

GMA to make a strong pitch for RP's I.C.T. industry in brief stopover in Silicon Valley

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will make a strong pitch for the country's information and communications technology (ICT) and electronic sectors during her brief stopover in California's Silicon Valley after her official visit to Mexico to attend the leaders' meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

The President will leave October 24 to attend the 10th APEC Economic Leaders in Los Cabos, Mexico, which will be held from October 26-27. But on her way to Mexico and on her return trip, the President will be making stopovers in some cities in the United States as part of her economic diplomacy.

On her way back, the President will make a brief visit to San Jose City, California, known the world over as the "Silicon Valley," home to the world's biggest producers of ICT and electronic parts.

In San Jose City, the President will meet with officials of American firms that already have substantial investments in the ICT and electronic sectors in the Philippines and ask them to invest more.

The first activity of the President in San Jose City is a roundtable discussion with the members of the Semi-Conductor Association of America and the American Electronics Association.

Fifty six percent of the country's total exports consist of electronics, mostly semi-conductors and other electronic parts.

"Majority of these players come from Silicon Valley. So, the intention is for the President to thank them and to invite more parts makers to come to the Philippines," the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said in a briefing material.

Among the officials the President would be meeting in San Jose City are those from the Sunpower Corporation, Solitron Global Services, ICT Group, Unical Corporation, and Chevron, whose local subsidiary is known as Texaco, or Caltex.

The Sunpower Corporation would be producing in the Philippines Silicon chips or wafers that are used in the manufacture of high-efficiency airplanes.

The Solitron Global Services, on the other hand, intends to put up more customer services, or ICT centers, in the Philippines.

The ICT Group would also set up additional customer relation centers in the Philippines and plans to hire between 1,000 to 2,000 new workers in the country.

The Unical Corporation, which is already here in the Philippines, under the Philippine Geothermal, Inc. is planning to expand their exploration operations in the country and officials of the firm would like to brief the President about their expansion program.

Texaco, or Caltex, on the other hand, would like to put up their worldwide business outsourcing of facilities in the Philippines to service their accounting requirements in the Asia Pacific region.

Next year's P84.9 billion budget support for Mindanao to help solve its peace and order problem

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has said that next year's budgetary support to Mindanao, amounting to P84.9 billion, is based on two considerations, one is to tap the enormous productive potential of the area, and second, to resolve the peace and order problem in the island

In a statement, the DBM said that poverty may not be the root of insurgency and terrorism, but where poverty thrives, terrorism could rear its ugly head.

The DBM said that Mindanao has benefited from a higher per capita budget allocation over the years compared to Luzon and Visayas.

"For 2003, we have identified at least P84.9 billion worth of programs and projects for Mindanao. This is imperative in the light of our efforts to counter the effects of insurgency and rebuild the area from the ravages of terrorism," the DBM said.

Among the major projects to be funded by the Macapagal-Arroyo government in Mindanao in 2003 are the following:

- Construction of airports in Pagadian, Butuan and Cotabato;
- Construction of circumferential roads in Basilan, Cotabato City, and Lake Lanao;
- Expansion and improvement of vital seaports like those in Davao, Zamboanga, General Santos, Dapitan and Polloc;
- Electrification of 82 percent of the barangays in Mindanao, up from 69 percent this year;
- Rehabilitation and construction of communal irrigation system, among them, the Saugod River Irrigation in Davao del Norte, Malitubog Libungan Transbasin in North Cotabato, and Maganoy No. 3 Dam in Sultan Kudarat; and
- Agricultural modernization projects supported by 37 percent of the Department of Agriculture budget.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) alone will devote at least 31 percent of all its infrastructure projects next year to Mindanao, up from 27 percent this year, the DBM said.

"I have also instructed all concerned agencies to realign their regional budgets based on development programs for each area or region and not make their own regional programs separate from area-based development plans. I take this as an important budget policy for 2003 to benefit development areas in Mindanao," DBM Secretary Emilia Boncodin said.

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

Fellow citizens of the Republic,

A few troublemakers with limited capabilities are trying to bully 80 million Filipinos into living in fear and terror in their own homes and neighborhoods. They are being unwittingly aided by rumour mongers, and by the hysterical and those easily panicked from among us. Let us not allow ourselves to be cowed into submission by those who seek to terrorize us. Let our calm determination to pursue our normal lives overwhelm their malicious intent to disrupt. Let our alertness to suspicious activities thwart their evil ways. And let our trust and cooperation with the authorities be our shield to their attacks. Keep calm. Be alert. Trust and cooperate with the authorities.

Our uniformed protectors are in full alert. They have already prevented some attacks from occurring, but the vigilance of our whole society is needed to fully protect ourselves from these secretive and determined extremists. Justice will be meted out to perpetrators of those bomb attacks that have not been prevented.

Let us not allow terrorists to destroy our day. Let us live our lives normally under the protection of our authorities. Let this be our unified act of defiance against terrorism. Let us support the determined efforts of our law enforcers to root out this evil from among us.

GMA issues 10-point plan to counter terrorists threat

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today issued a ten point police-community anti-terrorism plan to address terrorist threats around the country.

The President issued the plan during the meeting of the Presidential Oversight Committee on Internal Security, this morning in Malacañang, which was attended by local executives of Metro Manila.

First and foremost, the plan calls for the immediate convening of all peace and order councils (POCs) in the provinces, cities, municipalities and also the convening of the barangay peace and order committees

This is to put in place and activate the local officials' respective anti-terrorism sub-committees to address the terrorist threats.

The plan also calls for the adoption of anti-terrorism public safety plan by the POCs of all provinces, cities and municipalities and by the barangay peace and order committees.

The public safety plan would provide law enforcement authorities reporting and feedback mechanisms necessary to ensure regular monitoring of unusual and suspicious movements of inhabitants in their respective localities.

Third, the President also called for the convening of the barangay assemblies all over the country for the purpose of educating their constituents on how to deal and cope with terrorist threats in their respective barangays.

Fourth, all barangay tanods in the country would conduct daily regular "rondas" and searches in public places within their respective area of jurisdiction in accordance with law.

Fifth, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other law enforcement agencies should intensify their intelligence work aimed at speeding up the identification of the terrorist groups.

Sixth, the AFP, PNP and other law enforcement agencies should conduct a speedy investigation, arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators responsible for the recent bombing incidents.

Seventh, the police and other law enforcement agencies should review and update their respective public safety and security plans in public and private installations and establishment such as shopping malls, markets, supermarkets, schools, public parks and plazas, theaters and amusements places, bus and jeepney terminals, parking spaces, bus and jeepney stops, factories and public buildings and the like.

Eight, the citizenry should be more vigilant and assist in the anti-terrorist campaign by immediately reporting to the authorities suspicious persons, unattended baggage and other materials.

Ninth, owners, proprietors and administrators of establishments should review and update their safety and security plan by including the conduct of thorough and regular searches of persons as well as baggage and personal belongings of customers in the entrances of their respective establishments.

Tenth, all non-governmental organizations, church groups, civic organizations and other sectoral organizations in the localities must help and assist their respective local government officials and their local peace and order councils and committees in the overall effort against terrorist threats by actively participating in the education campaign on how the citizenry can cope and deal with terrorist threats.

Gov't to employ 'Oplan Kapkap' and 'Police Marshal System' to address terrorist threats

As part of government efforts to address terrorist threats, the government will be enforcing "*Oplan Kapkap*," and the "Police Marshal" system, Press Undersecretary Roberto Capco said today.

In a briefing in Malacañang, Capco said the police under 'Oplan Kapkap' will undertake random check and searches on bus and jeepney passengers, even people in malls and other public places.

Capco said under the Police Marshal System, uniformed policemen will board public conveyances to check on passengers and the over-all situation.

"Our intention here is to increase police visibility. We want the public to see that the police force is doing their job protecting the people," Capco said.

Capco also said the Philippine National Police (PNP) will be giving additional police cars and motorcycles to cities and towns in Metro Manila.

There's also a plan to deploy in Metro Manila for the meantime some 1,700 police trainees currently training in the Philippine National Police Academy.

"This is to ensure that we can secure as many public places as possible," Capco said.

Capco also said that local executives will be the over-all in-charge in addressing terrorist threats and acts of terrorism in their localities.

"This is part of our incident management strategy whereby local executives take full charge," he said.

According to Capco, Metro Manila Development Authority chairman Bayani Fernando said that Metro Manila mayors have assured the President of preparedness in handling these contingencies.

"The mayors would be on top of such situations, the police being now under their full control," he said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 19, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100704232347/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct19.htm>

The President's Day: October 20, 2002

20 OCTOBER 2002

- **GMA calls for grassroots vigilance, timely reporting system to combat terrorism**

GMA calls for grassroots vigilance, timely reporting system to combat terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo called today for grassroots vigilance backed up by a timely and efficient reporting system to the police and the military to combat terrorism.

In her expanded radio message to the people delivered over the weekend, the President called on everyone to do his or her share in the battle against trouble makers "trying to bully 80-million Filipinos into living in fear and terror in their own homes and neighborhood."

"It is the vigilance of the ordinary citizens in the streets that makes the difference in the war against terrorism," said the President.

"We must further strengthen our grassroots focus against terrorism," the President added. "Each and every citizen can help prevent harm to the community and the nation."

The President said the mayors of Metro Manila, in a meeting in Malacañang yesterday along with the National Security Council, agreed to take the lead in the war against terrorism and the protection of the citizenry against secretive and defiant extremists.

The President added that the mayors, who now have control over the police, will also take the lead in the gathering of intelligence information and the operations against the terrorists.

The mayors will also have the responsibility to supervise cases of terrorist incidents in their areas of responsibility, including the investigation and arrest of those behind such acts of violence against society, the President said.

"The police and the military shall assist the mayors in this responsibility as needed," the President said.

Among the sites and facilities the mayors must protect are those that may be targeted by the terrorists, the President added. These include places frequented by the people, communications facilities, fuel depots and other areas and facilities that would provide political and propaganda value to the terrorists.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 20, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213448/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct20.htm>

The President's Day: October 21, 2002

21 OCTOBER 2002

- **GMA offers estero squatters safer homes, opportunities for better life**
- **GMA acts to regain people's trust in P.E.A., gov't**
- **GMA announces signing of Nursing Act of 2002**
- **GMA renews call for people to unite in fight against terrorism**
- **City mayors vow to lead fight against terrorism, support national ID system**

GMA offers estero squatters safer homes, opportunities for better life

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the relocation of squatters from river banks and esteros to government resettlement sites offers them not only safer living facilities but also opportunities for a better life.

In her brief remarks during the transfer of 5,913 families to the resettlement area in Kasiglahan Village in Barangay San Jose in Rodriguez (formerly Montalban) Rizal, the President stressed the importance of relocating squatter families living dangerously along riverbanks, esteros, bridges and other hazardous sites.

"Kailangan talaga na magkaroon ng tahanan ang lahat at lalo na iyong masasabi nating ligtas, kasi 'yun mga tabi ng ilog, nakatabi sa estero, hindi iyon ligtas (Everyone must have a home, especially safe homes. Living along the rivers banks and esteros is not safe at all)," the President said.

Aside from being exposed to dangers, the President said squatter areas do not offer amenities and transportation facilities like the Kasiglahan Village resettlement area.

The government is therefore giving the squatters the chance for a better life and the opportunity to buy their own homes, the President said.

Whenever necessary, as in the case of the Kasiglahan Village, transportation facilities are provided to make livelihood opportunities available, the President also said.

Kasiglahan Village 1, popularly known as KV-1, is a resettlement project of the National Housing Authority (NHA) situated at Barangay San Jose. The project was primarily intended for the affected families of the Pasig River Rehabilitation Program.

In June 1999, the first batch of families residing along the banks of the Pasig River in Barangay San Agustin, Quiapo, Manila were relocated in Kasiglahan Village 1.

A total of 9,915 housing units are available in the Kasiglahan Village. As of last July, 5,623 units are already occupied. San Jose Plains has 4,845 occupants and Sub-Urban has 778 occupants. Exactly 2,176 families came from the Pasig River and 3,477 other families are non-Pasig River residents.

Existing community facilities on site are schools, market, health and day-care centers, recreational grounds and jeepney terminal.

GMA acts to regain people's trust in P.E.A., gov't

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today enumerated several measures designed to clean up the mess in the Public Estates Authority (PEA) in order to regain the people's trust in the agency and in the government itself.

In her speech at the 80th founding anniversary of the Philippine Nurses Association, Inc. at the Manila Hotel, the President said although the Senate blue ribbon committee has found that proper procedures were followed in the Manila Bay reclamation road project, still the overall cost has been quite excessive.

“Kaya, dahil doon, hindi pa rin ako kontento (That is why, because of this, I am still not contented),” the President said.

The President said she still want “to go to the bottom of the controversy, discern the truth, identify the wrong doers, if any, clear the innocent and possibly revamp the PEA for being embroiled in many scandals.”

She said that she has ordered state probers investigating the PEA anomaly to speed up the pace of work, unmask the guilty party, and submit a final report at the earliest possible time.

The President said that although she has ordered the PEA board to go on leave, she was willing to accept their resignations, without prejudice to their prosecution if recommended by the Department of Justice or the Senate blue ribbon committee.

According to the President, she has also directed the PEA interim board of directors as well as the agency’s top officials and employees to fully cooperate with the ongoing investigation and to conduct its own parallel inquiry on the reclamation road project.

She said that she has also ordered the PEA interim board to make its work fully transparent and above suspicion.

The President also suspended all pending and planned projects of the PEA, especially those requiring public bidding “until the investigation of the alleged overpricing of the project at the reclamation area shall have been completed.”

GMA announces signing of Nursing Act of 2002

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced today that she already signed into law the Nursing Act of 2002 which makes the nursing profession more responsive to the ever-changing health needs of the country and the whole world.

The President made the announcement during her speech at the annual convention of the Philippine Nurses Association, Inc. at the Manila Hotel which is also celebrating its 80th Foundation Day and Nurses Week.

The President lauded both houses of Congress for the passage of Nursing Act and thanked Senator Juan Flavier and Rep. Eladio Jala, principal sponsors of the bill in the Senate and the House of Representative.

President noted that the Nursing Act emphasizes the expansion of the nurse’s role to include comprehensive specialty programs. The new law establishes a minimum base pay for nurses working in the government and abroad and expands the Board of Nursing membership and enhances their functions.

The President said that by enhancing the functions of the Board of Nursing, the law enhances the professionalism of nurses in the country.

In her speech, the President paid tribute to the heroes and heroines in the nursing profession.

“We don’t have to talk about Florence Nightingale anymore,” the President said. “We have our own Ediborah Pamaran Yap.”

“Even in the darkest depths of adversity, Ediborah stuck to her professional oath. She is our model of devotion,” the President added. “She was a true nurse and heroine for all seasons.”

GMA renews call for people to unite in fight against terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today renewed her appeal to the people to unite in fighting terrorism, saying that complacency would only embolden the terrorists to further spread their “ideology of mayhem” in the country.

In her speech at the 80th founding anniversary of the Philippine Nurses Association, Inc. at the Manila Hotel, the President said the bombing attacks in Bali, Indonesia and in Zamboanga City, show that terrorism knows no boundaries.

“We must work together to fight terrorism. We cannot sit back and wait. We must take this fight to the terrorists before they undermine our very way of living,” the President said.

The President said that recent events proved that terrorists are not guided by moral or religious conviction. “They are nothing more than murderers of innocent people driven by an ideology of mayhem,” she said.

According to the President, many of her opponents have criticized her decisions in making an unequivocal stand against terrorism.

“But I have to tell you I make no apologies to aggressively seeking to root out terrorism in the Philippines. And to putting considerable efforts in seeking regional consensus on fighting terrorism,” the President said.

The President also extolled the important role being played by the country’s nurses in coping with the effects of terrorism, citing the “modern day heroism” of Ediborah Yap who was executed by the terrorist Abu Sayyaf in Basilan.

“Even in the darkest depths of adversity, Deborah stuck to her professional oath. She is a model of devotion not just of her profession but of humankind,” the President said.

She said the heroism of Deborah has become a defining point of what it truly is to be of service to others. “It also defines terrorism as a universal fight and not the challenge of a single profession or a single nation or a single region,” the President said.

The story of Ediborah Yap, the President said, illustrates that greatness beckons every hour in the nursing profession.

She explained that this greatness is also present in the story of every Filipino nurse who leaves her family to work abroad to secure a home and a future for them.

City mayors vow to lead fight against terrorism, support national ID system

Local government executives today vowed to take the lead in the fight against terrorism as the League of Cities of the Philippines expressed support for the national ID system as well as the anti-terrorism bill.

The league, an organization of all city mayors in the country, led by its president, Tagaytay City Mayor Francis Tolentino, assured President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in their meeting this afternoon in Malacañang that they would file resolutions in support of the two proposals.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, who attended the meeting, said the city mayors expressed their support for the national ID system and the anti-terrorism bill because they feel that there is an urgent need for everyone to take part in the fight against terrorism.

“The mayors have agreed to take the lead role,” Bunye said.

Bunye also said that during the meeting, it was concluded from Commission on Audit (COA) Chairman Guillermo Carague that local executives could now take advantage of the calamity fund in the event that terrorism strikes in their locality.

Meanwhile, the cities of Baguio and Cebu have agreed to undertake pilot implementation of the national ID system.

The local executives would also acquire more equipment that would be utilized against terrorist threats such as metal detectors and bomb-sniffing dogs.

Bunye added that the mayors agreed to hire police auxiliary personnel “as long as they do not carry guns.”

Aside from Mayor Tolentino, among the city mayors who attended the meeting in Malacañang were San Fernando City (La Union) Mayor Mary Jane Ortega, Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Trenas, Bacolod City Mayor Luzviminda Valdez and Gen. Santos City Mayor Pedro Acharon.

Top officers from the Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines likewise attended the meeting.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 21, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030064112/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct21.htm>

The President's Day: October 22, 2002

22 OCTOBER 2002

- **Palace lauds local execs of Cebu City, Baguio for offering to pilot-test I.D. system**
- **No 'lavish' party for Ateneo cagers, says Palace**
- **Bunye condoles with family of Nonoy Marcelo**
- **GMA arrives in Cebu City to turn over gov't projects**
- **Hawaii awaits GMA visits amid preparations for centennial of Filipinos in Aloha State**
- **GMA joining APEC summit to advance RP economy, coordinate security action with Pacific allies**
- **Palace insists present situation does not warrant emergency powers for GMA**
- **Special diplomatic mission to Europe a success — Ople**

GMA orders PAGC to conduct lifestyle check on all gov't officials

Palace lauds local execs of Cebu City, Baguio for offering to pilot-test I.D. system

Malacañang today lauded the local governments of Cebu City and Baguio City for agreeing to pilot-test the national identification system (NIS) in their respective areas.

In an interview, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that if the NIS would be successfully carried out in the two cities, then it would be easy to implement the plan throughout the country.

During a meeting in Malacañang Monday, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo approved the offer of Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña and Baguio City Vice Mayor Lourdes Tabanda to pilot-test the NIS in their cities pending the passage of a law on this plan.

According to Osmeña and Tabanda, the NIS could be implemented in the cities through city ordinances.

Bunye said that through the pilot-testing of the NIS, kinks could be ironed out before a bill is crafted and submitted to both houses of Congress.

Authorities agreed that one effective way of combating terrorism is to put in place a national ID mechanism, to be based initially on the Social Security System ID card.

Bunye also said that during the meeting last week in Brunei Darussalam of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information, it was agreed that there is a need for a region-wide cooperation in the fight against global terrorism.

A resolution signed by the ministers after the meeting condemned the bombings in Bali, Indonesia and in Zamboanga City.

"The members of ASEAN are resolved to help each other in the fight against international terrorism," Bunye said.

No 'lavish' party for Ateneo cagers, says Palace

Malacañang today took exception to malicious reports that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was hosting "a lavish party" in the palace for the victorious basketball team of Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) while Zamboanga City was rocked with its second bomb attack.

"Just to set the record straight. The party was anything but lavish or excessive as some reports portrayed the occasion," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye said food served during the occasion was "*pica-pica*."

There was a lot of picture-taking and autograph signing. "But that was about it. The President just dropped in to congratulate the players but she did not stay long," Bunye said.

Bunye also said that the occasion was scheduled in advance.

"We just have to get on with our lives. Let us not allow the terrorists to dictate our tempo," Bunye said.

Over the weekend, the President also held a series of command conferences with top military and police officials, as well as with Metro Manila mayors, to discuss measures in the wake of bomb attacks in Zamboanga City and in Balintawak, Quezon City.

Bunye condoles with family of Nonoy Marcelo

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today extended her condolences to the family of well-known cartoonist Severino "Nonoy" Marcelo who died Tuesday at the Chinese General Hospital in Manila due to complications arising from diabetes.

The President said that with Marcelo's death, Philippine media has lost a pillar in illustrative journalism.

During his long career as a caricaturist and editorial cartoonist, Marcelo has been cited for his perceptive insights into everyday life and political developments of the country, the President said.

She said that as a social and political satirist, Marcelo has been known for his long-running "Tisoy" and "Ikabod" comic strips.

In 1985, Marcelo's "Ikabod" was honored by the prestigious Catholic Mass Media Award, one of the rare occasions where a comic strip was recognized as a serious journalistic commentary.

Marcelo carried "Ikabod" to the now-defunct Pinoy Times where he last served as the paper's art director.

Aside from his daily "Ikabod," Marcelo also illustrated the Pinoy Times' editorial cartoon and a front-page cartoon complimenting the banner story.

Marcelo started his career as a cartoonist in the early 1960s with "Plain Folks" for the Daily Mirror. He then moved over to the Manila Times in 1962, where he created the highly popular comic strip, "Tisoy." Two movies and a television series were later spun off from "Tisoy."

GMA arrives in Cebu City to turn over gov't projects

CEBU CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her official party arrived at the Mactan Benito Ebuen Air Force Base here at 2:15 p.m. today

The President was met by top civilian and military officials here who have been waiting for her since 9:00 a.m. She was originally scheduled to arrive here at 9:25 a.m.

Immediately after disembarking from her plane, a Learjet, the President boarded a blue and white helicopter which took her to Colawin, Argao to attend a program at the Colawin National High School.

Argao, the hometown of Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., is situated some 66 kilometers southeast of this city.

During the program, the President distributed certificates of turnover for three projects, namely, the farmers trading post building, the research farm house and the Colawin multi-purpose irrigation system.

The President also turned over a P5-million check for the Cebu Vegetable Highway project.

From Argao, the President and her party proceeded to Danao City to attend the groundbreaking of a fish port project.

Tonight, the President is scheduled to attend a dinner at the Cebu Grand Convention Center to celebrate the recent selection of Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña as one of two outstanding city mayors in the country.

On Wednesday morning, she is expected to attend the national conference of the United Catholic Student Councils at the University of San Carlos (USC) before returning to Manila.

Hawaii awaits GMA visits amid preparations for centennial of Filipinos in Aloha State

HONOLULU, Hawaii – Filipinos in Hawaii are now in the midst of feverish preparations for the first visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to the Aloha State on October 24.

While the visit is brief – the President will fly in from Manila on her way to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Los Cabos, Mexico and is expected to stay only overnight – the Filipinos here are waiting for the Philippine leader with great anticipation, being perhaps only the third Filipino President to come to Hawaii after the late President Ferdinand E. Marcos and then President Fidel V. Ramos.

While in Hawaii, the President is scheduled to meet with United States Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, a supporter of Philippine interests in the US legislature in Washington, and Admiral Thomas Fargo, commander in chief of the US Pacific Command based here.

She is also scheduled to visit the Philippine Community Center on the islands and meet with the members of the large Filipino community here.

The President comes to Hawaii at a very auspicious and appropriate time. The highest state leader, Governor Benjamin Cayetano, is a lawyer who is originally from Urdaneta, Pangasinan, and the top leaders of the state Senate and state House of Representatives as well as the state Supreme Court are also of Filipino descent.

The state's Senate President is Robert Bunda (Democrat) who was born in Quezon City. In the state Supreme Court are Associate Justices Mario Ramil, who was born in Quezon City, and Simeon Acoba, Jr., although born in Hawaii, is also of Filipino descent.

The President's visit also comes at a time when the Filipinos are busy campaigning for a Filipino, State Senator Ron Menor, for Lieutenant Governor who could later be a strong candidate for governor.

More than that, the President's visit will also be a big boost to the preparations of the Filipinos here for the grand celebration of the arrival of the Filipinos 100 years ago.

While the grand centennial celebration of the arrival of the first Filipinos in Hawaii will not be until 2006, the Filipino community here is already in the heat of the campaign for the big event, thanks to Filipino leaders headed by Governor Cayetano, the first Filipino to be elected as state governor in Hawaii and in the entire United States, and Assemblyman Felipe Abinsay, Jr. of the State House of Representatives.

With the support of Cayetano and through the initiative of Assemblyman Abinsay and his fellow Filipino assemblymen in the state House of Representatives and the Filipino senators in the state Senate, the 21st State Legislature Regular Session of the State of Hawaii has approved a bill creating an organization that will oversee the arrangements for the commemoration of the centennial anniversary of the arrival of the first Filipinos in Hawaii.

Assemblyman Abinsay said the organization is called the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission under House Bill No. 1942 which both chambers of the State Legislature approved unanimously last April. The bill was subsequently signed into law on June 12 by Governor Cayetano and took effect only last July 1 as Hawaii Act No. 159.

Abinsay said that in approving the measure, the State Legislature of Hawaii recognized that the members of the Filipino community in Hawaii have “contributed significantly and substantially to the growth and development of Hawaii.”

“Since the arrival of the first Filipinos in Hawaii in 1906, the rich culture and proud heritage of the Filipino people have been and continue to be a positive influence upon life in Hawaii,” the Hawaii lawmakers said.

“In recognition of the great contributions of Filipinos to Hawaii’s diverse and multi-cultural society, a celebration to commemorate their arrival and subsequent achievements in Hawaii is appropriate,” the lawmakers said.

According to Abinsay, the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission will take charge of all arrangements for the commemoration of the centennial of the Filipinos in Hawaii.

The members of the 15-man commission, to be appointed by the governor from the Filipino community, will represent government, labor, business, culture and the arts, and the community at large.

GMA joining APEC summit to advance RP economy, coordinate security action with Pacific allies

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye today said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will be traveling to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting on Oct. 26 and 27 in Los Cabos, Mexico to advance the Philippine economy and coordinate security through concerted action with its Pacific allies.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, the Press Secretary said the President expressed the belief that now, more than ever, the member-economies of APEC must work together to bolster security and at the same time advance their economies.

“It is vital that the work of APEC continue undeterred by global terrorism or economic slowdown,” Bunye said.

The President believes that the opportunity to make the case for trade and investment in the Philippines to regional business leaders is critical to bringing about more economic opportunity to the Philippines, Bunye added.

The President is resolute in her belief that the APEC agenda and the benefits it brings in terms of jobs and trade and peace and security are essential at this important junction in time, Bunye said.

“The President looks forward to having frank and honest discussions with the other APEC leaders, including wide-ranging discussions on the hunt to destroy terrorists and the need to tackle poverty in order to undermine terrorism,” Bunye said.

The President will leave for Los Cabos on October 25 from Hawaii where she will hold meetings with US Senator Daniel Inouye and Admiral Thomas Fargo, Commander in Chief of the US Pacific Command.

In Los Cabos, the President will take the opportunity to hold bilateral meetings with her Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Russian President Vladimir Putin and New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark.

She will also be joining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders’ meeting with US President George Bush.

Aside from bilateral and multilateral talks, the President will address the summit and other meetings of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), US Chamber of Commerce and the US-ASEAN Business Council.

Palace insists present situation does not warrant emergency powers for GMA

Malacañang today reiterated its previous stand that under the present situation, there is no need to clothe President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo with emergency powers.

In his regular press briefing, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said that although some well-meaning leaders in the House of Representatives, notably Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzales, volunteered to file a resolution giving emergency powers to the President, the administration does not see any need for them.

“The present situation does not warrant it,” Bunye said, adding that the proposal was not even discussed in official meetings in Malacañang.

Gonzales wanted the President to wield extra powers to cope with the threats of terrorism in the wake of bomb attacks in Zamboanga City and in Metro Manila.

In a related topic, Bunye also said that since they enjoy autonomy, local government units have the right to legislate within their jurisdictions and this includes the right to impose curfew for minors in their localities.

“The curfew is being undertaken by various local government units. For as long as they are covered by appropriate ordinances, these ordinances are deemed valid until proven otherwise,” Bunye said.

Bunye said that ordinances passed by local government units are deemed legal unless overturned later on by the Supreme Court or by some appropriate judicial body.

Special diplomatic mission to Europe a success — Ople

“The mission is a success,”

In a press statement issued today, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople said the special diplomatic mission to the European nations that he headed “succeeded in initiating the process of severely limiting the ability of the CPP-NPA-NDF (Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front) to mobilize and use their financial and material resources to commit acts of terrorism in the Philippines.”

Ople said the European officials who met with the diplomatic mission reiterated their support for the war against terrorism and expressed their desire to assist the Philippines in its own efforts to fight terrorism.

According to Ople, the diplomatic mission, composed of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales, Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable, Jr., and Undersecretary Abraham Purunggan of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns, traveled to Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Spain “to ask the support of our European partners for our own efforts at combating terrorism and to bring terrorists to justice.”

Several European officials gave their commitment to declare the CPP-NPA as terrorist organizations while others agreed to study this matter closely, Ople said.

Ople said he led the diplomatic mission to end the death and destruction brought by the terroristic acts committed by the CPP-NPA-NDF and to bring peace and progress to the Filipino people.

“Within the span of a week, the diplomatic mission held discussions with senior officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, justice and interior of Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Spain,” Ople said.

The diplomatic mission also met with Javier Solana, Secretary-General of the European Union, and Chris Patten, the European Commission’s Commissioner for External Relations and former Governor of Hong Kong.

GMA orders PAGC to conduct lifestyle check on all gov’t officials

ARGAO, Cebu—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) to spearhead a lifestyle check of all government officials from Cabinet secretaries down to bureau directors as well as executives of government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), government financial institutions (GFIs) and other offices of the executive branch.

In her speech at the Third Farmer-Scientists Congress held at the Colawin Technical School here, the President said that her administration will embark, starting next week, on a campaign to foster honesty in public service.

The President said that under this campaign those who have shown dedication and fidelity to the service will be rewarded but sanctions will be imposed on government officials and employees found to have amassed wealth and property beyond their means “or those who visibly live in affluence when their circumstances do not warrant such luxury.”

She said she has empowered the PAGC to enlist the material and manpower support of other Cabinet departments to enable it to carry out its work of cleansing the bureaucracy of corrupt officials.

The President was specific in ordering the PAGC to conduct the lifestyle check of government officials immediately.

In the presidential directive, the PAGC was ordered to undertake the following as part of the campaign:

- to determine compliance with present government requirements, such as submission of statement of assets, liabilities (SAL) and net worth, submission of income tax returns, and other requirements needed for assumption to office;
- to make determination in current standard of life of government executives covered by the order or consistent with submitted SAL;
- to make ocular inspections of the residences, properties and businesses of government officials;
- to submit reports to the Office of the President on the result of its work on regular basis;
- to communicate to the public its findings and recommendations; and
- to undertake investigation and prosecution as part of its work.

In her speech, the President, however, said that while the government is determined to conduct the campaign without pause, people should not expect prosecutions and convictions overnight.

“Due process will be observed in the course of the drive. The effort may be laborious but it shall be focused and determined,” the President said.

She also called on the perpetrators of graft “to change, to repent and to correct their ways.”

“Magbago na kayo. Magsisi, sa pamamagitan ng matuwid at malinis na paglilingkod (You change, you repent by being honest and dedicated in your jobs),” the President said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 22, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030062430/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct22.htm>

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Gov't lauds int'l call center firm for choosing RP as major operations hub

Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas today expressed the appreciation of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to e-Telecare International, the country's largest call center, for choosing the Philippines as its major investment and operations site.

In a report, Sto. Tomas said that the call center industry is a sunshine industry that represents a window of growth for the country.

Sto. Tomas congratulated e-Telecare International for inaugurating its second call center facility at the PBCom Tower in Makati City.

The firm is expected to employ some 2,500 workers in its new facility that occupies three floors of the Philippines' tallest building.

e-Telecare International started with only 25 workers when it set up its first facility in the Philippines at the Citibank Square in Eastwood Park, Quezon City two years ago.

The firm now counts among its clients some of the world's top financial institutions, telecommunications giants and service organizations. By the end of this year, the company expects to have a workforce of 1,800. It expects to triple that number in three years.

"The services sector, including call centers and fast food chains, are boosting employment, and helping cushion weak job growth in other sectors," Sto. Tomas said.

She said the firm's opening of its second center in the Philippines shows that employment is flourishing in this particular industry.

The call center industry, Sto. Tomas said, attests to the fact that "the Philippines' best natural resource is labor."

James Franke, president of e-Telecare International, cited the role of the Filipino workers in the company. "Broadly speaking, the first member of our team is the Philippines itself, with its highly educated, English speaking workforce," he said.

Franke said the company's Filipino workers enabled the firm to clinch seven major awards in the United States in the past 12 months, adding that his company earned the "best of the best" distinction for outsourced call center services in the International Call Center Management Conference held recently in Chicago, USA.

GMA orders Perez to refer Transco raps to PAGC

CEBU CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed Energy Secretary Vicente Perez to refer to the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) for investigation those implicated by Sen. Sergio Osmeña III in his privilege speech to the alleged anomalies in the National Transmission Co. (Transco).

In her speech at the University of San Carlos here, the President said she has also ordered the investigation of alleged anomalies in the Public Estates Authority, Philippine National Construction Corp., and the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB).

Just yesterday in Argao, the President ordered the PAGC to conduct a lifestyle check on top government officials – from Cabinet secretaries, undersecretaries, assistant secretaries to bureau directors; executives of government-owned and control corporations; heads of government financial institutions and other major offices in the executive branch of government – to see if they are living within their means.

The President, however, cautioned the people not to expect prosecution and convictions overnight.

"Due process will be observed," she said, adding that the process may be laborious but will be focused and determined.

Earlier this week, the President suspended all pending and planned projects of the PEA, especially those requiring public bidding "until the investigation of the alleged overpricing of the project at the reclamation area shall have been completed."

The President said she wants "to go to the bottom of the controversy, discern the truth, identify the wrong doers, if any, clear the innocent and possibly revamp the PEA for being embroiled in scandals."

GMA says she, First Gentleman to set example in fight against graft

CEBU CITY – In fighting graft and corruption, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the primordial requirement is to set an example from the top.

This is why even the First Gentleman, Atty. Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, is not above the law when she enjoined him to face a Senate investigation.

"I have enjoined him to face the Senate investigation to demonstrate that there are no sacred cows in my government," the President said.

And as expected, she said the accusations against him were found to be false and politically-motivated.

She said by letting her husband face inquiry, she has gained moral authority to call on investigation on graft herself.

"Batobato sa langit, pag natamaan huwag magagalit (whoever is hit should not get hurt)," she said.

Yesterday, the President ordered the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) to conduct a lifestyle check on all officials of the government, including those in government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) and government financial institutions (GFIs).

GMA lauds police, Lobregat for speedy arrest of suspects in Zambo bombings

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Philippine National Police (PNP) and Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat for their coordination resulting in the speedy arrest of five suspects believed behind the series of bombing attacks in Zamboanga City during the past weeks.

The five suspects, believed to be members of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group, were presented to the President at the Villamor Air Base upon her arrival this morning from Cebu City.

In her brief remarks at the presentation of the suspects, the President particularly congratulated PNP chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Chief Superintendent Eduardo Matillano, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), and Mayor Lobregat.

Mayor Lobregat was also present during the presentation, along with Ebdane and Matillano.

The President also congratulated the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for its role in the joint enforcement and command in Mindanao especially in the fight against terrorist elements.

She cited the example of Mayor Lobregat, saying that when the mayor is in command in the fight against crimes, law enforcement units act more in concert.

In answer to a query, the President said that police officers responsible for the arrests are not entitled to cash rewards but they will be given promotions aside from receiving medals of valor.

A PNP press statement said that the five suspects were arrested Tuesday by elements of PNP-CIDG, Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (PACER) and Police Regional Office 9 during a raid conducted at a suspected Abu Sayyaf Group hideout in Guiwan, Zamboanga City.

The suspects were arrested based on the descriptions provided by the many witnesses who saw them park the bicycle where the bombs were attached at the entrance of the Fort Pilar Shrine last October 20 prior to the explosion that killed the Marine sentry and wounded 10 others.

Initial findings of the investigation showed that the security measures at the checkpoint had prevented the suspects from bringing the bicycle inside the premises of the Fort Pilar Shrine where it would have caused more damage.

Arrested in separate operations were the following:

- Abduljamin Asanul Habi alias Abdulasis/Jamin/Bas Jumail, 18 years old, Yakan, resident of Kalabasa, Curuan, Zamboanga City;
- Bas Ismael alias Big Boy Arab/Arab, 18 years old, Tausug, resident of Siasi, Sulu;
- Madznul Abdula Ladja alias Arjhon Morales/"Eddie", 23, Tausug, resident of Siasi, Sulu;
- Buyungan Bungkak alias Jul, 19, Tausug, resident of Manicahan, Zamboanga City; and
- Rajak Sagumayan alias Rajak, 27, Yakan, resident of Curuan, Zamboanga City.

The arrest were made by virtue of search warrants issued by Judge Jesus Carbon of RTC Branch 16, Ninth Judicial Region in Zamboanga City.

The PNP said their operatives recovered from the suspects two caliber .45 pistols and paraphernalia and equipment for making bombs like long-nose pliers, a cutter, two cell phone units, powder substances, one bicycle compressor, one alarm clock and documents containing instructions for bomb-making

According to the PNP, the suspects are believed to be responsible for at least three bombing incidents, namely, the Malagutay bombing last October 2, the twin explosions at Shop-o-Rama and Shoppers Central last October 7, and the Fort Pilar Shrine bombing last October 20.

The arrested persons are currently undergoing tactical interrogation. Appropriate charges are being prepared against them.

GMA stresses due process to be observed in fight against graft in public offices

CEBU CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that while her administration is determined to rid the bureaucracy of grafters and wrongdoers, the people should not expect convictions overnight because due process will still have to be followed.

In her speech this morning at the opening of the Catholic Student Leaders Conference held at the University of San Carlos here, the President said it is also part of the moral and principled leadership to observe due process in the course of the campaign against corruption in public offices.

In Argao yesterday, the President said that she had ordered the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) to conduct a lifestyle check on all officials of the government as part of her campaign against graft and corruption.

The President said she realized that graft in government could not be crushed in a single stroke like the slaying of the dragon by Saint Michael's sword or washed away like dirty tables with a Herculean douse of water.

She cited as example former Commissioner Rene Banez of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) who tried to fight graft in the agency like Saint Michael or Hercules.

The President said that in his efforts to fight graft at the BIR as fast as possible, Banez was sabotaged by his own people, prompting him to resign and concentrate on his job as consultant at the Department of Finance.

The lesson that has been learned in the Banez case, the President said, is that like an infected wound, corruption must be healed not by Saint Michael's dragon but by "patient, constant and steady disinfecting, scraping, and cleansing."

The President said that part of this "scraping and cleansing" process is the adoption of the e-procurement program that has saved billions of pesos and minimized anomalies in government transactions.

She also announced that the BIR, under its new commissioner, former Customs Commissioner Guillermo Parayno, has been able to achieve its revenue target for the month of October after so many months of being below target.

The BIR collections for October, the President said, is about one-third higher than the bureau's collection for the same period last year, thus proving that it pays to have experienced and honest official in revenue generating agencies in the person of Commissioner Parayno.

GMA determined to stamp out graft, corruption

CEBU CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed that she is very concerned about stamping out graft and corruption in government.

In her speech at the opening ceremonies of the Catholic Student Leaders Conference at the University of San Carlos here, the President noted that she is very much influenced by his father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, who made God first, country second and family third in his priorities.

“We were disciplined to be self-effacing, not self-aggrandizing,” the President said.

In fighting graft and corruption, the President said the primordial requirement is to set an example at the top.

Yesterday in Argao, the President recalled, she announced the launch of “a campaign to foster honesty in public service, reward dedication, fidelity to service, and sanction government officials and employees discovered to have amassed wealth and property beyond their means, or who visibly live in affluence when their circumstances do not warrant such luxury.”

The President said she ordered the Presidential Ant-graft Commission (PAGC) to spearhead the conduct of a lifestyle check of Cabinet secretaries, undersecretaries, assistant secretaries, bureau directors, executives of government-owned or controlled corporations, heads of government financial institutions, and other major offices in the executive branch.

“Let me assure you, my young friends, that I am working diligently to ensure that the people are getting the professional and clean government you deserve,” the President told the student leaders.

“The Filipino masses are with me in this campaign,” the President said in Argao earlier. “And we shall celebrate the removal, charging in court and sending to jail of thieves in suit and barong.”

Bunye congratulates PBS program for winning CMMA

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye today commended Radyo Pilipinas-Overseas of the Philippine Broadcasting Service (PBS) for winning the Best Radio Feature Program for this year’s Catholic Mass Media Awards (CMMA).

In his letter of commendation to Tanny Rodriguez: Broadcast Station Manager of Radyo Pilipinas, the Press Secretary cited the prestige and honor that the station brought to the Office of the Press Secretary by clinching the award from the prestigious annual television and radio competition.

Radyo Pilipinas’ winning entry is titled “Undas Tradisyon, Ritwal at Iba pa.”

“Undas” examines the colorful burial traditions of both Christian and Muslim Filipinos; and provides an expert’s perspective on common experiences that are believed to be paranormal occurrences.

Radyo Pilipinas bagged the prestigious award for the second straight year.

Rodriguez dedicated the award to the millions of Overseas Filipino Workers across the globe who are the primary audience of Radyo Pilipinas.

Rey Sampang wrote the script, while Danny Morados provided the musical scoring. Joshua Ayuste and Gene Tan were the segment producers for the award-winning radio program.

Radyo Pilipinas uses the shortwave facilities of the International Broadcasting Bureau (Voice of America) for its worldwide transmission.

The station’s Filipino service is aired daily at the frequencies of 11.720/12.270/15/190 mHz, from 1730-1930 UTC. Its English Service, meanwhile, is aired over 11.885/15.120/15/270 mHz from 0200-0330 UTC.

GMA pushes for responsible parenthood

CEBU CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that her administration’s policy on population growth is based on the constitutional principle of responsible parenthood.

In her speech at the opening of the Catholic Student Leaders Conference held at the University of San Carlos here, the President said this policy is anchored on the principle of having God as the first priority in determining public policy.

The President said that the priorities of her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, which she has adopted as a guiding principle in her public life, are God first, country second, and family only third.

According to the President, responsible parenthood means that parents are educated enough to be able to determine how many children they can afford to have.

“Then, having made that decision responsibly, it is they who will decide how to carry out their decision with regard to their respective religious and cultural beliefs,” the President said.

The President also said that there are laws that govern or punish couples who resort to abortion or the use of abortifacient in stopping birth.

She also said that responsible population policy is not just about birth control but also about creative programs like population dispersal.

The density level in Metro Manila, the President said, is already approaching unacceptable limits and that is why the government is setting up resettlement sites outside of Metro Manila.

One of these big resettlement sites is in Montalban, Rizal where some 16,000 former squatter families from Metro Manila are now resettled.

NSC urges fast-tracking of anti-terror law, strengthening of intelligence organizations

The National Security Council (NSC), chaired by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, endorsed today the fast-tracking of the anti-terrorism bills now pending in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

In a press briefing in Malacañang after the NSC meeting at the State Dining Room of the Palace this afternoon, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said the council also expressed the need to strengthen the nation's intelligence organizations and saw the danger of the indiscriminate arming of Barangay Tanod or village police.

The NSC also unanimously endorsed the proposal of Basilan Rep. Gerry Salapuddin to hold a Muslim-Christian congress that will consolidate the support of moderate Muslim groups in the government's anti-terrorism campaign.

Golez said the members of the NSC expressed concern that if the Philippines does not have a strong anti-terrorism law, it will become relatively soft compared to the hard position on anti-terrorism of countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Golez that Malaysia and Singapore already have their internal security laws while President Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia came out last week with two decrees on anti-terrorism which were fully supported by Parliament.

The NSC also reaffirmed the need for a national Identification (ID) system but stressed they would prefer that it be handled through an Executive Order.

Golez said that the proposed ID system will be transaction-related and not obligatory and will be used for government transactions. Golez said this ID is going to be SSS or GSIS-based, referring to the Social Security System and the Government Service Insurance System.

The Security Council also urged the local government units (LGUs) to come up with their local ordinances for an ID that can be used for LGU-related transactions by the general public.

Golez also said the NSC suggested the further strengthening of the Regional Intelligence Coordinating Committee, which is actually chaired by the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency.

The aim is to bring the intelligence efforts down to the ground level and not just at the strategic and operational level of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Golez said.

Seeing the danger of an indiscriminate arming of the Barangay Tanod, Golez said the NSC stressed that this be done by following the strict process for licensing and the carrying of firearms being implemented by the Philippine National Police.

Golez clarified that if the Barangay Tanod are going to be utilized in the fight against terrorism, they should fall under the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) system of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, depending on the degree of threat or concerns of the barangay.

Golez also said the NSC stressed the need to hold an international anti-terrorism conference as soon as possible as he revealed that a lot of countries in the region “are already expressing their keen interest in holding this international conference on terrorism.”

On Congressman Salapuddin’s proposal, Golez said the Bishop-Ulama Group will handle the holding of a Muslim-Christian congress in accordance with the inter-faith solidarity thrust of the President as enunciated in her 14-point anti-terrorism program.

“We felt that this is going to be very necessary in order to strengthen inter-faith solidarity,” Golez said.

The NSC also took note of the 10-point police-community program to be implemented by the Department of the Interior and Local Governments (DILG) and the local government units, and welcomed the employment of the LGU members in the hardening of targets as well as intelligence work.

Aside from the President and Golez, among those present during the NSC meeting were Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr.; former President Corazon Aquino; Senate President Franklin Drilon, Jr.; Senators Ramon Magsaysay, Jr., Loren Legarda, Manuel Villar, Rodolfo Biazon and Juan Flavier; Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr.; Congressmen Raul Gonzales, Salapuddin, Nephthali Gonzales, Jr., Apolinario Lozada, Agapito Aquino and Amado Espino; Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura; PNP Chief Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr.; AFP Chief Gen. Benjamin Defensor; Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao; Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye; Energy Secretary Vicente S. Perez; Justice Secretary Hernando Perez; Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr.; Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz; Presidential Legislative Liaison Office Chief Gabriel Claudio; Presidential Adviser on Special Concern Norberto Gonzalez; Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro Baja and Metro Manila Development Authority Chairman Bayani Fernando.

GMA designates Veep to act for and on her behalf during U.S., Mexico trip

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today designated Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. to act for and on her behalf during her visit to the United States and Mexico.

The President directed Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo and all concerned departments and agencies to assist the Vice President in the discharge of his functions.

All acts of the Vice President for and on behalf of the President during her absence shall, however, be approved directly by the President or through the Executive Secretary.

Lifestyle check part of campaign for good governance, says Malacañang

Malacañang said today the lifestyle check to be conducted by the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) against corrupt public officials is part of the administration's campaign for good governance and transparency.

"We all know that this administration is really for good governance," Press Secretary Ignacio "Toting" Bunye said during his regular press briefing at Malacañang this afternoon.

Bunye said all presidential appointees starting from the Cabinet Secretaries, Undersecretaries, down to the level of Director are now the subject of a comprehensive lifestyle check to be conducted by the PAGC.

He said the President issued instructions yesterday to PAGC Chairman Dario Rama to conduct the lifestyle check.

"Let's just give Chairman Rama a chance to do his work and let's judge him later on the amount of work that he does in implementing this order," Bunye added.

The Press Secretary also said the mandate or authority of the PAGC is only to initiate administrative investigations and if some people are later found to be criminally liable, the criminal charges will be recommended by the agency to the Office of the Ombudsman.

"So, as far as the PAGC is concerned, they are doing the administrative aspect and the sanctions here include reprimand, suspension and termination," Bunye said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 23, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029125937/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct23.htm>

The President's Day: October 24, 2002

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- **GMA inducts Azcuna as S.C. Associate Justice**
- **GMA departs for Honolulu en route to Mexico for 10th APEC Leaders' Meeting**
- **GMA to meet with Inouye, Fargo, Fil-American community in Hawaii**
- **Filipinos shine in Hawaii legislature**
- **Tiglao back as Spokesman, to take oath as President's Chief of Staff on GMA's return from APEC meet**

GMA inducts Azcuna as S.C. Associate Justice

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today inducted into office former Press Secretary Adolfo A. Azcuna as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

The oath-taking ceremony at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall was witnessed by Azcuna's wife, Maria Asuncion, and two of his four children, Beatriz and Miguel, as well as other relatives and other members of the Supreme Court.

Prior to his appointment, Azcuna, 62, was senior partner of the Azcuna, Sarmiento, Chua and Caedo Law Office.

A lawyer by profession, Azcuna finished his Bachelor of Laws degree, Cum Laude, at the Ateneo de Manila University in 1962 and passed the Bar Examinations in the same year, placing fourth among the top examinees.

He obtained his post-graduate studies in International Law and Jurisprudence at the Salzburg University in Austria in 1982.

From 1962 to 1987, Azcuna went into private practice, specializing in international business and corporate law. He also taught International Law at the Ateneo Law de Manila.

Before his appointment as Press Secretary to former President Corazon C. Aquino, Azcuna was the Mrs. Aquino's legal counsel. He also served as acting chairman of the Presidential Commission on Good Government when its chairman resigned in 1988.

Apart from his functions as Press Secretary, Azcuna also served as President Aquino's spokesman.

Azcuna likewise has the rare distinction of having drafted two constitutions for the Philippines. He was elected to the Constitutional Convention in 1971. Fifteen years later, he was appointed by former President Aquino to the Constitutional Commission that drafted the 1987 Charter.

GMA departs for Honolulu en route to Mexico for 10th APEC Leaders' Meeting

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo left this afternoon for Honolulu en route to Los Cabos, Mexico, where she will attend the 10th Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

The President and her official delegation boarded a regular Philippine Airlines flight for Honolulu at about 3:30 p.m. at the Centennial Terminal II of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Before boarding her plane, the President was accorded the usual military honors. She did not have any departure statement.

The send-off party included Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr., Senate President Franklin Drilon, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Heherson Alvarez, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez, AFP Chief of Staff, Gen. Benjamin Defensor and Philippine National Police chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane.

Among the Cabinet secretaries who accompanied the President on her trip were Foreign Secretary Blas F. Ople, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye and Silvestre Afable, head of the Presidential Management Staff.

Earlier, the President designated Vice President Guingona to act for and on her behalf while she is on her official trip to the United States and Mexico.

In a directive, the President said that all acts of the Vice President for and on her behalf during her absence shall be approved directly by her or through Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo.

Although the President will be in Honolulu for less than 24 hours, she will have a hectic official schedule that includes meeting with Hawaii officials and Admiral Thomas Fargo, commander in chief of the Pacific Command (CINCPAC) of the United States.

While in Honolulu, the President will also meet with members of a very large Filipino community in Hawaii at the Filipino Community Center in the city.

In Los Cabos, Mexico, the President will be among the 21 leaders of the Pacific Rim who will discuss current developments, including terrorist attacks that occurred in the region.

This will be the second time that the President attends an APEC summit, the first was during the 9th APEC Leaders' Meeting in Shanghai in October last year. The 10th APEC Leaders' Meeting will be from October 26 to 27.

While the APEC member-economies always consider economics at the top of the agenda, terrorism's threat to trade, especially after the deadly bombing this month in Bali, Indonesia, could also be included in the list of topics to be discussed.

Aside from Indonesia, other APEC members, including the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore, have been identified as possible havens for extremists linked to al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden's terrorist network.

APEC was established in 1989 to promote open trade and economic cooperation among the 21 member economies around the Pacific Rim.

The APEC members are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, US and Vietnam.

Asia-Pacific is one of the fastest-growing regions in the world and a major contributor to global prosperity and stability. APEC members have a combined population of over 2.4 billion.

GMA to meet with Inouye, Fargo, Fil-American community in Hawaii

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will update the Filipino community in Hawaii on the developments in the Philippines, particularly of her two-year-old administration, when she personally meets with them shortly after her arrival today in the Aloha State.

The President, accompanied by First Gentleman Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo and a few members of the Cabinet, flew to Hawaii at 3:30 p.m. on board a chartered Philippine Airlines flight en route to attend the 10th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico.

Upon her arrival at the Honolulu International Airport, the President will be officially welcomed by Philippine Ambassador Albert del Rosario, Consul General and Mrs. Rolando Gregorio, Hawaii Governor and Mrs. Benjamin Cayetano and Admiral Thomas Fargo, Commander in Chief of the United States Pacific Command (CINCPAC).

After the welcome ceremonies, the President and her official delegation will be immediately whisked to their hotel, where Senator Inouye, supporter of Filipino causes in the US Senate, and Admiral Fargo are scheduled to make courtesy calls.

She will then attend a luncheon to be hosted by Governor Cayetano, a Filipino, at the Governor’s official residence – the Washington Palace.

Immediately after her luncheon meeting with Governor Cayetano, the President will meet the Filipino community at the Filipino Community Center in Waipahu, Hawaii.

Based on the 2000 US census, there are 275,728 Filipinos in Hawaii. They constitute a hefty 22.18 percent of the 1.2-million population of the 50th US state.

While in Hawaii, the President will conduct a press conference to be attended by Hawaii-based print and broadcast media representatives as well as the Filipino journalists covering her official engagements.

Before she leaves for Los Angeles on her way to attend the APEC summit meeting in Mexico City, the President will have dinner with the Filipino-American community at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel.

Filipinos shine in Hawaii legislature

HONOLULU, Hawaii – President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo will be a proud visitor of Hawaii on October 24-25 (October 25-26 in Manila). For aside from the governor of Hawaii, the president of the state Senate of Hawaii is also a Filipino.

And there are three other state senators who are Filipinos or of Filipino descent.

In the other chamber of the state legislature, the House of Representatives, there are six members who are Filipinos or of Filipino descent.

The 10 constitute the biggest number of Filipino state legislators in Hawaii at any one time.

“This, in itself, is a big accomplishment for Filipinos here who first came to Hawaii in 1906 as mere sacadas or workers in the Hawaii sugar plantations,” according to Assemblyman Felipe Abinsay Jr., a Democrat who represents District 29 here consisting of Moanalua, Fort Shafter, Kalihi, Waena and Kapalama in the state House of Representatives.

Assemblyman Abinsay said the Hawaii Senate President is Robert Bunda (Democrat) who, like himself, was born in the Philippines – he in Ilocos Sur and Senator Bunda in Quezon City.

The three other Filipinos in the 27-member state Senate are Ron Menor (Democrat), also a son of a former sacada like Governor Benjamin J. Cayetano who almost became the first Filipino to be elected in the US House of Representatives earlier; Donna Mercado Kim (Democrat), a Filipino-Korean; and Lorraine Inouye (Democrat), a Filipino-Japanese.

Senate President Bunda represents District 29 composed of Wahiawa, Haleiwa and North Shore; Menor, District 18 composed of Waipahu, Crestview and Mililani; Kim, District 15 composed of Moanalua Valley, Alea, Pearlridge and Kalihi Valley while Inouye, District 1, composed of North Hilo, Hamakua and South Kohala.

Menor, following the footsteps of Governor Cayetano, is running this year for lieutenant governor of Hawaii. If he wins, he will be the hope of Filipinos to be the next Filipino governor of the Aloha State.

Aside from Abinsay, the five other members of the state House of Representatives who are Filipinos or of Filipino descent are Assemblymen Ben Cabreros (Democrat) of District 30 who, like Abinsay, is also originally from Ilocos Sur; Nestor Garcia (Democrat) of District 37; Willie Espero (Democrat) of District 41; Michael Magaoay (Democrat) of District 45; and David Pendleton (Republican) of District 50.

Filipinos have also their imprints in the Hawaii judiciary. Several Filipino lawyers have served or are still serving as judges in the lower, appellate and Supreme Courts of Hawaii.

At present, two of the five members of the state Supreme Court are Filipinos. They are Associate Justices Mario Ramil who was born in Quezon City and Simeon Acoba Jr. who is Hawaii-born.

Many Filipinos have also served as mayors or councilmen of the different cities of Hawaii.

Another son of a *sacada* from Negros, Virgilio de la Paz, born in Hawaii, served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the '70s, the highest position held by a Filipino-American in the US military service.

Many other Filipinos and Fil-Americans have brought pride to the Philippines through their accomplishments in various fields in Hawaii and the United States.

Among them are Miss America 2001 Angela Perez Baraquo, a teacher in Hawaii before she won the pageant, whose parents are originally from Mabini, Pangasinan and Manila; Olympic boxer Brian Vitoria; baseball player Benny Agbayani; and Dr. Jorge Camara, the first to conduct eye surgery through telemedicine.

In the field of construction, Lito Alcantara, a native of Ilocos Sur who served as president of the Filipino American Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii and had led several trade missions to the Philippines, stands out. His company built several hotels, homes and landmark buildings throughout Hawaii, earning for him the award as one of the Most Outstanding Minority Businessmen in Hawaii.

Filipinos in Hawaii believe it will not be long when they will be able to send a Filipino to the US Congress, either as congressman or senator.

“This is not far-fetched. This is very possible. In a few more years, we, in Hawaii, may be able to send the first Filipino member of the US Congress,” said Assemblyman Abinsay.

Abinsay recalled that the Filipinos almost made it in the mid-80s when now state Senator Ron Menor, whose father served as a member of the state Supreme Court of Hawaii, ran for US congressman but lost by a slim margin to a wealthier Japanese-American candidate.

Tiglao back as Spokesman, to take oath as President's Chief of Staff on GMA's return from APEC meet

Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao is back and, in a briefing at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport today, announced he will take his oath as Chief of Staff of the Office of the President as soon as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo returns from Mexico.

Tiglao was among the members of the Cabinet and other government officials who saw the President off for the United States and Mexico, where she is attending the 10th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit meeting.

“I’ve never left that job (of Presidential Spokesman). On leave lang (I just went on leave),” Tiglao said in his first press briefing since he went on leave on April 15 to assume a Visiting Professor Fellowship at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies of Kyoto University in Japan.

“I haven’t been sworn in as Chief of Staff,” Tiglao said, “but the President has already given me broad guidelines for the work.”

Tiglao also announced that the President has designated Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. to act for and on her behalf during her visit to the US and Mexico.

He also said Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo will be in charge of the day-to-day requirements of the government.

Tiglao actually returned to his job as Presidential Spokesman yesterday and immediately attended the National Security Council meeting the President called upon her return from a two-day visit to Cebu.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: October 24, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213900/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct24.htm>

The President's Day: October 25, 2002

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GMA gets warm welcome in Hawaii

HONOLULU, Hawaii – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived here Thursday (Friday in Manila) to a warm welcome amid a drizzle of morning rain on her way to attend the 10th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico

The President, who was garbed in a red dress, was welcomed by Hawaiian Governor Benjamin Cayetano, Admiral Thomas Fargo, commander in chief of the United States military forces in the Pacific and their wives, as well as members of the Philippine Consulate in Hawaii.

She was accompanied by First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye and Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable,

After the welcome ceremonies at the Honolulu International Airport shortly after her Philippine Airlines plane touched down at 7:30 a.m., the President was driven in a white Cadillac to the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel where she is going to be billeted overnight.

At the hotel lobby, members of the Hawaii Filipino community welcomed the President with leis.

Among those who welcomed the President at the hotel was former Miss America, Hawaii's Angela Perez Baraquo, who presented her with a bouquet. Baraquo's parents are Filipinos.

The President beamed as she personally received the warm greetings of the members of the Filipino community, who represented the United Filipino Council of Hawaii, the Oahu Filipino Community Council, the Filipino Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, the Pampanga Circle and the Congress of Visayan Organizations.

The President waved to the crowd and shook hands with the hotel's registration clerks sitting behind a counter before proceeding to her suite.

Later in the morning, she received United States Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, a staunch supporter of Philippine concerns in the US Senate, and Admiral Thomas Fargo, commander in chief of the US military forces in the Pacific.

Hawaii's Governor Cayetano, who is of Filipino descent, and his wife are to host a luncheon later for the President at the Washington Place, the governor's official residence.

GMA brings good news to Filipinos in Hawaii: passage of absentee voting bill

HONOLULU, Hawaii – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today brought good news to the Filipino community here: the passage of the absentee voting bill in both houses of Congress during the third and final reading.

Speaking at a press conference held at the Filipino Community Center in Waipahu, Hawaii, the President said “this is the farthest the bill has gone in all the administrations which attempted to enact it.”

The President asked the Filipinos in Hawaii to join her in praying that the differing provisions of the House and the Senate versions will be ironed out soon in the bicameral conference committee so that this can be implemented soon.

The absentee voting bill will allow Filipinos residing or working abroad to exercise their right of suffrage.

She also announced the passing of the dual citizenship bill in the Senate on third and final reading.

The President, in her opening remarks, thanked the Filipino community in Hawaii for helping her in improving and developing the Philippine economy.

The President, upon arrival here at what she described as “fantastic” Filipino Community Center, had a ceremonial planting of a narra tree. She also toured the center, met with Filipino-American veterans and had photo sessions with them.

She also met with “sacadas” or original plantation workers in Hawaii and the Fil-Am students here.

The President’s plane, PR 100, arrived from Manila at around 7:30 a.m. (Hawaii time)

Along with First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo, and the rest of the presidential party, she proceeded immediately to the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel where she received United States Senator Daniel Inouye, and later Admiral Thomas Fargo, commander in chief of the US Pacific Command (CINCPAC).

Earlier, the President had a luncheon hosted by Hawaii Governor and Mrs. Benjamin Cayetano. Among the other guests were top officials of Hawaii who are of Filipino descent.

Later tonight, the President will have, dinner with the Filipino-American community here at the Tapa Room of the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel where she is billeted.

The President made an overnight visit to this city on her way to attend the 10th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (PAEC) Leaders Meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico.

According to the President, the history of the Philippines in Hawaii is a mirror of the partnership between the Philippines and the United States of America.

“This partnership is firm. It is molded by history and shared strategic interests,” the President said.

The President said her trip to Hawaii “is a very refreshing and rewarding experience.” She thanked Governor Cayetano and the entire people of Hawaii for their warm reception and hospitality.

GMA discusses R.P.-U.S. security cooperation, other vital concerns with Inouye, Fargo

HONOLULU, Hawaii – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo met separately Thursday (Friday in Manila) with United States Sen. Daniel K. Inouye and Admiral Thomas Fargo, the commander in chief of the US Pacific

Command (Cincpac), on security issues and other matters of special concern to the Philippines and of mutual interest to the Philippines and the US.

The President said during a press conference at the Filipino Community Center in Waipahu that she and Admiral Fargo, the senior commander of American military forces in the Pacific and Indian Ocean areas, discussed security cooperation between the Philippines and the US.

“The forces under Admiral Fargo’s command have been working very closely with their counterpart in the Philippines under training activities covered by our Mutual Defense Treaty and the Visiting Forces Agreement,” the President said.

The Pacific Command covers more than 50 percent of the earth’s surface from the US West Coast to the east coast of Africa, from the Arctic to Antarctic, and including the states of Alaska and Hawaii. Its area of responsibility constitutes nearly 60 percent of the world’s population in 43 countries, 20 territories and possessions, and 10 US territories.

The President said she also met earlier with Senator Inouye, whom she described as a good friend of the Filipino people, and thanked him for his continued support and advocacy of Philippine interests in the American Congress.

“I thanked him because he was one of those who spearheaded the move not to give Philippine canned tuna a disadvantageous position with regard to the tuna imports to the United States from the Andean countries,” the President said.

The President said Senator Inouye will also help the Philippines get preferential treatment in the US market because the center of the tuna industry in the Philippines is in Mindanao, an area which is very much threatened by terrorist groups, including the Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom group and the Abu Sayyaf.

The President said she also thanked Inouye for spearheading support for the Filipino veterans’ rights in the US Congress.

The President also expressed the gratitude of the Filipino people to Senator Inouye for spearheading moves to increase appropriations for military assistance to the Philippines.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, in a radio interview after the President’s meetings with Inouye and Fargo, said the Admiral expressed the desire of the US to cooperate in upgrading the intelligence gathering capabilities of the Philippine government.

The President and Fargo also discussed the improvement of Philippine capability to transport troops to areas where they are needed and the provision of armored vests for Filipino soldiers, Bunye said.

GMA: RP-US fight against terrorism stems from common belief on strong democratic institutions

HONOLULU, Hawaii – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the Philippine-American partnership in the fight against global terrorism is anchored on the two countries’ common belief in strong democratic institutions that create peace and freedom for people everywhere.

Speaking at a press conference held at the Filipino Community Center in Waipahu, Hawaii, the President said it is because of common democratic ideals that the Philippines has offered political, security and humanitarian assistance to the United States in the pursuit of her most vital interest against terrorism.

The President also said she will meet with US President George W. Bush in Los Cabos, Mexico on the sidelines of the 10th Leaders Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Cooperation (APEC) to take up not only security matters but also development initiatives that would strike at the very roots of poverty in terrorism prone areas.

The President said that the Philippines is determined to fight terrorism “to the end.”

She said that strategic assessments point to a possible shift in al-Qaeda terrorist operations to Southeast Asia. “America and the Philippines are sharing eyes and ears in this development,” the President said.

The Philippines, the President said, is also closely allied with Indonesia and Malaysia under a trilateral agreement to check terrorist movements across their common seas.

But whether terrorists in the Philippines are linked to al-Qaeda or not, they are still terrorists and must be crushed, she said. “Terrorism is a global phenomenon today and, therefore, there must be a global response to terrorism,” the President said.

She said that since terrorism is a borderless activity, therefore, the response must be borderless or transnational.

The President said that after the Bali bombing, the Philippines had its small bombings in Zamboanga City and Western Mindanao. She, however, reported that the suspects in these blasts have been arrested.

“We won’t let these incidents just stay for long. Our local communities are enthusiastically helping the national government watch out for terrorist movements,” the President said.

According to the President, her administration is focused on what needs to be done to address the war on terrorism and to win the battle against poverty in the Philippines within the decade.

“Terrorism will never completely go away unless we root out the handmaiden of terrorism – poverty,” the President said.

The President said that 21st century war against terrorism is a new kind of war that requires a new kind of peace.

She said that part of this new kind of peace process is reconciling the concerns of developing countries with the prospective of developed economies.

“Thus our partnership with America has also leaned much on the common belief that terrorism and poverty are a combined enemy,” the President said.

Filipino community leaders willing to help safeguard absentee voting in U.S. in 2004 — GMA

HONOLULU, Hawaii—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded leaders of the Filipino community in the United States for their willingness to extend financial support so that the absentee voting in the US in 2004 would be clean and honest.

In a press briefing at the Filipino Community Center here, the President said that before she left Manila, she got a call from Loida Nicolas, Alex Esclamado and other prominent leaders of the Filipino community in the US who said that they would fund a NAMFREL-type activity in safeguarding the votes in the overseas balloting.

NAMFREL is the acronym of the National Movement for Free Elections, accredited by the Commission on Elections as watchdog in all elections in the country.

“So, therefore, much of the projected expenses, they said, can be borne by the Filipino community here,” the President said when asked if the government has enough funds to implement the absentee voting law.

The President also said that she has left it to the bicameral committee of Congress to reconcile the differences in the two bills passed by the House and the Senate on absentee voting.

The important thing, the President said, is that the principle of overseas voting has been adopted by Congress which is fully justified, considering the \$6 billion a year in remittances from overseas Filipinos.

She said that for the first six months of this year, some \$4 billion have already been remitted to the Philippines by overseas Filipinos.

According to the President, while one-third of all overseas Filipinos are in the US, two-thirds of the overseas remittances come from the US.

‘Because of your remittances, you should really be given the chance to have your voice heard,’ the President said.

GMA optimistic on RP’s tourism industry

HONOLULU, Hawaii—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she remains optimistic about the prospects of the Philippine tourism industry despite recent terrorist attacks in the region.

In a press briefing at the Filipino Community Center here, the President said that, in fact, as of October 2002, the country registered a 40 percent growth in tourism compared to the same period last year.

“So, while our budget is small, apparently it is very well allocated,” the President said, referring to the minuscule budget of the Department of Tourism (DOT) for promoting the Philippines in the international market.

The President said that when the bombings in Bali, Indonesia and in Mindanao occurred, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon just came from a meeting of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in Tokyo and the WTO is proceeding with its Visit the Philippines Year in 2003 as earlier scheduled.

While the President admitted that Thailand is number one in tourism in Asia, she said “we are not going to lose tourists to Thailand because they are already there.”

The Philippines and Thailand, the President said, have a twinning arrangement where long-haul tourists can visit and enjoy their holidays in both countries.

“It is not for us to compare ourselves with others. We have to find our own niche, our own market segment,” the President said.

According to the President, the Philippines’ number one market segment is beach tourism, followed by domestic tourism, shopping and sightseeing tourism, eco-tourism, Balibayan tourism, and the backpackers’ tourism.

The President then invited the Filipinos in all parts of the US to visit the Philippines next year, 2003 being Visit the Philippines Year.

Original ‘Sacadas’ children in Hawaii elated over meeting with GMA

HONOLULU, Hawaii (via PLDT) – For some of the remaining early Filipino sacadas or plantation workers and their children here, meeting President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is a privilege and rare opportunity.

“This is my first time to meet a president, a Philippine President. My first time to shake a president’s hand. It was a privilege,” said Livia Valido, 68 years old, whose parents were among the sacadas who arrived here in 1930.

Pedro Subia, who turned 82 today, considered his meeting with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as a “great gift.”

“I’m thankful to see President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Today is specially lucky for me. This is an opportunity, a great (birthday) gift,” Subia said in his native Ilocano dialect.

Ninety-three-year-old Damaso Gamundoy, the oldest living sacada here, is grateful and thankful to see the President. Gamundoy’s parents arrived and worked here in 1928.

These sentiments were also shared by representatives of the World War II veterans, sacadas’ children as well as Filipino-American students from various colleges and universities here.

The President met them informally at the grand ballroom of the \$18-million Filipino Community Center in Waipahu after touring the three-story facility.

The President received cheers and applause as she entered the ballroom. The Fil-Ams here, who eagerly awaited her arrival, warmly and excitedly welcomed the Chief Executive, waving small Philippine flags.

In a brief message, the President thanked the Filipino-American community here for their support in helping improve and develop the Philippine economy.

The President also lauded the sacadas for their very important role in the history of Hawaii, citing the hardships they suffered like the parents of Hawaii Fil-Am Gov. Benjamin Cayetano.

Addressing the veterans, who submitted a resolution asking the President to intercede on their behalf with the US for the provision of their full benefits, the President said there is an appropriation measure that has already been passed in the US House of Representatives granting \$65,000 for five years for the Filipino veterans’ health benefits in the US.

The President said this is now in the Senate, sponsored by Senator Daniel Inouye, a Japanese-American also from Hawaii.

She also informed them of the \$500-million a year health benefits for veterans in the Philippines which has already been approved in the US Congress.

An impressed President described the Filipino Community Center here as fantastic and fabulous.

The construction of the Center started in 2000. It was formally opened in June 2002.

The FilCom Center serves as a gathering place for promoting activities that will help strengthen, perpetuate and promote the rich Filipino cultural heritage and values.

It also serves as a family-focused center offering varied social and human service programs for Filipino-Americans.

Int’l Agricultural Research Week proclaimed

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has declared the period from October 28, 2002 to November 3, 2002 as International Agricultural Research Week.

In Proclamation No. 279 which she signed Thursday (October 24), the President said there is a need to focus more attention on the important role played by agricultural research in national progress, development and poverty alleviation.

The Consultative Group on the International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) will be holding its annual general meeting in the Philippines for the first time from October 28 to November 1, 2002. The meeting will bring together more than 500 local and foreign scientist-delegates.

The CGIAR is a global alliance of investors, 16 international research institutes known as Future Harvest Centers, 58 member-countries from both developing and industrialized countries and other partner organizations which mobilize science to benefit the poor.

“The meeting in Metro Manila is being held because of the Philippines’ long-term support for, and membership in the CGIAR, and because of the Philippines’ international reputation in agricultural research, being host country to one of the top-notch research agencies, the International Rice Research Institute,” the President said.

APEC members commend GMA determination, prompt efforts to root out terrorism

The member-economies of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) today commended the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for its determination and prompt and decisive efforts to root out and fight terrorism in the country.

In a radio interview this afternoon, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Delia Albert, who is now in Los Cabos, Mexico, said that the foreign affairs and trade ministers of the 21 member-economies of APEC completed their 14th ministerial meeting today and condemned terrorism in the strongest terms.

Albert said the foreign and trade minister ministers of APEC came out with a statement praising the President and Indonesia’s President Megawatti Sukarnoputri for their “prompt and decisive efforts to find and bring the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of terrorist attacks to justice.”

In a document to be released during the Los Cabos summit, the APEC leaders “condemn in the strongest terms recent terrorist acts in the APEC region, especially in Bali, Indonesia on Oct. 12, and bombings in the Philippines which claimed a large number of innocent lives.”

In their joint statement released today, the APEC foreign affairs and trade minister expressed their commitment to a sound macroeconomic and financial environment, the promotion of good corporate governance, and the common goal of free and open trade and investment in order to increase growth and improve the living standard within APEC economies.

They also said the recent attack in Bali is a tragic reminder of the importance of maintaining a united, committed, and sustained effort to ensure that terrorism does not prevent APEC from achieving its vision of free, open, and prosperous economies.

The Philippine delegation was able to get support on the initiative to hold a High-Level Meeting to Build Capacity in Maritime Security next year. This is a specific Philippine contribution to secure trade in the region. Among the economies which have so far endorsed this initiative are the US, Japan, Singapore, New Zealand, Chinese Taipei, and South Korea.

This initiative seeks to map out new strategies and fresh approaches to enhancing maritime security in the region, especially in the face of the lingering terrorist threat. It aims to build the capacities of the region and of individual economies in securing vessels, cargo, seaports, and seaport facilities, thereby promoting peaceful trade and travel within the region. It could also serve as a venue for launching cooperative action for the protection of the region’s marine resources and ecologically threatened areas.

The Philippines, along with other developing economies, pushed and endorsed WTO capacity and confidence building activities under the APEC Strategic Plan which the ministers believed should remain a top priority for APEC.

In particular, the ministers reiterated that APEC can contribute to the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) by encouraging and coordinating confidence building activities in areas such as investments, competition, trade facilitation, transparency in government procurement, and trade and environment.

RP humanitarian mission returns from Bali

The Philippine Medical Team sent by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to Indonesia returned yesterday after completing their one-week humanitarian mission.

The team, composed of two burn specialists and two nurses, was sent to Bali upon the specific instructions of the President to provide medical assistance to the victims of the terrorist bombings that rocked the island earlier this month.

Soon after bombs went off, the President telephoned Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri to condole with the Indonesian people and to offer assistance.

This gesture is quite common between these two countries and is reminiscent of past instances where Indonesia similarly extended its assistance to the Philippines, especially during times of natural calamities.

Indonesian Minister of Health Achmad Sujudi called Philippine Ambassador Rafael Seguis to express gratitude for the dispatch of the Filipino medical team.

The directors of Sanglah General Hospital, where the team was stationed, likewise conveyed their appreciation and praised the Filipino medical personnel for their performance and the compassion they showed for our Indonesian brethren.

GMA calls on Fil-Ams in Hawaii to help build strong Republic

HONOLULU, Hawaii – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the more than 200,000 Filipinos in Hawaii to help her two-year-old administration build a strong Republic in order to achieve its goal of economic prosperity and stability.

In her speech during a dinner meeting with the Filipino community at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel here, the President said her role is to serve as “chief architect and to see to it that our plans and blueprints are carried on time and correctly.”

However, the President said she can do this well “only if I can count on the support of more than 2-million Filipino-Americans, including the 200,000 Filipinos who are living in Hawaii.”

“As you got together to build the Philippine Community Center, as you got together to put this lovely (gathering) tonight, let us get together, bayanihan style, each contributing a meaningful embellishment to the plan of national greatness and prosperity,” the President said.

The President said the Filipino-Americans constitute one-third of overseas Filipinos, but they contribute two-thirds of the foreign exchange remittances to the Philippines.

“The Filipino-Americans represent the best in the Filipino. Thus, you are the most effective ambassadors of your mother country,” she stressed.

The President said she’s proud of all Filipino-Americans, whether well-known or anonymous.

“I am proud of Ben Cayetano, Jorge Garcias, the Loida Nicolases. But also equally proud of every Fil-Am who has made an investment in this nation and who seeks closer relations between the Philippines and the United States,” she added.

The President also said the Filipino worker has become a presence around the world because of talent and industry.

She cited as examples Filipinos who are known to be musicians of Asia. “In fact, Hawaii Governor Ben Cayetano told me earlier that the first Filipinos in Hawaii, they were not the Sacadas of 1906. They were preceded by some Filipino musicians who played here in Hawaii,” she said, adding that today international stars like Lea Salonga and a cast of Filipino talents are impressing audiences for their superb performances in Broadway.

She also paid tribute not only to the great, outstanding, world famous Filipinos like Hawaiian Governor Benjamin Cayetano but also to the thousands of nameless but unforgotten Filipinos who first landed on the Aloha State nearly a century ago.

“Their story is one of hard work and perseverance,” the President said.

The President also lauded the Filipino-Americans present during the dinner for their continued efforts to practice many of the Filipino customs and traditions that have found acceptance in Hawaii.

“These have been passed from one generation to the next, spreading to neighborhoods and communities, and reinforced by the succeeding wave of Filipino migration,” she said.

She likewise noted with gladness that the House of Representatives of the state approved the creation of the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission, which she said, “is an acknowledgement of the greatness of the Filipino community in Hawaii.”

After her speech, the President was presented the symbolic key to Honolulu which is a tradition given to a visiting head of state.

She also received from the Filipino community their pledge of support to all the programs and projects of her more than 20-month-old government.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: October 25, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20050625083306/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct25.htm>

The President's Day: October 26, 2002

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- **GMA assures signing of absentee voting bill within 24 hours after passage by Congress**
- **GMA says her persistence and advocacy for Filipino war veterans now paying off**
- **GMA elated that some Fil-Ams eager to join gov't loan program for small business ventures**
- **GMA off to Los Cabos for APEC summit**
- **GMA arrives in Los Cabos, Mexico for the two-day APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting**

GMA assures signing of absentee voting bill within 24 hours after passage by Congress

LOS ANGELES, California—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured Filipino-Americans in the United States that she will sign into law the absentee voting bill “within 24 hours” after its final passage by both houses of Congress.

In her speech before a large gathering of members of the Filipino community at the Westin Hotel here, the President said that for the first time after so many attempts by so many administrations, the House of Representatives and the Senate had passed the absentee voting bill on third and final reading.

But the President said there are some conflicting provisions in the versions of the House and the Senate.

“Let us pray that the House and the Senate can iron out their conflicting provisions, because as soon as they do so, I will sign that bill into law within 24 hours,” the President said to the applause of the audience.

The absentee voting bill would allow Filipinos who are already living abroad or those working overseas to exercise their right of suffrage.

The President recalled that even when she was still a senator, she already filed an overseas voting bill but like many other similar bills filed before and after her Senate term, her bill did not even go beyond the committee level.

That is why when she became president early last year, she certified as urgent the passage of the absentee voting bill and the dual citizenship bill, the President said.

The Senate has also passed on third and final reading the dual citizenship bill, the President said.

The President said that her two-hour visit to this city is supposed to be a mere “technical stopover” on her way to Mexico but she insisted on addressing the Filipino community in Los Angeles, the largest Filipino community in the United States.

After the brief stopover, the President and her official delegation, flew to Los Cabos, Mexico to attend the 10th Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

GMA says her persistence and advocacy for Filipino war veterans now paying off

LOS ANGELES, California—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that her persistence and advocacy on behalf of the Filipino World War II veterans are now paying off.

In her address before a large gathering of Filipino-Americans at the Westin Hotel here, the President said since last year, she had been working for the passage by the US Congress of a bill that would give additional benefits to Filipino veterans.

The President made a two-hour technical stopover here on her way to attend the 10th Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in Los Cabos, Mexico.

She said that during her official visit to Washington, D.C. last year, she took this matter up with US President George W. Bush "strongly and emphatically."

President Bush promised that a review of the services and benefits for Filipino veterans would be undertaken and the review is now yielding results, the President said.

According to the President, an appropriations bill that would expand benefit eligibility for health care compensation and burial benefits for Filipino World War II veterans to the tune of \$65 million has already been passed by the US House of Representatives.

She then asked the Filipino community to pray that the bill would pass the US Senate.

The President also informed her audience that the Bush administration is giving assistance to Filipino World War II veterans who are in the Philippines in the amount of half a million US dollars a year.

"Again for the first time after so many attempts by so many administrations, the first half a million dollars will be handed over to the Philippine government this month of October," the President said.

GMA elated that some Fil-Ams eager to join gov't loan program for small business ventures

LOS ANGELES, California—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she was elated to hear that some members of the Filipino community here are interested in participating in the "one town, one product, one million peso loan" program that her administration is implementing in the Philippines.

In her speech before a large gathering of Filipino-Americans at the Westin Hotel here, the President said that she was informed about the desire of Filipinos here to take part in the loan program by Consul General to Los Angeles Marcelino Paynor.

The President told her audience that the program is aimed at pump priming the economy by strengthening the small and medium enterprises (SMEs), especially those in the countryside.

She said that even as her administration is resolved to fight terrorism, she is also focused on her work program for the next six months to rev up the economy that would be anchored on a strong domestic market.

The President also cited the measures undertaken by her administration in ridding the government of grafters and wrongdoers.

"Let me assure you that I'm working diligently to ensure that the Filipino people are getting the professional and clean government you deserve, for you are still part of the Filipino people even if you are here in America," the President said.

She said that the new e-procurement program adopted in the purchase of supplies and equipment is saving billions of pesos and minimizing anomalies in government.

The Presidential Anti-Graft Commission is also investigating a number of government officials, including directors of state-owned corporations, some of them have been asked to go on leave pending the results of their investigations.

She assured her audience that her government would pursue without letup the fight against graft and corruption in public offices.

GMA off to Los Cabos for APEC summit

LOS ANGELES, California—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo left today for Los Cabos, Mexico after a two-hour stopover here where she addressed a large gathering of Filipino-Americans at the Westin Hotel.

In an interview with Manila newsmen, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, who is a member of the presidential party, said that in Los Cabos the President is scheduled to meet with some of the world leaders attending the 10th Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Bunye said that the President has a scheduled one-on-one with US President George W. Bush.

However, Bunye said, it is unlikely that the scheduled meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin would push through since the Russian leader has announced that he would not attend the APEC summit because of the hostage crisis in Moscow.

Before she left Manila, the President said she would like to discuss with Putin the possibility of importing crude oil from Russia if an energy problem would arise in the event of a new Gulf war.

Earlier in Honolulu, where the President made an overnight stopover, she said that she would meet with Bush in Los Cabos to take up not only security matters but also development initiatives that would "strike at the very roots of poverty" in places in the Philippines that are breeding areas for terrorism.

"Let me say that a very important part of my talks with President Bush would be security cooperation in addition to economic cooperation," the President said.

The 10th APEC leaders' meeting, being hosted by Mexico, would be held from October 26-27.

Aside from the President, the heads of state of 20 other member economies of the Pacific Rim would be attending the meeting.

A joint statement issued by the 14th APEC Ministerial Meeting, that preceded the summit, cited global terrorism as a threat to the economic stability of the APEC member economies.

"Terrorism, in all its forms, is a threat to economic stability in APEC, as well as a threat to regional peace and security, and a direct challenge to APEC's vision of free, open and prosperous economies," the statement said.

The statement said that the recent attack in Bali, Indonesia "is a tragic reminder of the importance of maintaining a united, committed and sustained effort to ensure that terrorism does not prevent APEC from achieving its goals."

The statement said that APEC member economies have already made substantial progress in implementing earlier commitments to suppress the financing of terrorism, enhance air and maritime security, strengthen energy security and enhance security-related cooperation on customs and border security.

GMA arrives in Los Cabos, Mexico for the two-day APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting

LOS CABOS, Mexico (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived here at about 10:40 p.m. (Mexico time) after a two-hour stopover in Los Angeles, California where she met with a large number of Filipino-Americans.

The President and her party, which included First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo, were met at the Los Cabos International Airport by Philippine Ambassador to Mexico Justo Orros.

Also on hand to welcome the President were Mexican Ambassador Gonzalo Aguirre, head of protocol and liaison with APEC economies, and officials from the APEC organizing committee.

After a simple arrival ceremony at the airport, the President and her official party, which included Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, Presidential Management Staff Chief Silvestre Afable, Jr. and Ambassador Marciano Paynor, motored to the Esperanza Hotel here where they are billeted.

The President is here for the two-day 10th Economic Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Tomorrow, the President will start the day with a speech at the plenary breakfast, dubbed "A Conversation with Leaders," organized by APEC business leaders. The breakfast forum will be held at the Salon Cabo Real Hotel here.

The free wheeling discussion after the speech of President Macapagal-Arroyo will focus on such issues as security and the war on terrorism, poverty and globalization, the future of energy management, and the outlook for exchange rates and financial markets.

She will also meet with the US-ASEAN Business Council.

After a bilateral meeting with Australian Prime Minister John Howard, the President will have lunch with officials of the US Chamber of Commerce.

Earlier In an interview with Manila newsmen from Los Angeles, California, Bunye said that the President is scheduled to meet with some of the world leaders attending the APEC summit.

Bunye said that the President has a scheduled one-on-one with US President George W. Bush.

During her stopover in Honolulu, the President said that she would meet with Bush here to take up not only security matters but also development initiatives that would "strike at the very roots of poverty" in places in the Philippines that are breeding grounds for terrorism.

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Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 26, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029212853/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct26.htm>

The President's Day: October 27, 2002

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- **GMA cites U.S.-ASEAN Business Council for moves to strengthen RP role as regional trade leader**
- **GMA tells U.S. execs of mission to create jobs, fight terrorism and poverty**
- **GMA welcomes Bush initiative for ASEAN-U.S. economic ties**
- **Australia proposes anti-terror pact with RP**
- **GMA calls on APEC leaders to expand coalition against terrorism to coalition for free trade**
- **GMA stands out in APEC Summit**
- **Europe tags CPP-NPA as terrorist, Ople reports**

GMA cites U.S.-ASEAN Business Council for moves to strengthen RP role as regional trade leader

LOS CABOS, Mexico – (via PLDT) President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo lauded the United States-Association of Southeast Asian Nations (US-ASEAN) Business Council for actively encouraging the American private sector to cooperate in strengthening the role of the Philippines as a trade leader within ASEAN and as a hub for business development in Southeast Asia, especially in the ICT, e-commerce and transportation sectors.

The President conferred the Presidential Citation on the US-ASEAN Business Council in ceremonies held at the clubhouse of the Esperanza Hotel here during a meeting with the representatives and officers of the council.

The citation, which was presented to US-ASEAN Business Council president Ernest Bower, cited the council for its forward-looking dialogue with the Philippine government on key economic and development issues of interest to both the public and private sectors of the Philippines and the US.

The President also acknowledged the council for its vision in expanding mutual understanding and cooperation between ASEAN and the US through business and commercial activities that provide for mutual benefits in the context of a globalizing world.

The President also noted the council's dynamic leadership in promoting broad-based business and commercial relations between the Philippines and the United States, which she said represented a principal element in the cooperative partnership of the two countries.

The citation also cited the council's consistent support for the expansion of Philippine trade and tourism, as well as American investments in and transfer of technology to the Philippines, contributing considerably to Philippine economic growth and development.

During the meeting, the President and members of the US-ASEAN Business Council held a round-table discussion of investment opportunities, the impact of terrorism on business and other security concerns.

Among those who attended the meeting, aside from Bower, were William Ichord, chairman of the US-Thailand Business Committee; Michael Ducker, president of Fedex; John Grice, partner and managing director of Worldtrade Pricewaterhouse Coopers; Warren Stanley, Chairman and CEO of Cargill, Inc.; Robert Riordan, vice president for corporate relations of Black and Veath International; Hugh Stephens, senior vice president of AOL Time Warner; William Rhodes, Vice Chairman of Citigroup; Joseph Ha, vice president of Nike; Bryan Moss, vice chairman of Gulfstream Aerospace; Keith Gottfried, senior vice president of Borland Software; Ambassador Roberto Romulo, chairman of ABAC Philippines; Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II; Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable, Jr.; former Trade and Industry Secretary Rizalino Navarro; Philippine Ambassador to the US Albert del Rosario; and Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Delia Albert.

GMA tells U.S. execs of mission to create jobs, fight terrorism and poverty

LOS CABOS, Mexico – (via PLDT) President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she is here in Mexico with a mission to create jobs in the Philippines and to build on regional and global cooperation in the war against terrorism.

In remarks during a luncheon conference with the United States Chamber of Commerce at the clubhouse of the Esperanza Hotel here, the President told the US business leaders that “only by working together can we stamp out the evil of terrorism and the scourge of poverty.”

The President emphasized that she is focused on what needs to be done to address the war on terrorism and on winning the battle against poverty in the Philippines.

“Terrorism will never completely go away unless we root out the handmaiden of terrorism – poverty,” the President said.

The President pointed out that the entire agenda for fighting terrorism by fighting poverty will work only if infused with a real spirit of cooperation.

“We must believe that in freeing the poor from the prison of poverty, all nations will reap the boon of a more tranquil and peaceful world,” the President said.

The President stressed that just as terrorism is searched out and destroyed, the terror of poverty must also be searched out and destroyed.

“There is evil in being hungry just as there is evil in being a destructive terrorist. Let us work together as a family of nation to alleviate both,” she said, appealing to the US business leaders to “do business with the developing world.”

“Do business with the Philippines,” she said.

The President also conducted a dialogue with US executives, including Thomas Donahue, president of the US Chamber of Commerce; Larry Liebenow, chairman of the US Chamber of Commerce; James Hipps, president for Asia Pacific of Black and Veatch; Theodore Austell III, vice president of Boeing Company; Michael Ducker, president of the International FEDEX; Mustafa Mohataram, chief economist of General Motors corporation; and Pamela Passman deputy general counsel and head of global corporate affairs of Microsoft.

GMA welcomes Bush initiative for ASEAN-U.S. economic ties

LOS CABOS, Mexico – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today welcomed the proposal of United States President George W. Bush to launch an Enterprise for ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Initiative.

“This is designed to boost trade and investment relations between ASEAN nations and the United States,” the President said in her meeting with the US-ASEAN Business Council here at the Clubhouse of the Hotel Esperanza.

The President pointed out that Bush’s Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative is a major step in deepening economic ties between ASEAN, a regional grouping of 10 nations in the region, and the United States.

The President said that globalization has its perils and opportunities. “The Philippines must address the perils of globalization by insisting on a rule-based multilateral trading system which ensures economic growth, employment, and development for all.”

However, the President said the Philippines must also grab its opportunities and not be left behind in maximizing the full potential of its trade and investment ties with the US.

Since the US will continue to be the major trade and investment partner of the Philippines for many years to come, the President said that both countries must work together to ensure that their economic relationship can be developed for their mutual benefit.

The President also stressed the need for ASEAN members to remain competitive in the American market.

She said Washington is seeking to conclude free trade arrangements with nations and regional groups that compete in certain areas with ASEAN member-states.

The President also said she welcomes the plan of the Bush administration for a closer study of individual ASEAN countries.

“Under this initiative, each country will be able to negotiate bilateral trade arrangements with the United States,” she said, adding that the Philippines will do so too.

The President also explained that the ASEAN Enterprise Initiative will help keep the US engaged in the region.

The President also noted China’s remarkable growth as a trade partner and competitor.

“Under these circumstances, ASEAN must have a bold vision to respond to existing and emerging challenges,” the President said.

Australia proposes anti-terror pact with RP

LOS CABOS, Mexico – (via PLDT) President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today extended her sympathies to Australian Prime Minister John Howard for the many Australians who died in the Bali bombing last October 12.

During their bilateral talks at the Hotel Esperanza here, Prime Minister Howard likewise expressed his condolences over the victims of the Zamboanga City bombings.

In light of the tragic experiences of the Philippines and Australia, Prime Minister Howard proposed a bilateral anti-terrorism agreement with the Philippines, which President Macapagal-Arroyo accepted.

The President explained that the Philippines has a trilateral agreement with Malaysia and Indonesia, and said that this new anti-terrorism arrangement with Australia was a welcome development.

In a briefing at the Press Room of the Sheraton Hotel here, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said the two leaders also discussed the issue of pineapple and banana exports.

The problem of the pineapple export is nearing solution, Bunye said. The Australians okayed the decrowning of the pineapple for export while the export of banana is temporarily stopped.

“The Australians are, however, apparently closed to idea of accepting banana as exports at this time,” Bunye said.

The two leaders also discussed sharing of intelligence information.

“This will be patterned after the anti-terrorism regional agreement with Malaysia and Indonesia,” Bunye said.

During their talks, President Macapagal-Arroyo invited Mr. Howard to visit the Philippines. Howard said such a visit would be convenient at the second half of 2003.

Howard likewise invited the President to visit Australia, but the President did not indicate any date, Bunye said.

GMA calls on APEC leaders to expand coalition against terrorism to coalition for free trade

LOS CABOS, Mexico (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo today called on world leaders in the Asia-Pacific region to extend the coalition against terrorism to a coalition in economic relations, saying that nations must ensure that the fight against terrorism does not make trade less free.

“My concern is how the terrorism shifted our attention away, from how to work to make the global economy thrive we have shifted our efforts to how to secure ourselves and our country,” the President said during the breakfast plenary session of the 10th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders’ Meeting here.

“The coalition against terrorism can and must extend to a coalition in economic relations,” the President said. “The global economy will be able to pull through if we approach it the way we have been approaching our fight against terrorism.”

Citing the Philippine experience, the President said “security impedes development and, conversely, poverty feeds extremists with recruits.”

During the plenary breakfast dubbed as “Conversation with Leaders,” the President said this coalition building could work equally well to lift the global economy out of its lethargy.

The key step is to build trust and faith once again in the global economy, the President said.

She cited two ways of doing this: first by dealing with terrorism as the most urgent priority and making sure that this is a secure world; and, by restoring faith and trust in the global economy by addressing the perceived inequality in receiving the benefits of integration.

Singling out the Philippines’ participation in the global efforts and work to promote this coalition at the regional level, the President said the Philippines has an anti-terrorism arrangement with Indonesia and Malaysia.

This arrangement, she said includes sharing intelligence, tightening border patrols and, if need be, joint peacekeeping.

“I think we should expand this coalition and take more aggressive action,” she said.

On the restoration of trust and faith in the global economy, the President said the World Trade Organization (WTO) should be reengineered to assure a level playing field, ensuring that the rules of trading are not tough in favor of developed countries.

The President proposed that APEC should influence the WTO to come up with early harvest of results that can benefit the most number of people in the world.

The President thus suggested the following:

- elimination of harmful agricultural export subsidies;
- the opening up of markets for tropical agricultural products and products of interest to developing countries, such as tuna and textiles;
- the liberalization of services where developing countries can benefit, including labor mobility in sectors such as information technology, health care, and education; and
- the enhancing of the capacity of developing country-members to negotiate effectively, implement commitments, and improve the competitiveness of products.

The President also underscored the need to pay special attention to the growth of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs), saying that these provide a business approach to the alleviation of poverty.

She said this is being done in the Philippines with her “one town, one product program.”

She expressed the hope that chief executive officers of APEC to look at integrating this self-help initiatives in their business plans.

Aside from President Macapagal Arroyo, two other women eladers in the Asia-Pacific region – Indonesian President Megawati and New Zealand’s Prime Minister Helen Clark – also sounded their calls for a united fight against terrorism and poverty.

GMA stands out in APEC Summit

This was how Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) chief executive officers described President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s speech during their breakfast plenary meeting, dubbed “A Conversation with Leaders,” at the Cabo Real Hotel here Saturday (Sunday morning in Manila).

The President and two other APEC women-leaders – Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri and New Zealand’s Prime Minister Helen Clark – made presentations for their respective countries during the meeting.

The President expounded on the interrelated wars against terrorism and poverty and called for the expansion of the global coalition against terrorism into a coalition for free trade and economic security.

In a briefing here later, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye told Manila-based reporters the APEC business leaders gave President Macapagal-Arroyo a standing ovation after the event.

Quoting the CEOs, Bunye said the President’s message was powerful both in content and delivery.

He said Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo stood out from among the two other APEC women leaders, whom the President described in her speech as “tough, gifted and thoughtful.”

In her speech, the President said “I’m very honored to share this platform with them today,” referring to Megawati and Clark. “We come from three different countries with three different cultures and three different sets of challenges. But we share common commitments to prosperity, to democracy and to peace.”

The President threw her support behind the international fight against terrorism but said efforts to ease poverty were also crucial to build security.

“If we neglect the economic imperative at this time when we are so concerned with terrorism, we would be feeding terrorism by promoting hunger, disease and ignorance,” she said.

Europe tags CPP-NPA as terrorist, Ople reports

LOS CABOS, Mexico—Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople said yesterday a special diplomatic mission sent by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to European countries “successfully placed the terrorist character of the CPP-NPA in the agenda of the European Union, which has created a “clearing house” to make a list of foreign terrorist organizations to be submitted to the United Nations.

In a report to the President who was attending the 10th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico, Ople said the mission he headed was received in Europe “with great warmth and enthusiasm.” The

other members of the special mission included Presidential Advisers Eduardo Ermita and Norberto Gozales, Undersecretary Abraham Puruganan and Presidential Management Staff chief Silvestre Afable, Jr.

Ople informed the President that most European governments indicated they would support a bid to endorse the New People's Army as a terrorist organization to the UN under Security Council 373, which mandates all states to commit themselves fully to the global fight against terrorism.

Ople said the mission covered six countries in seven days, namely Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Spain. "It was a whirlwind tour but the effort was worth it," he said.

Ople noted, however, the reservation of some governments such as Spain, to include the National Democratic Front under the foreign terrorist tag until they can sift stronger evidence linking the organization to the NPA's acts of terrorism.

The Secretary said the Department of Justice and Department of Foreign Affairs as well as the National Security Council were collecting evidence of three decades to show the NDF leaders, headed by Prof. Jose Maria Sison and former priest Luis Jalandoni, have directed terrorist attacks from their place of refuge in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

"The time is past when the CPP-NPA can hoodwink the international community about the nature of their organization," Ople said, adding:

"We would like to see the CPP-NPA-NDF go back to the negotiating table to consider a comprehensive peace settlement which would mean an end to the armed insurgency and their full participation in democratic elections under the constitution."

Ople said the leaders of Norway had agreed to take a more active role as mediator of the peace process.

*Source: **Office of the Press Secretary***

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 27, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029042812/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct27.htm>

The President's Day: October 28, 2002

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- **GMA, other APEC leaders issue united message on fighting terrorism without slowing trade**
- **RP, Australia to cooperate in war against global terrorism**
- **S. thanks GMA for support against terrorism**
- **APEC commends RP, Indonesia, Russ Federation on determination to bring terrorists to justice**
- **GMA, other APEC leaders wear traditional Mexican attire for photo session**
- **APEC leaders okay Trade Facilitation Action Plan**
- **GMA, other APEC leaders agree on need to crush terrorism to enhance growth**
- **APEC endorses negotiations for abolition of agricultural subsidies, export restrictions**
- **GMA to continue to work for hiked benefits for Filipino war veterans from the U.S. gov't**
- **GMA seeks support of Filipino-Americans in San Diego in building strong republic**
- **Filipinos come in Sunday best for dinner with GMA**

GMA, other APEC leaders issue united message on fighting terrorism without slowing trade

LOS CABOS, Mexico – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo joined other leaders from the Asia-Pacific region in issuing a united message on how to stop cross-border terrorists without slowing trade.

The leaders of the 21 member-economies of the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum condemned in the strongest terms the recent terrorist acts in the APEC region – including the Philippines, Indonesia and the Russian Federation – and reaffirmed determination to enhance cooperation in countering and responding to terrorism.

(The Philippines has been the target of terrorist bombers. The Indonesian resort island of Bali was the recent scene of that Asian country's worst terrorist bomb attack. A theater in Moscow was the stage for a bloody siege by Chechen guerrillas who held hundreds of people hostage.)

The leaders of APEC, created in 1989 mainly to promote free trade among economies in the Pacific Rim, also issued a blueprint on conducting more efficient trade and on making physical borders safer.

The Philippine President herself has stressed the need to extend the coalition against terrorism into a coalition in economic relations to boost trade and foster prosperity in the region.

She said tackling terrorism would be no easy task: "That Bali attack and the other attacks in October remind us that this war will be long, difficult and borderless."

The President also called for a level playing field in trade and, along with the other leaders of the developing countries, criticized agricultural subsidies and trade barriers in the developed countries that hindered the poorer nations' exports.

The APEC declaration at the end of the two-day summit here thus also endorsed the elimination of agricultural export subsidies and called for the conclusion of global trade talks by 2005.

The APEC statement thus called "for progress across all areas in the lead-up to the 2003 World Trade Organization Fifth Ministerial Conference in Cancun" in Mexico and encouraged negotiators to finish global trade talks by Jan. 1, 2005.

RP, Australia to cooperate in war against global terrorism

The Philippines and Australia have agreed to cooperate in fighting global terrorism, according to Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye.

In a radio interview from Los Cabos, Mexico where he is a member of the official delegation of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Bunye said that it was Australian Prime Minister John Howard who broached the idea of intelligence sharing between the Philippines and Australia as one of the measures in fighting terrorism in the region.

The President and Howard met Sunday on the sidelines of the opening day of the 10th Economic Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) hosted by the Mexican government.

According to Bunye, Howard proposed that the two countries sign a bilateral agreement on sharing of intelligence information.

In a statement, the leaders of the 21 member-economies of the Pacific Rim adopted several security measures as it condemned the recent terrorist attacks in Bali, Indonesia and in Moscow.

The APEC leaders also highly praised the firm and swift efforts made by the governments of Indonesia, the Philippines and the Russian Federation to arrest suspects in recent terror attacks in their respective countries.

Although Australia has not been hit by terror attacks, some 100 of the victims of the bombing in a nightclub in Bali were Australian vacationers.

Australia would be the fourth country in the region to sign an anti-terrorism agreement with the Philippines. The Philippines earlier signed a trilateral agreement against terrorism with Malaysia and Indonesia.

U.S. thanks GMA for support against terrorism

United States Secretary of State Colin Powell has expressed the deep appreciation of the Bush administration for the efforts of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to support the US in the global campaign against terrorism.

In a brief meeting with Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople in the sidelines of the APEC Ministerial Meeting held here on Friday. Powell also expressed his condolences to the victims of terrorist attacks in the Southern Philippines.

Ople and Powell also agreed the bilateral relations between the two countries remain strong and Powell said he was particularly pleased with the military to military cooperation between the United States and the Philippines.

The two officials agreed to support current APEC initiatives to promote trade security and fight terrorism.

Among these initiatives is the so-called "Star Initiative" (Secure Trade in APEC Region Initiative) proposed by the United States which was unanimously approved by APEC members.

STAR comprises a set of specific actions aimed at making the flow goods and people more secure and efficient with the help of advanced technology and improved monitoring procedures. APEC represents 60 percent of the world's GDP and half of its trade. Most of the world's top megaports are in APEC economies, as are most of the world's busiest airports.

More advanced economies – including the US, Japan, Canada, Australia — have agreed to help developing economies with capacity building assistance to enable them to achieve the goals specified under the STAR initiative. APEC members will cooperate to promote the implementation of these measures.

Included among the specific actions under the STAR initiative were:

- Improving airline passengers and crew safety by introducing highly effective baggage screening procedures and equipment in all APEC international airports as soon as possible. And in any case by 2005;
- Enhancing air cargo security by promoting adoption of the guidelines developed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA);
- Adopting standards of application of biometrics in travel procedures and documents such as those being developed by the ICAO and the International Standards Organization;
- Implementing expeditiously a container security regime that would assure in-transit integrity of containers, identify and examine high-risk containers, and support international efforts to provide advanced information on containers to customs, port, and shipping officials as early as possible in the supply chain while taking into consideration the promotion and facilitation of legitimate trade.

These and other measures were aimed at protecting cargo, ships in international voyages, international aviation and people in transit.

The United States also welcomed the moves of the Arroyo administration to host a high-level APEC meeting on maritime security next year to ensure that the movement of goods and people carried out through traditional maritime routes remain unimpeded.

The high-level maritime security conference seeks to map out new strategies and fresh approaches to enhancing maritime security in the region, especially in the face of lingering terrorist threats. The result of the conference will complement ongoing efforts to secure trade under the STAR initiative.

Other APEC members like Japan, Singapore, Russia, Papua New Guinea and Australia have also expressed support for the Philippine initiative to host the high-level maritime security conference.

APEC commends RP, Indonesia, Russ Federation on determination to bring terrorists to justice

LOS CABOS, Mexico – The leaders of the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum today commended the determination by the governments of the Philippines, Indonesia and the Russian Federation to bring terrorists to justice.

In one of two statements issued at the end of their two-day summit meeting here, the leaders of the APEC also condemned the recent terrorist attacks in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in the Philippines, Indonesia and the Russian Federation.

The APEC leaders also expressed deepest sympathy and condolences to the victims of these attacks and their families and to the peoples of these APEC member-economies.

The statements issued at the end of the summit address the dangers posed by terrorism to the Asia-Pacific region and outline the twin APEC goals of enhancing security against terrorist threats while ensuring trade growth in the Asia-Pacific region.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said in her speech at the breakfast plenary meeting dubbed “A Conversation with Leaders” that tackling terrorism would be no easy task.

“That (Bali) attack and the other attacks in October remind us that this war on terrorism will be long, difficult and borderless,” she said.

The President threw her support behind the international fight against terrorism but said efforts to ease poverty were also crucial to build security.

“If we neglect the economic imperative at this time when we are so concerned with terrorism, we would be feeding terrorism by promoting hunger, disease and ignorance,” she told the meeting in this luxury Mexican beach resort.

APEC leaders have also agreed to enhance practical efforts to prevent terrorists and their organizations from transferring and accessing funding. These measures include fully implementing United Nations and other international instruments, promoting better monitoring of alternative remittance systems and non-profit organizations and enhancing law enforcement and regulatory capabilities.

GMA, other APEC leaders wear traditional Mexican attire for photo session

LOS CABOS, Mexico – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the other leaders attending the 10th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting here wore costumes deeply rooted in Mexican tradition during the meeting's official photo session.

The President wore a "huipiles," the most traditional form of women's clothing in Mexico, which has been used since pre-Colombian times.

It consists of a swath of cloth, doubled over with an opening for the head.

Huipiles are still woven on handlooms, guaranteeing that each is an individual work of art.

The patterns woven into the cloth date back before the conquest and represent sacred beings and animals that protect the crops, fertility and harmony with the earth and, finally, the Mayan vision of the cosmos.

The huipil that the President and the other women leaders wore was hand-made by members of the indigenous cooperative SNA Jolobil in the Chiapas highlands.

Mexican President Vicente Fox and the other male leaders wore Mexico's traditional white "guayabera."

The guayabera, which originated from the Caribbean, arrived in Mexico during the colonial era. They were created by a pottery maker named Joselillo.

According to tradition, one day Joselillo received a bundle of cloth from his family back in Spain.

He asked his wife to use the cloth to make comfortable and cool shirts that he could wear.

The shirts were so admired that the style soon caught on with farmers throughout the region.

They later added pockets to the shirt to where they can put their belongings and tobacco.

The Escultura shirtmaking factory, founded in 1955, made the guayaberas that worn by male economic leaders.

APEC leaders okay Trade Facilitation Action Plan

LOS CABOS, Mexico – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the other APEC economic leaders today endorsed the APEC Trade Facilitation Action Plan which will implement their commitment to cut transaction costs by five percent in the APEC region by the year 2006.

In the declaration issued at the end of the APEC Leaders Retreat at Ventanas Al Paraiso Hotel here, the leaders recognized the significant economic and trade benefits which can accrue from trade facilitation and took special note of the action plan's call for providing appropriate capacity building assistance to developing economies.

The leaders directed their ministers to continue moving forward with the selection and implementation of trade facilitating actions and measures and to assess the benefits of associated transaction cost reductions.

The leaders have adopted the Statement to Implement APEC Transparency Standards, and directed that these standards be implemented as soon as possible, and in no case later than January 2005.

The leaders likewise endorsed Pathfinder initiatives on advance passenger information systems, the revised Kyoto Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedure, electronic SPS certification (e-cert), Electronic certificates of origin, mutual recognition arrangement of conformity assessment on electrical and electronic equipment Parts II and III, and corporate governance.

The statement to implement the APEC policies on trade and the digital economy, which contains a set of targets related to trade policies for the new economy, also a pathfinder initiative, was also adopted.

The leaders praised the strengthened peer review process of the individual action plans for monitoring process to achieve the Bogor goals.

They also endorsed the broadened Osaka Action agenda, which reflects their strong commitment to the achievement of the Bogor goals, while responding to changes in the global and regional economy.

GMA, other APEC leaders agree on need to crush terrorism to enhance growth

LOS CABOS, Mexico (via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the other leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum agreed today on the need to crush terrorism, which poses a profound threat to their vision of free, open and prosperous economies.

In the APEC Economic Leaders' Declaration, the heads of the 21 member-economies of the Pacific Rim discussed the challenge posed to the region's security and prosperity by terrorist organizations, noting the need to strengthen security while maintaining the smooth flow of goods, capital and people that has been key to the region's economic growth.

"We welcomed the efforts of member-economies in APEC for a response to the 2001 Leaders' Statement on Counter-terrorism," the APEC leaders said.

The Leaders' Declaration, which was read by Mexican President Vicente Fox after the final "Leaders' Retreat" at the Las Ventanas al Paraiso Hotel here, condemned in the strongest terms recent terrorist acts in the APEC region, and reaffirmed the leaders' determination to enhance cooperation on countering and responding to terrorism.

The leaders have adopted the Los Cabos Statement on Fighting Terrorism and Promoting Growth, committing to take a series of concrete steps that will protect and make more efficient the flows of trade, finance, and information.

The APEC leaders likewise called for the development of capacity-building programs to assure that all economies are able to implement all elements of the statement.

The leaders further endorsed the strengthening of energy security in the region under the mechanism of the APEC Energy Security Initiative, which activates notably the reporting of monthly oil data, and were introduced and highly commended by the Eighth International Energy Forum last September.

APEC endorses negotiations for abolition of agricultural subsidies, export restrictions

LOS CABOS, Mexico – The leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation member-economies today endorsed negotiations for the abolition of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and unjustifiable export prohibitions and restrictions which President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and other leaders of developing countries criticized as hindrances to their countries' expansion and development.

In the APEC Economic Leaders Declaration issued Sunday (Monday in Manila), the 21 Asian-Pacific leaders agreed to implement the APEC vision of free and open trade and investments.

The APEC leaders thus called on their ministers “to continue negotiations that will open markets and enhance the multilateral trading systems, foster economic growth and poverty reduction particularly in developing economies, promote sustainable development, improve disciplines, improve WTO (World Trade Organization) coherence with other institutions, and provide opportunities for all citizens of the world.”

“We discussed the fundamental contribution of trade to economic growth, and the need for APEC to strongly support the multilateral trading system, while implementing our commitment,” the leaders’ declaration stated.

The leaders likewise welcomed the launch of new multilateral trade negotiations in Doha and encouraged all economies to pursue substantive negotiations in all areas of the Doha Development Agenda by the agreed timelines to ensure that the deadline of January 1, 2005 to conclude such negotiations is met.

“We call for progress across all areas in the lead-up to the 2003 WTO Fifth Ministerial Conference in Cancun,” the leaders said.

The leaders have agreed that these negotiations hold the prospect of real gains for all economies, and particularly developing economies, in the area of agricultural reform, improved market access for goods and services, and clarification and improvement of trade disciplines.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and other leaders of developing economies have been calling for a leveling of the playing field in trade, saying that agricultural subsidies and trade barriers in the United States, Japan and the European Union have hindered exports.

GMA to continue to work for hiked benefits for Filipino war veterans from the U.S. gov’t

SAN DIEGO, California—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she will continue to work for increased benefits for Filipino World War II veterans from the American government.

In her speech at a gala dinner at the Marriott Hotel organized by the Filipino community here, the President said that during her meeting with US President George W. Bush on Sunday in Los Cabos, Mexico, she again reminded the latter of his promises to help the Filipino veterans.

“When I was with President Bush at the APEC summit yesterday, I reminded him again about our Filipino veterans,” the President said.

The two leaders were among the heads of state and governments of the 21 member-economies of the Pacific Rim who attended the 10th Economic Leaders’ Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

The President said that she had included the veterans’ benefits in the agenda of all her bilateral meetings with President Bush, especially during her official visit to Washington, D. C. last year.

She also called on the Filipino community here to support American legislators who have endorsed the bill that would expand benefits for Filipino World War II veterans.

The President lauded in particular San Diego Congressman Bob Filmer, the principal author of a bill that has been passed in the US House of Representatives for health care compensation and burial benefits for Filipino veterans to the tune of \$65 million.

“And I know that you, the Filipino community, will always support those who support the Philippine cause,” the President said.

The President then called on the Filipino-Americans here to pray so that the appropriations bill would pass the US Senate.

According to the President, her advocacy on behalf of the Filipino war veterans has paid off since the US Veterans Administration is providing \$500,000 per year for veterans' health care in the Philippines.

The President said that this would be the first time in so many years and after so many attempts in the past that the American government is giving this amount to Filipino war veterans, adding that the first \$500,000 would be released to the Philippine government within this month.

GMA seeks support of Filipino-Americans in San Diego in building strong republic

SAN DIEGO, California – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today brought to the 150,000 Filipino-Americans here the good news about what's happening in the home country, told them how she has been waging the war against terrorism, crime and poverty, and sought their continued cooperation and help in building a strong Republic.

In a speech before the Filipino community during a gala dinner at the Marriott Hotel here after two days of talks with other world leaders in Mexico, the President vowed to remain focused on her administration's economic policy reform agenda even as she spelled out her eight-point work program for the next six months.

"International credit rating agencies have rated us as stable when before I came in as president, they rated us negative," the President told the members of the Filipino community here.

A 5.2 percent growth rate in gross national product for the first half of this year makes the Philippines the best performing economy in Asia, she added.

"Your remittances have helped us grow higher than our neighboring countries," she said.

The President went on: the price of rice is stable at P14-P15 a kilo; about 200,000 urban poor families have acquired the right to buy the land they occupy; schools are being built where there used to be none; more than 3 million poor Filipinos now have health insurance.

Domestic terrorists, particularly the Abu Sayyaf, are on the run and the police and military forces have crushed at least five of the most notorious kidnap-for-ransom gangs, the President said.

"Even the Filipino-Chinese community, the favorite victims of those gangs, have said now 'All is quiet on the Binondo front'," she added.

The President also spelled out an eight-point work program for the next six months which is part of the bigger medium-term Philippine development plan to win the battle against poverty within the decade. The program aims to:

- strengthen our small and medium enterprises;
- jump-start housing;
- reduce transport costs from Mindanao to Luzon;
- decongest Metro Manila;
- mark up the contribution of the PCCG contribution to the fiscal resources;
- make Makati a specific urban tourist destination;
- stimulate private investment in agriculture; and
- make the reclamation area in Roxas Boulevard a tourism complex or the new Nayong Pilipino.

"After a year and a half in the presidency, I have come to realize that to overcome such tremendous odds, we must build a strong Republic. Upon the cornerstone of a strong Republic, we have to build a structure of shared ethical

values, a firm consensus to serve the common interest and a common vision of our national future,” the President said.

She said “no President can build a strong Republic singlehandedly. I can do it and do it well only if I can count on the support of the more than two-million Filipino-Americans, including the 150,000 here in San Diego.”

“I ask you, stay with me,” the President said. “Even as you are helping build America here in San Diego, help me build a strong Philippine Republic.”

Filipinos come in Sunday best for dinner with GMA

SAN DIEGO, California (Via PLDT) — Filipino-Americans here and in the outlying cities of Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Phoenix came in full force and in their formal best to the gala dinner in honor of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the ballroom of the Marriott Hotel here.

Some 1,200 Fil-Ams came mostly in formal Filipino ternos and Barong Tagalog for Sunday’s night special event.

They packed the San Diego Marriott Hotel, many of them carrying small Philippine flags, and applauded and cheered as the President, in a red business suit, entered the hotel’s ballroom.

The President, together with First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel T. Arroyo and the Philippine delegation, had just flown in from Mexico where they attended the 10th summit meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum.

Most of the Filipino-Americans were professionals, including doctors, engineers, IT (information technology) workers, accountants, teachers, military officers and World War II veterans.

Also in the audience were four congressmen who are members of the Philippine caucus in the US House of Congress: Congressmen Bob Filmer, Randy Cunningham, and Darryl Issa and Congresswoman Susan Davis.

With the President were Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye and PMS Chief Silvestre Afable, Jr.

During the program, the President was handed the key to the City of San Diego by Mayor Dick Murphy who remarked that the key can also open the office of the mayor, meaning the President can also visit San Diego anytime.

Murphy informed the President that six percent of the city’s residents are Filipino-Americans.

“The Fil-Ams are responsible for my elections as mayor,” he boasted.

*Source: **Office of the Press Secretary***

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: October 28, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029042058/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct28.htm>

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GMA pursues economic, security goals in trade, investment trip to California

SAN JOSE, California – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she is here in California for the same reason she was in Mexico for the 10th Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum – to focus on the economy and security of the Philippines.

In a press conference at the Westin Santa Clara Hotel here, the President said that in this interconnected world, “opening a door in Silicon Valley can open an opportunity for job creation in the Philippines.”

“Whether it is the fight against global terrorism or improving education at home, at the end of the day, it is always about the economy and improving the lives of my Philippine citizens,” the President said.

The President explained that the APEC meeting in Mexico underscored a significant new trend among nations and leaders – the recognition that global terrorism must be fought hand-in-hand with the fight against poverty.

The President pointed out that the best antidote to terrorism and poverty is political freedom and economic opportunity.

“As the leader of a developing nation, I cannot achieve one without the other, that is why my fight against terrorism on my own soil is accompanied by efforts to bring jobs, education and opportunity to my people at the same time,” she said.

The President expressed the belief that the link between terrorism and poverty has finally been accepted by developed nations.

“Increasingly, you see a place at the table for focusing on anti-poverty and economic issues to aid developing nations as a serious component to the fight against terrorism,” the President said.

She noted that this was very evident at the recent APEC meeting, the Monterrey Consensus in Mexico last spring, and even through the Doha round of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

“In each instance, developed nations have increasingly come to understand that as we help fight terrorism, they must help us fight the handmaiden of terrorism – which is poverty,” the President said.

The President said it was no coincidence that she followed up her APEC meeting with a trade and investment trip to Silicon Valley.

The President said she is meeting Andy Grove of Intel and many other high-tech leaders in an effort to encourage greater investments in the Philippines.

Intel has already invested \$1 billion and employs over 6,200 Filipinos.

“This is my idea of a good anti-terrorism plan,” the President said.

The President arrived here at the San Jose Mineta International Airport at about 9:40 this morning (California time).

She motored immediately to Westin Santa Clara for round-table discussions with Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of semi-conductor industry association member-companies.

GMA cites role of citizenry in fight vs terrorism

SAN JOSE, California — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the cooperation of the citizenry in the fight against terrorism and other crimes in the Philippines.

In a press conference here, the President said that in the Philippines, the government has been conducting an information campaign on how the community can help in the fight against terrorism, kidnapping, and other forms of criminality.

“We have to remember that fighting terrorism is not the work only of the military or the police. It is also the work of citizens,” the President said.

The President mentioned the taxi driver who drove his vehicle to Camp Crame in Quezon City after he noticed that there was a box left inside the taxi that he suspected of being a bomb.

The police had been getting a lot of inquiries from the ordinary citizens on how to report crimes or detect bombs, the President said.

“We are responding to these inquiries. Alertness of a citizen even in the anti-kidnapping campaign has been a very, very big factor in our anti-crime drive,” the President said.

Asked whether the government has established a connection between the al-Q aeda terrorist group and the local terrorists, the President said that it is possible that al-Qaeda is making its way to Southeast Asia.

“But the most important issue is to break up the regional and global network, to stop the flow of money to terror groups and to break the militant cells wherever they may be across the globe,” the President said.

GMA’s California visit a boon for job generation

SAN JOSE, California – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s visit to California, particularly at Silicon Valley, is a logical sequel to her participation in the Asia-Pacific Economic Council (APEC) meeting in Mexico and her desire to generate more jobs for Filipinos back home.

In a radio interview, Press Secretary Ignacio “Toting” Bunye said the President’s visit to the Silicon Valley, particularly in the headquarters of Intel, is an extension of her campaign at Los Cabos for economic security for the Philippines and the people.

“Kasi doon sa APEC ay pinag-usapan ang mga solusyon sa mga problema ng terorismo at lumalabas na ang pinaka-importanteng solusyon dito ay ang paglaban sa poverty o kahirapan at ang sagot ng ating Pangulo sa solusyong iyan ay pagbibigay ng mga trabaho sa pamamagitan ng paghahanap ng mga puhunan na manggagaling

sa labas na dadalhin sa ating bansa (At APEC, during the discussions on the problem of global terrorism, the most important solution that surfaced was to fight poverty; and the President's solution against poverty is job generation through more foreign investments pouring into the country)," Bunye said. medium enterprises (SMEs) or businesses or just help them build their own houses worth from P15,000 to, say, P2 million.

He said building houses has a big multiplier effect that could greatly help the Philippine economy.

Bunye also noted that the mayor of Milpitas, Henry Manayan, happens to be of Filipino origin. Mayor Manayan was among those who welcomed the President and gave her the symbolic key to the city.

Bunye added that the President also visited the Intel headquarters in Silicon Valley.

Intel has billions of pesos invested in the Philippines and employs about 6,200 Filipinos in its Philippine-based manufacturing facility.

Palace confident measures against planned transport strike are enough

SAN JOSE, California – Press Secretary Ignacio "Toting" Bunye today said the government is confident that measures undertaken by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) and the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) against any planned transport strike are enough to cushion its impact on commuters.

Secretary Bunye said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is well updated on the strike and she is concerned about its impact on the commuters.

He said that we all know that the most affected sector of society during transport strikes is the riding public.

"So, she is appealing *na kung puwede ay mapag-usapan ang bagay na ito at huwag humantong dito sa mga makakapinsalang mga strike sa ating mga kababayan* (The President is appealing that the matter be discussed and settled so it won't lead to a strike that would affect the people)," Bunye said.

Bunye said the government is confident that LTFRB Chairman Dante Lantin and DOTC Secretary Leandro Mendoza are taking all the necessary measures to resolve the problem.

No loyalty check, Palace assures people

Malacañang today brushed off reports that the administration is out to conduct a loyalty check not only among military and police officials but also among the allies of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In an impromptu interview, Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao said the term loyalty check is a misnomer. "There is no such thing as loyalty check," he said, adding that it is not the President's style to undertake such a check.

Tiglao said that all officials of the government are perceived to be supportive of the republic and the administration.

Tiglao also said that the spokesman of the Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa (RAM) could have been misquoted in the report that says the group has now joined the so-called People's Consultative Assembly headed by administration critic Linda Montayre.

"You have to remember that the RAM is also very careful and the official stand of RMA comes from its board. I think you have to get an official statement from the RAM chairman himself," Tiglao said.

The news report about the so-called joining of forces of RAM and PCA was pegged on RAM's sending a representative to a meeting organized by the PCA at the University of the Philippines.

According to Tiglao, there were conflicting reports about the stand of RAM on the PCA's call for the ouster of the present government and the formation of an interim administration prior to the establishment of a parliamentary-type of government.

But the report quoted RAM spokesman, Col. Reynaldo Samaco, as saying that a coup at this time was not an option since an interim government would be unacceptable to the people.

Palace defends GSIS on purchase on Juan Luna painting

Malacañang today defended the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) in buying the 110-year-old Juan Luna oil painting at an auction in Hong Kong, saying the painting is "part of our national history and culture."

In an interview with Malacañang Press Corps this afternoon, Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao said the money used by the GSIS for the purchase of Luna's oil painting, "Parisian Life," was not "an expenditure but an investment."

Tiglao also said that pieces of history, such as the Juan Luna painting, "are very important to us as a people."

He explained that had the government allowed Luna's painting to be auctioned to other individuals, it could have "ended up in some billionaire's private quarter and we cannot retrieve it."

"The price for 'Parisian Life' might seem to be big but the point is that it's really priceless," Tiglao said.

According to Tiglao, Luna's painting "is not only a work of art by a Filipino master but also an achievement of the Filipino people."

"Now, the GSIS on its own has the option to sell it to a Filipino collector who can assure us that the painting would remain in our country," Tiglao said.

The painting depicts a woman in a café. On one side are Luna, Jose Rizal and Dr. Ariston Bautista in a huddle.

Luna earned his fame as a painter at the turn of the 19th century. His most famous pieces include "The Death of Cleopatra" and "The Spoliarium."

GMA in Silicon Valley to make pitch for more U.S. investment in RP

SAN JOSE, California – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived here in northern California on a trade and investment mission designed to boost the combined trade between California and the Philippines that already exceeded \$12 billion per year.

The President flew here from a meeting of the leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in Los Cabos, Mexico where she joined other APEC leaders in discussing ways to unite against terrorism and increase economic cooperation.

Speaking at a luncheon and program sponsored by the Commonwealth Club of California, the President said she is in California for the same reason she was in Mexico – to focus on the economy and security of the Philippines.

"In this interconnected world, opening a door in Silicon Valley can open an opportunity for job creation in the Philippines," the President said.

She said her mission is to stimulate trade and investment abroad in order to boost job creation and economic opportunity at home.

“It is no coincidence, therefore, that I am following up my APEC meeting with a business trip to Silicon Valley,” the President said.

In her speech, the President said that the APEC nations stand against terrorism and with the United States.

In the case of Iraq and North Korea, the objective is to peacefully disarm the two nations and for them to reform and open up to the world. These two nations, the President said, can do tremendous harm to the region with the weapons and arsenal at their disposal.

Also in the audience were leaders and members of the various Filipino-American organizations, leaders of the US chambers of commerce, and members of the Silicon Valley community.

GMA to pursue New Zealand offer

SAN JOSE, California – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said she would pursue New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark’s offer of capability-building assistance in support of the United States’ initiative of Securing Trade in the APEC Region (STAR).

In a press briefing at the Westin Sta. Clara here, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said the Filipino leader thanked the Prime Minister for the good quality of official development assistance (ODA) extended by New Zealand.

The President said this ODA assistance has seen excellent results in project sites she visited in Negros, Bukidnon, Dumaguete, Baguio, Banawe and other regions of the Philippines.

Bunye also said New Zealand is aggressively promoting the development of geothermal energy in the Philippines.

New Zealand, Bunye further said, has made substantial contributions to Mindanao, particularly through the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD).

During their meeting, the President told the New Zealand leader that the Philippines is very grateful for this assistance, noting that the funds have been well utilized.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand was also briefed by the Philippine President about the New People’s Army (NPA) in the country.

The President said her administration has been coping well with the insurgency problem, adding that the group has been listed by the United States among terrorist organizations.

The President said that funding for the NPA, which has been coming from abroad, is fast drying up, which is the reason why they are now resorting to extortion.

The President also said that the on-going training program of the Filipino soldiers with the US troops is needed to develop Filipino capability for anti-terrorism. She said the present campaign of her government is to encourage countryside vigilance against terrorists.

Prime Minister Clark likewise expressed interest in entering into air services agreement with the Philippines.

She noted that the bulk of foreign direct investments appear to be going to China.

This is the reason why it is important to pursue negotiations between ASEAN and China in order to improve investments, President Macapagal-Arroyo said.

The two leaders also agreed to increase trade in dairy products between the two countries. They acknowledged, however, that it is the private sector that must aggressively pursue this dairy trade.

GMA making headlines in U.S., Mexico visits

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been making the headlines in the cities she has been visiting during her current trip to the United States and Mexico, where she took an active part in the 10th Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

Her pictures have also been splashed on the front and inside pages of papers, particularly in the US.

More significantly, her call for the extension of the coalition against terrorism into a coalition for economic security and the fostering of economic growth and poverty reduction has won the support of the other APEC leaders at Los Cabos.

Her declaration – ‘Security impedes prosperity and, conversely, poverty feeds extremists with recruits. The war against terrorism is going to be long, difficult and borderless’ – has been widely quoted in the newspapers all over the world, particularly the Asia and Pacific region whose leaders agreed on the need to crush terrorism and exert stronger efforts at reducing poverty.

Her speech at the ‘Conversation with Leaders’ breakfast session – where she took the stand for the developing world along with two other women leaders, Indonesia’s Megawati and New Zealand’s Prime Minister Helen Clark – was widely applauded. One of the chief executive officers in the audience described her speech as ‘a homerun,’ powerful both in content and delivery.

Even United States President George W. Bush showed his appreciation and admiration for the Filipino leader, posing with her for a picture at Los Cabos with his hand on her shoulder.

‘He appreciates, admires my courage, my stand, my consistent position in the fight against terrorism,’ the President later told Manila-based reporters who accompanied her to Mexico. ‘He thinks it’s a good example for other leaders in the world.’

Another picture dispatched by Associated Press and Reuter to different newspapers all over the world showed her with Bush and Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov.

Earlier during her visit to Hawaii, the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* welcomed Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo on October 25 with the bold headline ‘Mabuhay, Presidente’ along with a photograph of her getting a warm welcome from the members of the Filipino community on the islands.

The story read: ‘The event was supposed to be limited to invited guests, but organizers said that despite security concerns they could not turn people away, and many were able to get close to her.’

Inside the same *Star-Bulletin* issue were photos of the President with Gov. Benjamin Cayetano, who is of Filipino origin, and his wife Vicky; the President planting a narra tree, the national tree of the Philippines, at the Filipino Community Center in Waipahu; and the President greeting senior members of the Filipino community in Hawaii.

There are some 200,000 Filipinos and Filipino-Americans on Hawaii, where many of the first Filipinos who migrated to the US went to work as ‘sacadas.’

In California, where most of the 2-million Filipino-Americans in the US are located, the *San Diego Union Tribune* ran a story on the President's visit with the local Filipino community in its Metro section.

"Fresh from meeting with President Bush at a summit of Pacific Rim leaders in Baja California, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo yesterday came to San Diego with the message that the threat of economic recession is the key challenge to the stability of the region," read the lead of the *Union Tribune's* story on October 28 headlined "Arroyo addresses local Filipino leaders."

"This is a president who knew before our president knew how important the war on international terrorism is," the San Diego daily quoted Rep. Darrell Issa (Republican-Vista) as saying. Issa was part of a three-member Congressional team that flew to Manila in January 2001 for Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo's inauguration.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 29, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213546/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct29.htm>

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- **GMA confident of regaining S&P credit rating**
- **GMA stresses role of U.S., other developed countries in fight vs terrorism, poverty**
- **GMA gets assurances of new business, investments from Silicon Valley firms**
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DOLE field doctors, social workers to provide on-site assistance to OFWSs

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has deployed seven social workers and six medical doctors to various countries to provide basic medical and counseling services and assistance to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) as ordered by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In her meetings with OFWs during her foreign trips, the President assured the country's "modern-day heroes" that her administration would work to provide them with more assistance and welfare in their work sites abroad.

"The deployment of these doctors and social workers demonstrates the Macapagal-Arroyo administration's concrete and continuing efforts to protect and enhance the safety and welfare of our overseas Filipino workers," DOLE Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said.

Sto. Tomas also said that since the deployment is basically funded through the congressional initiative allocation (CIA) of Sen. John H. Osmeña, this shows convergence and unity of purpose between the executive and legislative branches of government.

In a report to Malacanang, Sto. Tomas said the deployment of the social workers and medical doctors was made under the Overseas Comprehensive Social Services Package for OFWs (OCSSP), a collaborative effort of DOLE, the Department of Health and the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

She said that under the terms of reference of the OCSSP, DOLE will identify the overseas posts where the medical doctors and social workers would be deployed and their respective dates of assumption.

The social workers were Dulfie Shalim, whose assumption in Singapore took effect August 31; Cynthia Barriga, Hong Kong, September 2; Fatima Abobakar, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, September 5; Marlene Kahano, Kuwait, September 10; Gina Gonzales, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, September 14; Delia Pamani, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, September 29; and Ma. Theresa Rico, whose assumption in Taichung took effect on October 1.

The medical doctors who have been deployed were Ray Suanding, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, October 12; Ignacia Fajardo, Hong Kong, October 15; Candido Alam, Kuwait, October 17; Regina Melodia, Korea, October 17; Ramon Moreno, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, October 18; and Marietta Ann Balbas, Singapore, October 21.

Sto. Tomas said that DOLE's International Labor Affairs Service is still in the process of facilitating the travel requirements of two more medical doctors, namely, Ricardo Audan, to be posted in Bahrain on October 29, and Nestor Aviles, to be deployed to Abu Dhabi on November 4.

Part of the responsibilities of the medical doctors will be to plan and manage the daily health care requirements of OFWs, undertake worksite and jail visitation if allowed by the host country, and participate in the periodic dialogue with workers.

The social workers would provide counseling and other assistance to OFWs, develop and implement alternative measures to alleviate stress, undertake periodic jail visitations if allowed by host country, and participate in special projects and programs for the OFW community.

GMA thanks Bush for support to RP's fight against terrorism, Filipino vets' welfare

SAN FRANCISCO, California — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed her thanks to US President George W. Bush for his support not only in the Philippines' fight against terrorism but also in her government's advocacy for more benefits for Filipino World War II veterans.

In an interview with top editors of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the President said that during her meeting with Bush on the sidelines of the recently concluded 10th Economic Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in Los Cabos, Mexico, Bush accepted her proposition about the link between the war against terrorism and the war against poverty.

“President Bush has been a very good friend of the Philippines and I appreciated the fact that he recognizes the partnership between the US and the Philippines,” the President told the *Chronicle*.

The President said that the Bush has given his support to the Philippines' war against terrorism “in the manner that we want it to be given.”

According to the President, Bush also admired her consistent stand and commitment to wipe out terrorism in the Philippines.

“He thinks it is a good example for other leaders to follow,” the President said about her meeting with Bush.

The President also appreciated the fact that when she asked for the help of the US leader in providing more assistance to Filipino veterans, Bush graciously obliged, resulting in the passage of a bill at the US House of Representatives expanding benefits for the Filipino war veterans.

The bill, with San Diego Congressman Bob Filmer as its principal author, would provide health care compensation and burial benefits for Filipino war veterans in the amount of \$65 million.

The President then urged the Filipino-Americans in the Bay area here to write letters to their senators so that House-approved appropriation measure would pass the US Senate.

GMA prefers 'overseas' voting to 'absentee' voting

SAN FRANCISCO, California – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she would convey her sentiments to the Philippine Congress to rename the absentee voting bill to overseas voting bill.

Speaking at a gathering of Filipino Americans here dubbed as “the Fil-Am Community Salutes the President,” the President said she will also convey to Congress their recommendation on how the final versions should be and as soon as they reconcile their final versions, she will sign it into within 24 hours.

The President expressed elation that after so many attempts by so many administrations before her to pass a bill on “overseas voting,” it is only during her administration that it has passed third and final reading in both houses of Congress.

“The most important thing is we get a bill out, because we have waited for so long and for the first time, it has reached this far,” the President said.

The President also lauded the initiative of the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NFFAA), headed by Loida Nicolas Lewis and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for filing a petition for injunction to stop the enforcement of the US requirement for the federalized job of airport screeners.

“We agree that experience matters in securing airports and planes in the United States,” the President said.

The President said that although this is an internal matter, she will take it up with Ambassador Adelbert del Rosario to make known the Philippine government’s sentiments to the appropriate US official.

At the start of her speech, the President expressed her gratitude to San Francisco Mayor Willy Brown for presenting her the key to the city.

She also acknowledged two other city mayors, both Filipino city mayors, Henry Manayan of Melphitas City in Silicon Valley and Mike Guingona of Daly City.

“We are very proud of them,” she said stressing that Manayan is on his last term as mayor of Melphitas,

“He has been such a good Filipino here in Silicon valley and he wants to be a good Filipino representing Philippine interests in the state assembly next time around,” the President said.

GMA confident of regaining S&P credit rating

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo remains confident that the Philippines will regain its stable rating from Standard and Poor’s (S&P) Ratings Services.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said in a telephone interview from San Francisco that the President respects the S&P observation but believes the ratings firm overlooked the country’s macroeconomic indicators.

The Press Secretary quoted the President as saying: “We have a high regard for Standard and Poor’s but Standard and Poor’s may have taken into account only one macroeconomic indicator and probably did not take into account our significant gains like highest growth rate in Southeast Asia and third largest growth rate in Asia, our low inflation rate regime and fiscal discipline.”

“Be that as it may,” the President added, “I believe we can make it back to stable. I am confident we can do it.”

Meanwhile, Malacañang learned that Moody’s Investors Service said it was maintaining its stable credit outlook for the Philippines.

Exports have recovered, the official foreign exchange reserves are still high and workers inflows continue, Moody’s said.

Meanwhile, Secretary Bunye believes that in the recent visit of the President to Silicon Valley, there are very positive notes that investment from that part of the globe will soon pour into the country.

He said business executives and investors who called on the President while she was in California affirmed that they are working on the approval of these investments.

GMA stresses role of U.S., other developed countries in fight vs terrorism, poverty

SAN FRANCISCO, California – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today underscored the important role of the United States and other developed nations in helping developing nations like the Philippines in their efforts to win the war against terrorism and poverty.

In an interview with top editors of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the President cited three measures that the United States and other developed countries must undertake.

“For one, they should help the poorest of the poor all over the world because there are poor all over the world who live on less than a dollar a day,” she said.

The President stressed that these poorest of the poor “are the most fertile grounds for the recruits of terrorism.”

“Then number two, they must open up their doors to the products of the developing countries,” the President said.

According to the President, while developed nations preached to developing countries the blessings of liberalization, they actually practice protectionism.

In this connection, she stressed the need for developed nations to “open their doors if they are going to preach liberalization.”

“Third, they should invest more in developing countries,” the President said, adding that what developing countries need are not handouts but investments in people because this will be “investments in the fight against terrorism.”

As far as aid is concerned, the President said it is also the obligation of the developing countries to use their resources responsibly.

“So, the developed countries must also help the developing countries build the capability towards transparency of mobilization of resources,” she explained.

She also said that her administration supports the United States in the case brought to the United Nations against Iraq.

“And we are urging the UN to act on the US resolution,” the President said.

GMA gets assurances of new business, investments from Silicon Valley firms

Malacañang today said the visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the Silicon Valley firms in California produced positive results as she convinced business leaders and executives in the world’s information technology capital to put their business and pour in more investments in the Philippines.

In a telephone interview from San Francisco with Malacañang reporters in Manila this afternoon, Press Secretary Ignacio “Toting” Bunye revealed that one of the chief executive officers of Silicon Valley, Richard Swanson, president of Sunpower Corporation, promised to establish a solar cell manufacturing company in the country.

Bunye said the assurance of Swanson to make a \$200-million investment in the Philippines is the result of his meeting with the President last Monday (Tuesday in Manila).

He also said Swanson and his firm are rushing the paperwork needed for the approval of the Philippine investment plan.

Bunye said the solar cell manufacturing company will be fully operational before 2004 and would provide employment to Filipinos.

“(The) expected job generation (in the solar cell manufacturing company) is 1,400 jobs in four years,” Bunye said.

“This is the first solar cell manufacturer. It will produce clean electricity because its comes from the sun,” he added.

Aside from Sunpower Corporation, Cypress Semiconductor Corp. also informed the President of its plans to put up a silicon wafer fabrication plant in the Philippines.

Cypress, a company that specializes in high-volume manufacturing of silicon cells at very low cost, is a major partner of Sunpower, a premier manufacturer of ultra high-efficiency silicon solar cells.

Other major Silicon Valley investors in the country include PeopleSoft, Cisco, HP-Compaq, Oracle, Sun Microsystems, Sybase and Agilent Technologies.

GMA informed of launching of ‘adopt a barangay’ project in U.S.

SAN FRANCISCO, California – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was informed by Consul General Delia Menez-Rosal here of the formal launching of the Adopt-A-Barangay Coalition (ABC) at the Philippine Community Development Forum of the First Global Filipino Community Networking Convention held in this city last August 31, 2002.

Welcoming the President at a Filipino gathering here, Ambassador Menez-Rosal said that an alliance was established by a core group of concerned dedicated Filipinos in the Bay Area, as well as US and Manila-based foundations, such as Ayala Foundation, LBC Foundation and Philippine Children’s Fund to implement a “holistic approach” in mitigating poverty in the Philippines.

“The end objective of this coalition is to help our ‘Kababayan’ and to uplift the socio-economic conditions in the Philippines through the provision of health, nutrition, education and livelihood in the Philippines, as well as medical missions, food banks, scholarships, values orientation to the vocational training,” Menez-Rozal said.

An MOU was signed by the members of the core group and participants of the community development forum.

The launching, which was also attended by Senate President Franklin Drilon, Congressman Augusto Syjuco and Ambassador Albert del Rosario, was highlighted by a candle-lighting ceremony.

Before her speech at the Filipino community here, the President met with the officers of the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NAFFAA) lead by Ms. Loida Nicolas Lewis

The NAFFAA is a private non-profit, non-partisan, organization established in 1997 to promote the welfare and well-being of all Filipinos and Filipino-Americans throughout the United States.

The officers of the NAFFAA told the President said that their primary objectives include the following:

- promoting active participation of Filipino-Americans in civic and national affairs and in all other aspects of mainstream America;
- promoting awareness of Filipino-American contributions to social economic, cultural and political life in the United States; and
- securing social justice, equal opportunity and fair treatment of Filipino-Americans through advocacy and legislative and policy initiatives at all levels of government.

Palace condemns killing of Abra mayor, orders Lina to resolve case immediately

Malacañang has strongly condemned the shooting Tuesday of Tineg, (Abra) Mayor Clarence Benwaren inside a Catholic Church in Calauan, Laguna.

Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao told Malacanang reporters that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had ordered Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. to immediately resolve the killing of Mayor Benwaren.

The mayor was felled by an assassin's bullet inside the San Isidro Labrador Church in Calauan while standing as a sponsor at a wedding.

Tiglao said the President wanted Lina not only to apprehend the remaining gunmen but also the mastermind of the crime.

Members of the Calauan police were able to kill one of the gunmen in the ensuing firefight but the other suspects managed to escape.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) has control and supervision over the Philippine National Police (PNP).

Police are still trying to determine the motive of the killing.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 30, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213059/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct30.htm>

The President's Day: October 31, 2002

31 OCTOBER 2002

- **All Saints Day message from President thru Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye**
- **GMA's official visit to Mexico, U.S. 'an overwhelming success.' says Bunye**
- **GMA cites U.S. support in RP's fight vs terrorism, veterans' welfare as gains in official trip**
- **Fitch, Moody's maintain ratings, stable outlook on Philippines**
- **GMA assures safety of Filipinos as nation marks All Saints' Day tomorrow**
- **GMA says new enemy of 21st century requires transnational collaboration**
- **GMA elated by confidence of I.T. execs in Silicon Valley on RP growth**
- **Joma Sison, NPA now in EU's Official list of terrorist groups or persons**

All Saints Day message from President thru Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye

Sa ngalan ng ating Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, ng Unang Pamilya, ako po ay bumabati sa inyong lahat sa Araw ng Namayapa.

Ang pagbisita natin sa himlayan ng ating mga mahal na yumao ay isang tradisyon at kaugaliang nagpapakilala ng ating paggalang hindi lamang sa mga namayapa kundi sa mga adhikaing kanilang ipinanamana sa atin.

Ilan sa mga adhikaing dapat nating patuloy na ipaglaban ay ang pagkakaisa, kapayapaan, kaunlaran at kaligtasan mula sa mapanindak ng elementong walang puwang sa isang sibilisadong kaayusan. Nawa sa pagtugay ng ating Panginoon, ang Panahon ng Undas ay maging isang ginituang pagkakataon din upang ating patatagin at palakasin ang ating pagkakaisa bilang pamilya.

Ang matatag na pamilya ay isa sa mga sandigan ng isang malakas na Republika.

Sa ngalan ng ating Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at ng Unang Pamilya, harinawang maging makabuluhan at matahimik ang paggunita natin sa Araw ng mga Namayapa.

GMA's official visit to Mexico, U.S. 'an overwhelming success.' says Bunye

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was able to accomplish her mission in her week-long official trip to attend the 10th Economic Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Los Cabos, Mexico and to meet with American investors as well as Filipino communities in the United States.

"The visit was an overwhelming success," Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said in summing up the trip of the President to Mexico and to the United States.

In an interview from San Francisco, California, Bunye said that while at the APEC summit, the President has taken up the cudgels for the developing countries as she called on the industrialized countries to practice what they preached on trade liberalization instead of maintaining their protectionist policies.

Bunye is part of the small official delegation of the President.

At the APEC, the President also restated the strong commitment of the Philippines in supporting the US in the fight against global terrorism, Bunye said.

The President has also successfully brought forward her stand that there is a link between terrorism and poverty, saying that poor countries can be an ideal breeding ground for terrorist activities, Bunye said.

Bunye said that in her meetings with the members of the Filipino community, first in Honolulu, and later in San Diego and in San Francisco, California, the President was warmly greeted by our *kababayans*, especially when she announced the passage by both houses of Congress of the absentee voting bill and the dual citizenship bill.

“Kaya’t napakaganda ng pagtanggap sa ating Pangulo sa lahat ng lugar ng kanyang binisita (That’s why the President was warmly received by our countrymen in the places that she visited),” Bunye said.

At the Silicon Valley, Bunye said, leading manufacturers of electronics and information and communications technology (ICT) products have also assured the President of their continued confidence in the Philippine economy.

The American ICT giants assured the President that they will not only expand their present operations in the Philippines but would also put new investments, especially in call center operations, Bunye said.

The President and her official party are scheduled to return early tomorrow morning, taking the regular flight of the Philippine Airlines from San Francisco, California.

GMA cites U.S. support in RP’s fight vs terrorism, veterans’ welfare as gains in official trip

SAN FRANCISCO, California — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that one of the gains of her official trip to Mexico and the United States is the assurance from US officials, particularly US President George W. Bush, that they will continue to support the Philippines in its fight against terrorism.

In a radio interview with Ely Saludar of the Radio Mindanao Network (RMN) here, the President also said that during her one-on-one with President Bush in Los Cabos, Mexico, the latter assured her of his commitment to work for expanded benefits for the Filipino World War II veterans.

The President and Bush were among the 21 leaders of the Pacific Rim who attended the 10th Economic Leaders’ Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) held October 26-27 in Los Cabos, Mexico.

In fact, the President said, the Bush administration was largely instrumental in the passage at the US House of Representatives of a \$65 million outlay for health benefits and burial assistance to Filipino veterans.

This appropriations bill, according to the President, is now in the Senate. That is why, she said, she had asked the Filipino Americans in the US to write to their senators so that the veterans benefit bill would be endorsed by the US Senate committee on veterans affairs to the whole Senate for approval.

The President said that during their talks, President Bush also assured her of continued US support to the Philippines’ fight against terrorism and poverty.

During the interview, the President also explained that there is still hope that the \$30-million financial assistance for the Philippines, which forms part of the \$5 billion package for several countries could be passed by the US Congress after it was vetoed.

The President said that Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye, a friend of the Philippines and who inserted the \$30 million outlay for the Philippines, would attempt to include the same amount in the next US budget.

Senator Inouye called on the President during her overnight stopover in Honolulu on her way to Mexico.

According to the President, the \$30 million outlay, if finally approved, would be on top of the existing \$50 million economic support fund that the US has extended to the Philippine government.

“Kaya tuloy mas marami pang makukuha natin kung ganoon (If this is the case, we could even get more),” the President said.

Fitch, Moody’s maintain ratings, stable outlook on Philippines

Two of the world’s leading credit rating, research and risk analysis firms – Fitch Ratings and Moody’s Investors Service – are maintaining their ratings and stable outlook on the Philippines.

Malacañang welcomed the decision of the two agencies even as investment bank JP Morgan expressed surprise over the downgrading by Standard and Poor’s (S&P), another ratings services firm, of its long-term outlook for the Philippines.

Brian Coulton, a senior director at Fitch, said the agency is maintaining its ratings on the Philippines long-term foreign currency debt at BB+ and its long-term local currency borrowings at BBB-.

Credit ratings are used by investors as indications of the likelihood of getting their money back in accordance with the terms on which they invested.

“The ratings remain the same,” Coulton said, “and the outlook does remain stable as well.”

Moody’s also said it was keeping its stable credit outlook on the Philippines, saying the country’s strong balance of payments outlook was a balancing factor to a growing budget deficit.

Moody’s lead analyst for Asia, Thomas Byrne, said: “Back in August, we issued a statement and we looked primarily at the fiscal factors. But at that time, we didn’t see anything that would make us change our stable outlook. And the recent information that was released hasn’t led us to change our conclusion that we made back then.”

Moody’s revised in February its credit outlook on the Philippines to stable from negative, an outlook that had been in place since October 2000.

“Exports have recovered, the official foreign exchange reserves are still high and workers inflows continue; in fact they are pretty good this year,” Byrne said.

“These factors suggest that there is no direct link, at least not yet, and probably not foreseeable, with the budget problems and the balance of payments position,” he added.

JP Morgan, meanwhile, said in a statement it was surprised by S&P’s revision of its outlook for the Philippines from stable to negative.

It said S&P should have deferred the action to revise the outlook until early next year “to assess the trends, especially after the critical April tax month.”

“Clearly, S&P has given little weight to the Arroyo government’s arguments about a deficit frontloading and emerging signs of tax collection improvements,” JP Morgan said.

In San Francisco yesterday, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo expressed confidence that the Philippines will regain its stable rating from Standard and Poor’s Ratings Services.

“We have a high regard for Standard and Poor’s,” Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye quoted the President as saying. “But Standard and Poor’s may have taken into account only one macroeconomic indicator and probably did not take into account our significant gains like highest growth rate in Southeast Asia and third largest growth rate in Asia, our low inflation rate regime and fiscal discipline.”

“Be that as it may,” the President added, “I believe we can make it back to stable. I am confident we can do it.”

GMA assures safety of Filipinos as nation marks All Saints’ Day tomorrow

SAN FRANCISCO, California — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the public that they can visit the graves of their loved ones or relax at the malls and other places without fear of terrorist attacks.

“Gusto ko lang ipaalam na sinisigurado natin ang kaligtasan ng ating mamamayan, kaya mayroon tayong mga Marines na nagbabantay ngayon sa mga malls para lalong ligtas ang ating mga mamamayan (I would like to assure the safety of our countrymen, that is why we have Marines guarding the malls),” the President told the Radio Mindanao Network (RMN) in an interview here.

The President said that she had declared October 31 and November 2 as special non-working days to allow the people not only to go to the cemeteries during All Saints’ Day but also to relax and enjoy during the long weekend.

She said that her mission in going to Mexico for the leaders’ meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and to Silicon Valley in California is two-fold.

One, the President said, is to participate in widening the global alliance in the fight against international terrorism, and second, to work for more employment opportunities for our people through additional foreign investments.

“Kasi, kahit anong pinag-uusapan natin, sa katapusan yun din ang ating talagang hangarin: na bumuti ang buhay ng ating mga mamamayang Pilipino (Whatever we discuss, in the end, our final objective is to improve the lives of our countrymen),” the President said.

The President and her official party are scheduled to return early tomorrow morning, taking the regular flight of the Philippine Airlines from San Francisco, California.

GMA says new enemy of 21st century requires transnational collaboration

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the new kind of enemy in the 21st century, which is terrorism, requires a transnational collaboration among nations.

“There is a new kind of war in the 21st century, which is terrorism. This is a transnational war and therefore, there must be transnational collaboration not only with the United States but also with other neighbors in the region and other members of the United Nations,” the President in an interview with CNN while on a brief visit in the United States from the APEC Leaders’ Meeting in Mexico .

The President noted the several and recent strikes of terrorists in many parts of the world.

‘They’re trying to get into the Philippines. They’re trying to get into Europe. They’re trying to get into America, so it’s an international threat and it must be answered also, transnationally,’ she said.

The Philippines has a trilateral agreement with Malaysia and Indonesia on intelligence sharing and border patrols against transnational crime, including terrorism.

Meanwhile, the President said the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is ready and capable of dealing with transnational crimes as it is responsible for reducing the number of Abu Sayyaf from thousands to just a couple of hundreds.

“The Abu Sayyaf was numbering thousands. Now, they are numbering a couple of a few hundreds and they are holed up, by and large, now where they started,” the President said. “In other words, we are making tremendous gains in our fight against the Abu Sayyaf.”

The President stressed, however, that the government is holding peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and that there is an ongoing cease-fire between the MILF and government troops.

She said the government is taking advantage of the peace talks to bring about development in the area where the MILF can get their sympathizers.

“And this reminds us, and reminds the world — and I’m glad now that the developed countries agree that if we are going to fight terrorism, we have to fight poverty as well — we have to fight terrorists where they are and we have to fight poverty where the terrorists are,” she added.

GMA elated by confidence of I.T. execs in Silicon Valley on RP growth

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today noted the confidence manifested by executives of the information technology enterprises in Silicon Valley on the ICT sector in the country.

“If the business community feels that way, especially the community in the growth sector of the future for the Philippines, which is ICT, then I think this message has to be brought back to the Philippines so that they’ll know that there is confidence on the most important growth sector for the future in our country,” the President said in an interview with Cable News Network (CNN) while in the United States.

In her brief visit to San Jose, California, the President was able to convince business leaders and executives in the world’s information technology capital to put their business and pour in more investments in the Philippines.

One of the chief executive officers of Silicon Valley, Richard Swanson, president of Sunpower Corporation, promised to establish a \$200 million solar cell manufacturing company in the country, which would be fully operational by 2004.

It is expected to generate at least 1, 400 jobs in four years.

Aside from Sunpower Corporation, Cypress Semiconductor Corp. also informed the President of its plans to put up a silicon wafer fabrication plant in the Philippines.

Cypress, a company that specializes in high-volume manufacturing of silicon cells at very low cost, is a major partner of Sunpower, a premier manufacturer of ultra high-efficiency silicon solar cells.

Other major Silicon Valley investors in the country include PeopleSoft, Cisco, HP-Compaq, Oracle, Sun Microsystems, Sybase and Agilent Technologies.

Joma Sison, NPA now in EU’s Official list of terrorist groups or persons

The European Union (EU) has included Jose Maria Sison, erstwhile chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and the CPP’s armed wing, the New People’s Army (NPA), in the list of persons and groups engaged in terrorist activities.

The list, which was adopted after written consultations among the 15 member-states of the EU, has been published by the EU’s Official Journal.

Earlier, the United States also formally tagged the CPP-NPA as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO). On the request of the US, the Dutch government had ordered a freeze in the financial accounts of Sison and cut off his monthly allowance from the Dutch welfare department.

Sison, along with top officials of the National Democratic Front (NDF) that included NDF chairman Luis Jalandoni, is now living in exile in Utrecht, the Netherlands. The NDF is the political front of the CPP-NPA.

The EU's official journal gave Sison's aliases as Armando Liwanag and Joma and described him as "in charge of NPA."

Sison left the Philippines in March 1986 shortly after he was released from detention by then president Corazon Aquino. He has sought political asylum in the Netherlands since 1988.

The EU Council Resolution dated October 28, 2002, was based on a decision agreed on December 2001 that imposed specific restrictive measures directed "against certain persons or entities with a view to combat terrorism."

With the terror tag, all EU member countries are obliged to freeze the assets or properties of Sison and his group.

Aside from the NPA, among the more well-known terror groups listed in the EU Council resolution are the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the Abu Nidal Organization, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Palestine Liberation Front, all in Israel; the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland; Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC); Shining Path or Sendero Luminoso in Peru; and Gamaa Al-Islamiya of Indonesia.

Last week, Foreign Secretary Blas F. Ople led a Philippine mission to six European nations to convince their governments to include Sison and the CPP-NPA in their terror list.

In his report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Ople said most European governments have indicated their support in a bid to endorse the NPA as a foreign terrorist organization to the United Nations under Security Council 373, which mandates all states to commit themselves fully to the global fight against terrorism.

Ople's mission covered six countries, namely Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Spain.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: October 31, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029212254/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/oct31.htm>

The President's Day: November 2, 2002

02 NOVEMBER 2002

- **GMA arrives from successful trip to Mexico, US**
- **GMA leaves tomorrow for Cambodia to attend eight ASEAN summit**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao**

GMA arrives from successful trip to Mexico, US

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today arrived from a successful trip to Los Cabos, Mexico for the 10th Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meeting and the United States.

The President, on board a Philippine Airlines commercial flight from San Francisco, arrived at 4:05 in the morning. First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo accompanied her.

On hand to welcome her during simple arrival honors were Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo and Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita. Presidential daughter Evangeline Lourdes "Luli" was also present to welcome her parents.

During her trip, the President was able to accomplish her mission while attending the 10th APEC and was able to meet with American investors as well as Filipino communities in the U.S.

At the APEC summit, the President stated the strong commitment of the Philippines in supporting the U.S. in the fight against global terrorism.

During the summit the President has also successfully brought forward her stand that there is a link between terrorism and poverty, saying the poor countries can be an ideal breeding ground for terrorist activities.

In her meetings with members of the Filipino community, first in Honolulu, and later in San Diego and in San Francisco, California, the President was warmly greeted by Filipinos, especially when she announced the passage by both houses of Congress of the absentee voting bill and the dual citizenship bill.

At Silicon Valley, leading manufacturers of electronics and information and communications technology products have also assured the President of their continued confidence in the Philippine economy.

One of the chief executive officers of Silicon Valley, Richard Swanson, president of Sunpower Corp., promised to establish a \$200 million solar cell manufacturing company in the country, which would be fully operational by 2004.

It is expected to generate at least 1, 400 jobs in four years.

Aside from Sunpower Corp, Cypress Semiconductor Corp., also informed the President of its plans to put up a silicon wafer fabrication plant in the Philippines.

Cypress, a company that specializes in high-volume manufacturing of silicon cells at very low cost, is a major partner of Sunpower, a premier manufacturer of ultra high-efficiency silicon solar cells.

Other major Silicon Valley investors in the country include PeopleSoft, Cisco, HP-Compaq, Oracle, Sun Microsystems, Sybase and Agilent Technologies.

GMA leaves tomorrow for Cambodia to attend eight ASEAN summit

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will leave on Sunday (November 3) for Cambodia to attend the 8th ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) summit.

The Chief Executive will be in Cambodia from November 3 to 6 for the summit to further Philippine interests in the multilateral gathering. After her three-day trip to Cambodia, the President will proceed to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for a state visit on November 6 and 7.

The President, fresh from her successful trip to attend the 10th Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico, will be accompanied by a small group of Cabinet members.

The President's five-day trip to Cambodia and Vietnam will be her first since she assumed the presidency in January 2001. Her attendance in the ASEAN summit will be her second. The first was in Brunei Darussalam during the Seventh ASEAN summit last year.

Upon arrival at the Pochentong International Airport in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, the President will be accorded simple arrival honors.

After the arrival ceremonies, the President and her official delegation will immediately be motored to Hotel Cambodiana, where they are going to be billeted.

The first official activity of the President in Cambodia will be a meeting with the Filipino community at the Hotel Cambodiana's Ballroom.

Based on a fact sheet released by the Department of Foreign Affairs, there are some 680 Filipinos living in Cambodia.

Most of the Filipinos in Cambodia work for non-government organizations, the United Nations and other international organizations. Others work as missionaries, engineers, factory workers, and in service works as singers and entertainers, teachers and restaurant workers.

Statement of Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao

We welcome the revision yesterday by the US State Department of its Oct. 23 'travel advisory' to the Philippines, which acknowledged our government's efforts to deter terrorist attacks in our country. American intelligence warned that such attacks would be launched, in the aftermath of the Bali, Indonesia bombings, in Southeast Asia by Jemaah Islamiyah and other terrorists cells linked to the Al Qaeda.

The US State Department's Public Announcement released yesterday, and which superseded its Oct. 23 announcement noted:

"Philippine authorities have confirmed that they have put into place extra security measures...to deter possible terrorists attacks and to protect the public, including resident and traveling foreigners."

There are actually two types of what are informally called "travel advisories" by the State Department. Travel warnings are issued by the State Department "to recommend that Americans avoid travel to a certain country. Public Announcement are issued "to disseminate information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or trans-national conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers."

As of today there are 25 countries in the US State Department's list of "Travel Warnings", or countries which it advises Americans to avoid travel to. The Philippines is not in this list.

The Philippines however is in the list of 17 countries, which the US has issued Public Announcements on. A US Public Announcement on a particular country essentially advises its citizens to exercise caution and vigilance when traveling to that country in the face of short-term terrorists or other threats.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 2, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030063030/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov02.htm>

The President's Day: November 3, 2002

03 NOVEMBER 2002

- **President's Radio Address (Saturday & Sunday, November 02 & 03, 2002)**
- **Gov't still open to peace talks with reds**
- **GMA off for ASEAN Summit in Cambodia**
- **GMA welcomes Moody's continued stable rating**
- **GMA arrives in Cambodia for ASEAN Summit**
- **GMA to push for initiative to curb terrorism in meetings with ASEAN leaders**

President's Radio Address (Saturday & Sunday, November 02 & 03, 2002)

Magandang araw sa inyong lahat.

Kararating ko lang ngayon mula sa aking pagdalo sa Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. Iyong APEC meeting sa Mexico ay nagbibigay diin ng isang importanteng bagong direksyon sa mga bansa at namumuno; na kinikilalang kailangan labanan natin ang pang-mundong terorismo kasama ng laban sa kahirapan.

The best antidote to terrorism and poverty is political freedom and economic opportunity. As the leader of a developing nation, I can't achieve one without the other. That is why my fight against terrorism on our soil is accompanied by efforts to bring jobs, education, and opportunity to our people at the same time.

Sa palagay ko itong koneksyon ng terorismo at kahirapan ay sa wakas tinatanggap na ng mga bansang maunlad. Dumadalas, makikita ninyong may lugar sa mesa para tumukoy sa mga isyu laban sa kahirapan at ukol sa ekonomiya, upang tulungan ang mga bansang umuunlad pa lamang bilang seryosong bahagi ng laban sa terorismo. Napatunayan ito sa nakaraang pulong sa APEC, sa consensus meeting sa Monterey sa Mexico ilang buwang nakaraan, at kahit na sa Doha Round ng WTO. Sa bawat panahon, ang mga bansang maunlad ay lalong naiintindihan na habang tumutulong tayo laban sa terorismo, sila ay dapat tumulong sa ating lumaban sa katulong ng terorismo – ito ay ang kahirapan.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that I followed my APEC meeting with a trade and investment trip to Silicon Valley. I met with Andy Grove of Intel and many other high tech leaders in an effort to encourage greater investments in the Philippines. Intel has already invested one billion dollars and employs 6,000 Filipinos. That's my idea of a good anti-terrorism plan.

Ang laban sa terorismo ay labang pangmundo at hindi lamang laban ng isang tanging bansa o rehiyon. Ang terorismo ay walang kinikilalang dulo. Ang pagkakaisa sa pulong sa APEC ay nagbibigay-diin na nasa lahat ng lugar ang bantang ito.

We must work together as nations around the world to fight terrorism. We can't sit back and wait; we must take this fight to the terrorists before they undermine our very way of living.

Naiintindihan natin ang hamon ng terorismo sa lahat ng bansa na nagbibigay halaga sa kapayapaan at katiwasayan. Mula noong ako'y nanungkulan, nagdeklara ako ng giyera sa terorismo sa Pilipinas. Kaya ako ang unang lider sa Asya na nakiisa sa pang-mundong koalisyon at sumama sa pamilya ng mga bansa sa laban kontra sa terorismo.

Here at home, I have welcomed US military assistance to help us in the fight against terrorism. A few of my opponents have criticized my decision. But I have to tell you; I make no apologies for aggressively seeking to root out terrorism in the Philippines and putting considerable effort into seeking regional consensus on fighting terrorism.

Itong mga terorista ay napatunayang muli na sila ay hindi ginagabay ng paninindigang moral o relihiyoso. Wala silang adhikain kundi mga mamamatay ng mga inosente, tulak ng ideolohiya ng kaguluhan. Naranasan na natin ang

ganoong walang prinsipyong karahasan sa Pilipinas. Ang tanging gamot ay mawalan ng takot, at durugin ang sinisikap nila.

The APEC nations stand against terrorism. The issue is making sure to build the strongest alliance possible and most leaders believe that it is through the United Nations. The same is true whether we are dealing with Iraq or North Korea. The objective is to peacefully disarm a nation that, one, needs to reform itself and open up to the world, and, two, can do tremendous harm to the region with the weapons and arsenal it has at its disposal.

Ang layunin ng pagbuo ng APEC ay ekonomiya. Iyon ang nagpapakatako sa kaniyang agenda, at dahilan kung bakit ako ay dumalo. Inakap ko ang laban kontra sa terorismo mula noong unang araw; ang mas mahirap na tanong sa mga bansang maunlad ay panatilihin ang mundong nakatukoy sa trabaho at ekonomiya. Ang kahirapan at desperasyon ay ang pinakamalaking sandata ng terorismo laban sa ating bansa. Hindi ko natatanggal iyan sa aking paningin. Hindi rin dapat sa ibang bansa.

I inherited an economy heading for bankruptcy and a political environment teetering on chaos. We have instilled political order and fiscal discipline. Inflation is at its lowest point in over a decade, economic growth is among the highest in Asia. We have done significant reforms including anti-money laundering, privatization, banking asset reform, among others.

Mabuti naman at iyong international credit agency na ang Moody's ay tuloy na itinuturing ang ating pang-matagalang hinaharap bilang stable. We believe that their assessment of the Philippines takes into account the fact that not only do we have an economy that has delivered one of the highest growth rates in a world full of troubles, but we are also taking further steps to strengthen further our macro-economic fundamentals.

Tutuloy tayong mulat sa ating mga pagsisikap na bawasan ang kakulangan ng ating badyet at, sa bandang diyan, naniniwala ako na ang mga pangdagdag na koleksiyong hakbang na tinutupad ng Bureau of Internal Revenue pati na rin ng mahigpit na kontrol sa gastos ng pamahalaan na nilagay natin ay magsusuporta sa ating tagumpay dito.

We have demonstrated our ability to win the approval of the rating agencies and we are encouraged with the approval of Moody's.

Habang ginagawa natin ito tutukuyin natin ang mga positibong sukat ng lakas ng ating ekonomiyang pinapatakbo sa sariling sikap, kasama ng pag-angat ng GNP, mahinang pagtaas ng presyo ng bilihin, patas na gastos ng gobyerno, at malakas na pagbalik ng export.

Bilang inyong Pangulo, naniniwala ako na kaisa ko kayo sa paghahangad ng isang matiwasay na pamayanan, masaganang pamumuhay at matatag na Republika.

Maraming salamat po.

Gov't still open to peace talks with reds

The government remains open to peace talks with the communist rebels despite the decision of the European Union (EU) to declare Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Ma. Sison and the New People's Army as terrorists.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said in a radio interview this morning that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration's policy to keep the doors open to negotiations stands.

Bunye said Secretary Rigoberto Tiglao, Presidential Spokesman and Chief of Staff of the Office of the President, has offered to serve as go-between in talks between the government and the communists.

Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable, Jr., who was directed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to take charge of the back-channel negotiations, and Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales are also ready to serve as go-between, Bunye said.

Thus far, however, the CPP-NPA-National Democratic Front has not made any contact with these government negotiators, Bunye added.

“Although the formal negotiations are suspended, the communication lines remain open,” Bunye said. “The government wants peace.”

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, however, warned the communists against stepping up attacks in response to the EU position, saying it would only prove that they are terrorists.

Bunye also said it is up to Sison, who is now in the Netherlands on political asylum, if he wants to return to the country. Sison left the Philippines in March 1986 shortly after he was released from detention by then President Corazon Aquino. He has been in the Netherlands since 1988.

“We all know he will hardly have freedom of movement now in Europe” because of the October 28 decision of the Council of the European Union to declare him and his group as terrorists, Bunye said.

Foreign Secretary Blas Ople said the EU move would deny “sanctuary” to Sison and other guerrilla leaders in Europe, freeze suspected rebel funds and cut off financing from their European supporters.

“They have no place to hide,” Ople added.

The decision of the Council, the legislative body of the European Union, calls upon all its 15 member-states to freeze the assets of the NPA and Sison – whom it described as “in charge of NPA” known by his aliases of Joma and Armando Liwanag. The member-states of the EU are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

As early as last August, the Bank of England, as agent for Her Majesty’s Treasury, has “directed all financial institutions that any funds which they hold for or on behalf of the Communist Party of the Philippines (‘CPP’), its armed wing the New People’s Army (‘NPA’) and Jose Maria Sison, the founder of both the CPP and the NPA, must be frozen. This is because the Treasury has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the CPP, NPA and Jose Maria Sison are or may be persons who commit, attempt to commit, facilitate or participate in the commission of acts of terrorism.”

GMA off for ASEAN Summit in Cambodia

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo left this afternoon for Cambodia to attend the eighth Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit that is expected to focus on terrorism, the same theme spotlighted by last week’s Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders’ Meeting in Mexico.

The President was accorded departure honors before boarding a chartered Philippine Airlines plane bound for the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh at around 12:40 p.m. at Terminal 1 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Among the Cabinet members who accompanied the President in the trip were Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon and Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye.

During the two-day summit meeting that opens tomorrow, the President, widely considered in the region as the most vocal on the security issue, is expected to raise the urgency of collectively fighting poverty which, she says, breeds terrorism.

She is also expected to solicit support for an international conference on terrorism that the Philippines plans to host.

After the Cambodia summit, whose theme for this year is “Towards a Community of Southeast Asian Nations,” the President will proceed to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for a state visit on November 6 and 7.

This is the second time the President will attend the gathering of the leaders of 10-member Asean. Last year, she attended the summit meeting in Brunei Darussalam. The Asean is composed of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar.

While in Cambodia, the President is expected to meet with the small Filipino community in Phnom Penh. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs, there are some 680 Filipinos living in Cambodia.

Most of the Filipinos in Cambodia work for non-government organizations, the United Nations and other international organizations. Others work as missionaries, engineers, factory workers, and service works such as singers and entertainers, teachers and restaurant workers.

Among the highlights of the Phnom Penh summit are:

- the signing of the ASEAN Tourism Agreement by the ASEAN leaders which will enhance cooperation and assistance in the development and promotion of the tourism industry in the region;
- the adoption of ASEAN-China Cooperation in Non-Traditional Security Issues which is aimed at promoting the collaboration of efforts to safeguard the region against terrorism and other forms of transnational crime;
- adoption of a declaration towards ASEAN-Japan Closer Economic Partnership; and
- an ASEAN-India Summit Meeting, the first summit meeting between ASEAN and its dialogue partner a decade after India’s admission to the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1992.

GMA welcomes Moody’s continued stable rating

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today welcomed the decision of Moody’s Investors Service, one of the world’s leading rating agencies, to maintain its stable credit outlook on the Philippines.

“We believe that (Moody’s) assessment of the Philippines takes into account the fact that not only do we have an economy that has delivered one of the highest growth rates in a world full of troubles, but we are also taking further steps to strengthen further our macroeconomic fundamentals,” the President said in her radio message aired yesterday and today.

The President said the administration will remain focused on efforts to reduce the budget deficit.

She said that with the improved collection efficiency of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the tight controls on government spending, she is confident of success towards this end.

“We have demonstrated our ability to win the approval of the rating agencies, and we are encouraged with the approval of Moody’s,” the President added.

“I inherited an economy heading for bankruptcy and a political environment teetering on chaos,” the President recalled.

“We have instilled political order and fiscal discipline,” she added.

Inflation is at its lowest point in over a decade and economic growth is among the highest in Asia, the President said. “We have done significant reforms, including anti-money laundering, privatization, banking asset reform, among others.”

Moody’s, in maintaining its stable credit outlook on the Philippines, said “exports have recovered, the official foreign exchange reserves are still high and workers inflows continue; in fact they are pretty good this year.”

GMA arrives in Cambodia for ASEAN Summit

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived at the Pochentong International Airport at 2:45 p.m. (Cambodia time) on board a chartered Philippine Airlines flight from Manila for the eighth summit conference of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The President and her official party were welcomed at the airport by ranking officials of the Cambodian government and Chief of Protocol Hul Phany.

The President’s official party included Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople, Philippine Ambassador to Cambodia Voltaire Gazmin, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, Foreign Affairs Senior Undersecretary Lauro Baja, Jr. and Presidential Adviser for Regional Development Paul Dominguez.

From the airport, the President and her official delegation motored immediately to Hotel Cambodiana, where they are going to be billeted.

The first official activity of the President in Cambodia will be a meeting with the Filipino community at the Hotel Cambodiana’s Ballroom this afternoon. Based on a fact sheet released by the Department of Foreign Affairs, there are some 680 Filipinos living in Cambodia.

During her meeting with the Filipinos, the President Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to brief them on the ongoing developments of her administration for the last two years.

She is also expected to bring the good news about the passage of the absentee voting and dual citizenship bills in Congress.

As the country’s biggest investors, the President will also exhort the Filipino community’s continued support to her government particularly in helping improve the Philippine economy.

Tonight, the President will attend the working dinner for the 10 Heads of State/Government of ASEAN at the Intercontinental Hotel. ASEAN is composed of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar.

Tomorrow, the President will join the nine other ASEAN leaders for their two-day summit meeting.

During the summit, the President and the other ASEAN leaders will sign the ASEAN Tourism Cooperation Agreement (t-ASEAN), an initiative proposed by Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen.

The tourism initiative was discussed by the President and Prime Minister Hun Sen during their bilateral talks in November last year while attending the seventh ASEAN summit in Brunei Darussalam.

In their talks, the President expressed the hope that the tourism agreement would contribute to a better understanding among the peoples of ASEAN and enable them to learn of each other’s economic potentials.

The President will also attend the ASEAN+3 working lunch with the leaders of the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Later, the President will later attend the ASEAN+3 summit and the ASEAN + China summit.

This will be followed by the signing of the Framework Agreement on ASEAN-China Economic Cooperation.

Later in the evening, the President will motor to the Royal Palace for an audience with King Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk and Queen Norodom Monineath Sihanouk of Cambodia.

After her audience with the Cambodian King and Queen, the President will attend the State Banquet hosted by the Royal Couple in honor of the leaders of ASEAN, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and India.

On November 5, the President will attend the ASEAN+Japan summit, the ASEAN+Korea summit and the India+ASEAN summit at the Intercontinental Hotel.

GMA to push for initiative to curb terrorism in meetings with ASEAN leaders

PHNOM PENH,Cambodia (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to push for her initiative for a regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism as she meets with leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

International terrorism is expected to dominate talks both in the summit proper as well as informal discussions among heads of state attending the eight ASEAN summit here.

In an interview, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said the President will likely take advantage of the presence of the ASEAN leaders in one venue, to push for stronger regional and global cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

He said the President is also expected to take advantage of her meetings with ASEAN leaders to reiterate her invitation for a regional conference on international terrorism to be hosted by the Philippines.

ASEAN leaders are under pressure to prove to the rest of the world that they can curb terrorism, especially in light of warnings from the United States that more attacks could be staged in the region.

The US State Department issued a statement expressing concern “that individuals and groups may be planning terrorist attacks against US citizens and interests as well as sites frequented by Westerners” in Southeast Asia.

ASEAN is scheduled to issue a joint statement on terrorism Monday, stressing its commitment to curb this international menace.

Apart from this, ASEAN leaders are also set to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with China, declaring their determination to cooperate with each other in addressing transnational crimes, including terrorism.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 3, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029041349/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov03.htm>

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GMA lauds Filipinos in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo lauded the members of the Filipino community here for being worthy partners of the people of Cambodia in nation-building even as she exhorted them to help and support her administration in its efforts to build a strong Republic.

After just one year, Filipinos here in Cambodia made their mark as managers, engineers, teachers and school administrators, entertainers, doctors, social workers, agricultural experts and members of religious organizations, among many other callings, the President said in her speech before close to a thousand members of the Filipino community gathered at the Cambodiana Hotel.

“You have been our exemplar of the great Filipino worker, known worldwide for discipline, talent, professionalism and a shepherding and compassionate spirit,” she told the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

The President, who is on her first visit to Cambodia, encouraged the OFWs here to be the Philippines’ ambassadors of goodwill and to “maintain our friendly relations with the Cambodian government and people.”

The President asked the members of Filipino community led by chairman Antonio Gomez to maintain their bond with their homeland and “deepen further your appreciation of your national identity.”

The President said she was proud that Filipinos have been worthy partners of the people of Cambodia in nation building.

“Your contribution to democracy is important as our contribution as a country is important. You were sent here to oversee the transition to democracy because the Philippines... (is) the most vibrant and dynamic democracy in Asia. And we are very proud of it and we are very proud of you,” she said.

The Chief Executive told the members of the Filipino community that no president can build a strong Republic single handedly.

“I can do this well only if I can count on the support of the more than 7 million Filipinos overseas. You are the wellspring of support, the network of Filipinos all over the world, that I am counting on,” she declared.

The President thanked the overseas workers for their care and support to their Filipino brothers and to their country as a whole.

“Ipagpatuloy natin ang ating magagandang gawain, ang ating pagbubuklod-buklod, at ang ating pagkakaisa (Let us continue to do our good work, and remain united), she said.

“Even as you are helping build a new Cambodian nation, help me build a strong Republic,” the President said..

Among those present during the affair were Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II, Press Secretary Ignacio “Toting” Bunye, Ambassador Voltaire Gazmin, and Presidential Adviser for Regional Development Paul Dominguez.

GMA stresses importance of Overseas Voting Bill

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo underscored the importance of the overseas voting bill among Filipinos working or residing abroad which has passed both houses of Congress.

“Through this act of empowerment, we envision our overseas Filipinos to have a greater stake in governance and the future direction of our country,” the President said in a speech before the officers and members of the Filipino community in Cambodia during a reception held yesterday at the Cambodiana Hotel here.

The President asked the close to 1,000 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Cambodia to pray that the House of Representatives and the Senate can iron out their conflicting provisions of the overseas voting bill soon “because as soon as they do so, I will it sign into law within 24 hours.”

The President recalled that she filed an overseas voting bill when she was still a senator.

“But like many other overseas voting bills before and after mine, my bill did not even progress beyond the committee level. So when I became President, I certified as one of my five most urgent bills — the overseas voting bill,” she stressed.

The President asked the Filipino community led by its chairman Antonio Gomez to maintain their bond with their homeland and “deepen further your appreciation of your national identity.”

Gomez, meanwhile, pledged the support of the Filipino community in Cambodia to the Macapagal-Arroyo government and its programs and projects, particularly the overseas voting bill.

“Kinagagalak namin na sa oras na maging batas at maging epektibo ito, magkakaroon din kami ng pagkakataon sa wakas na magpasiya sa pagpili ng mga taong mamumuno sa ating mahal na bayan (We are happy that when the overseas voting bill is signed into law and becomes effective, we will be able to choose the leaders we want to lead our country),” Gomez said.

Gomez said the passage of the overseas voting bill represents the Macapagal-Arroyo administration’s care and support for the overseas Filipinos who, despite their being away from the Philippines, have remained Filipinos in heart and spirit.

He also informed the President that the members of the Filipino community in Cambodia are also supporting her other programs, particularly on poverty alleviation and socio-economic reforms, livelihood, housing, and education which are all aimed at helping the poor.

“We are also one with the President in her efforts to fight terrorism and poverty in the country,” Gomez said.

The spokesman for the community told the President that they will also help in improving the country’s tourism industry by encouraging more people to go and visit the Philippines.

GMA stresses need to step up sub-regional cooperation among ASEAN members

PHNOM PENH (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo underscored Sunday the need for the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to intensify sub-regional cooperation against terrorism not only under the Greater Mekong sub-region but also under the BIMP-EAGA (Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area).

The President told other ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) heads of state and government attending the Eighth Summit here that the development of BIMP-EAGA should remain in a very high priority concern of the four participating governments because “this is where Jemaah Islamiya (JI) terrorists have located their training camps, taking advantage of these areas and the high poverty incidence of its residents.”

The President, accompanied by a few members of her Cabinet, arrived here Sunday afternoon to attend the two-day Eighth ASEAN Summit which opened this morning.

“The development of BIMP-EAGA is precisely being undertaken to address this backwardness and high poverty incidence and, therefore, is a necessary parallel economic effort alongside the intelligence, police, and military actions being utilized in medium and long-term plans to eliminate the security and terrorism threat in the sub-region,” the President said.

The President requested that officials responsible for implementing the Trilateral Agreement Against Terrorism be instructed to give special focus on the BIMP-EAGA areas because of the presence of the JI training camps and recent terrorist acts reportedly perpetrated by the JI in North Sulawesi and Mindanao.

Officials responsible for BIMP-EAGA, the President said, should now focus their activities on programs and projects that would clearly contribute to enhancing security in the sub-region.

The President pointed out that Customs, Immigration and Quarantine officials of the most active ports in BIMP-EAGA should further intensify their communication and coordination to prevent the movement of terrorists and criminal elements through these sensitive borders such as General Santos City-Manado and Zamboanga-Sandakan.

She further recommended that BIMP-EAGA officials undertake a massive information and communication program within BIMP-EAGA to expand stakeholder awareness of BIMP-EAGA and elicit their support to combat terrorism and criminal activities which are now the main obstacle to the development of the sub-region.

“An objective of this information and communication program would be to increase the participation of local government leaders who, because of the new autonomy laws in Indonesia and the Philippines, are now in the forefront on both development and security programs,” she added.

The President exhorted BIMP-EAGA officials, with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), to focus their efforts specifically to the small and medium enterprise sector as this is the sector of the business community whose presence and commitment to invest in BIMP-EAGA has been the least affected by the increasing security concerns.

She suggested that BIMP-EAGA officials focus their investment and tourism marketing efforts in China and Korea as the interest of these countries in the BIMP food products and tourism services remains strong in spite of the recent incidents.

For the medium and long term, the President said, “we could undertake economic initiatives, such as the formulation of a three-year BIMP-EAGA Strategic Development Plan, including a review and update of the 1996 ADB investigative study.”

The President expressed confidence that under the leadership of Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen of Cambodia, the Eighth ASEAN Summit and the summit meetings with the four leaders will be fruitful and will enrich and build upon the existing strong bonds of geopolitical affinity, history and kinship.

ASEAN is composed of the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

GMA calls for more intelligence exchange joint border patrols in Asean region

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo called on the other leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to push for the implementation of the Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communications Procedures “more vigorously by upgrading our intelligence exchange and carrying out joint border patrols.”

“One of the steps we took immediately following our summit last year was the signing of the Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communications Procedures among Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, with Cambodia acceding last July,” the President told other ASEAN leaders here.

The President said she is looking forward to Thailand and Brunei Darussalam acceding to this agreement during the Eighth ASEAN Leaders Summit which had its first working meeting this morning. ASEAN is composed of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar.

She also said that later this week in Manila, the Philippines is hosting an anti-terrorism conference with the World Tourism Organization.

“In accordance with one of our initiatives in last year’s summit, the Philippines will host a Multilateral Seminar Game on Emergency Responses to Terrorist Threats sometime in December this year or early next year,” she said.

The President explained that the simulation is a practicum in security cooperation.

She added that her government intends to test existing hotlines and person-to-person contacts for coordinating anti-terrorist operations.

“We could explore sharing of airline passenger lists and shipping passenger manifests to fix and apprehend suspects. We could also simulate the deployment of more law enforcement officials to identified entry and exit points used by potential terrorists,” she declared.

The President also said that it is high time that Regional e-Security is included in the implementation of the e-ASEAN initiative.

As a first step in this direction, the President said two proposals could be considered.

One, is the creation of a working group on critical infrastructure security.

“This working group, which will be a sub-unit within the e-ASEAN Working Group will discuss Regional Information and Communications Technology (ICT) concerns and will update the ASEAN senior officials on the matter,” she said.

Two, is linking existing national anti-terrorist agencies and institutions.

GMA presents short, medium and long-term measures to curb terrorism

PHNOM PENH, (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presented Sunday short, medium and long-term measures to curb terrorism, as she stressed the need for Southeast Asia to approach the problem in a holistic, complementary and time-bound manner.

The President cited the urgency for the regional grouping to dispel speculations that the region has become the main focus of terrorism.

The President said that ASEAN must address the perception that the network of international terrorism has shifted to Southeast Asia, stressing that it is now time to intensify security cooperation in the region.

The President reiterated the common sentiment of ASEAN leaders, sympathizing with Indonesia for the tragic bomb attacks in Bali that killed 180 people, many of them foreign tourists.

“For the second time, the bell has tolled for ASEAN and the world community to unite against a common menace threatening global peace and security,” the President told the other leaders attending the Eighth ASEAN Summit here.

As an immediate short-term measure, the President said ASEAN leaders should concentrate on enhancing security and security cooperation.

This, she said, is due to the fact that it is the perception that the region is a hotbed of terrorism that is discouraging the development of the sub-region.

The President said this could be initially addressed by using the existing hotlines and person-to-person contacts for coordinating anti-terrorist operations, sharing of airline passenger lists and shipping passenger manifests and the deployment of more law enforcement officials to identified illegal entry and exit points.

For the medium and long-term, the President said ASEAN could look to the strategic development plan already adopted by the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asian Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), as well as the investigative study of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1996 as a framework in fighting terrorism.

The President said it is only after the ASEAN has effectively addressed the problem of terrorism that the regional could maximize its growth potentials.

ASEAN leaders are under pressure to prove to the rest of the world that they can curb terrorism, especially in the light of warnings from the United States that more attacks could be staged in the region.

The US State Department earlier issued a statement expressing concern ‘that individuals and groups may be planning terrorist actions against US citizens and interests, as well as sites frequented by Westerners’ in Southeast Asia.

GMA, 9 other ASEAN leaders sign tourism agreement to enhance travel in region

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the nine leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed today a landmark Tourism Agreement aimed at strengthening the tourism industry and enhancing intra-regional travel among ASEAN member-countries.

The agreement was signed one by one by President Macapagal-Arroyo representing the Republic of the Philippines and the heads of state and government of Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam during the first day of the Eighth ASEAN Summit this afternoon at the Intercontinental Hotel here.

The region’s 10 leaders underscored the strategic importance of the tourism industry for sustainable socio-economic growth of the member-states.

They also noted the diversity in cultures, economy, and the complementary advantages across the region which would benefit the tourism development of ASEAN in the pursuit of improved regional quality of life, peace and prosperity.

The objectives of the agreement include the following:

- To cooperate in facilitating travel into and within ASEAN;
- To enhance cooperation in the tourism industry among ASEAN member-states in order to improve efficiency and competitiveness;
- To substantially reduce restrictions to trade in tourism and travel services among member-states;
- To establish an integrated network of tourism and travel services in order to maximize the complementary nature of the region's tourist attractions;
- To enhance the development and promotion of ASEAN as a single tourism destination with world-class standards, facilities and attractions;
- To enhance mutual assistance in human resource development and strengthen cooperation to develop, upgrade and expand tourism and travel facilities and services in the region; and
- To create favorable conditions for the public and private sectors to engage more deeply in tourism development, intra-ASEAN travel and investment in tourism services and facilities.

Under the agreement, the member-states shall facilitate travel within and into ASEAN by:

- Extending visa exemption arrangement for nationals of ASEAN member-states traveling within the region on the basis of bilateral visa exemption agreements;
- Harmonizing the procedures for issuing visas to international travelers;
- Phasing out travel levies and travel taxes on nationals of ASEAN member-states traveling to other member-states;
- Encouraging the use of smart cards for ASEAN business and frequent travelers and, where appropriate, for cross-border travel on the basis of bilateral agreements concluded between member-states that are ready to do so;
- Improving communications with international travelers through the use of universal symbols and multi-lingual signs and forms; and
- Easing the process of issuance of travel documents and progressively reducing all travel barriers.

The member-states shall also facilitate transport within and into ASEAN by:

- Cooperating in promoting accessibility by air to and amongst member-states through the progressive liberalization of air services;
- Improving the efficiency of airport management and other related services;
- Developing appropriate policies to encourage cruising, travel by ferries, and leisure boats by providing adequate infrastructure and facilitating seamless travel;
- Enhancing cooperation in developing measures in support of efficient and safe travel and tourism in terms of land transport and travel insurance; and
- Encouraging cooperation and commercial arrangements among ASEAN airlines.

On market access, the ASEAN member-states shall conduct continuous negotiations on trade in tourism services as provided for by the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services.

The agreement further says that member-states shall ensure quality tourism by undertaking the following measures:

- Encouraging all levels of government and local communities to carry out programs to ensure the preservation, conservation and promotion of the natural, cultural and historical heritage of member-states;
- Encouraging visitors to learn, respect and help preserve the natural, cultural and historical heritage of member-states;

- Encouraging where appropriate the adoption of environmental management standards and certification programs for sustainable tourism and for assessing and monitoring the impact of tourism on local communities, culture and nature, especially in environmentally and culturally sensitive areas;
- Promoting the use of environmentally sound technologies to preserve and conserve the natural heritage, the ecosystems and biodiversity and to protect endangered flora and fauna as well as micro-organisms;
- Strengthening measures to prevent tourism-related threats on and exploitation of cultural heritage and natural resources; and
- Taking stern measures to prevent tourism related abuse and exploitation of people, particularly women and children.

The agreement stipulates that member-states shall ensure the safety and security of travelers by stepping up cooperation among law-enforcement agencies in charge of tourist safety and security; intensifying the sharing of information on immigration matters among law enforcement agencies; and taking all necessary measures to ensure communications and assistance systems to deal with visitors' concerns.

Records showed that international arrivals to ASEAN in 2001 grew by 6.43 percent compared to the previous year, with some 41-million international visitors to ASEAN last year, marking an increase of 2.5 million in 2000.

It is estimated that that the tourism industry creates an annual revenue of about US\$26 billion for businesses in Southeast Asia.

ASEAN leaders accept RP invitation to Anti-Terror conference in Manila

PHNOM PENH (Via PLDT) – All the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) today formally accepted the invitation of the Philippine government to attend the International Conference on Anti-Terrorism and Tourism Recovery set for next week in Manila.

The acceptance of the invitation was contained in the declaration on terrorism issued by the 10 ASEAN member-states in their eighth summit here.

The ASEAN leaders issued a strong declaration projecting the region's strong determination to fight terrorism as they were concerned over the warnings of the United States that more attacks could be staged in the region.

The US State Department issued a statement expressing concern "that individuals and groups may be planning terrorist actions against US citizens and interests, as well as sites frequented by Westerners" in Southeast Asia.

In the declaration, the 10 countries in the region stressed that "we are determined to carry out and build on the specific measures outlined in the ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism, which we adopted in Brunei Darussalam in November 2001."

"We resolve to intensify our efforts collectively and individually to prevent, counter and suppress the activities of terrorist groups in the region. The ASEAN countries shall continue with practical cooperative measures among ourselves and with the international community," the declaration stated.

In the same declaration, ASEAN states lashed out at the members of the international community that tend to indiscriminately issuing travel advisories against trips to countries in Southeast Asia, warning that such actions serve no purpose but to help terrorists achieve their objectives.

"We call on the international community to avoid indiscriminately advising their citizens to refrain from visiting or dealing with our countries in the absence of established evidence to substantiate rumors of possible terrorist attacks, as such measures could only help achieve the objectives of the terrorists," the leaders stressed.

ASEAN nations also deplored “the tendency in some quarters to identify terrorism with particular religions or ethnic groups,” even as they denounced “once again the use of terror, with its toll on human life and society, in many places around the world for whatever cause and in the name of whatever religious or ethnic aspiration.”

Assuring the rest of the world of ASEAN’s determination to cooperate actively in mitigating the adverse impact of terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia, the leaders urged “the international community to support ASEAN’s effort to combat terrorism and restore business confidence in the region.”

ASEAN leaders also took advantage of the summit to air their collective condemnation of “the heinous terrorist attacks in Bali, Indonesia, and in the Philippine cities of Zamboanga and Quezon.”

“We extend our deepest sympathies to the families of those who died and to those who were injured. We express the solidarity of our countries with Indonesia and the Philippines and ASEAN full support for their determined pursuit of the terrorist elements responsible for the attacks,” the state leaders declared.

They likewise commended the Philippines and Indonesia “for their efforts to curtail terrorism within their borders and for their determination to step up those efforts.”

The conference in Manila was just among the activities the ASEAN set as part of the efforts to curb terrorism in the region.

The other activities include the regional conference on combating money-laundering and terrorist financing scheduled in Bali in December and the Intersessional Meeting on Terrorism of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah in March next year.

Asean leaders also agreed to hold a ministerial meeting on transnational crimes with ministerial counterparts from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea in Bangkok in October next year.

They likewise committed to establish a Regional Counter-Terrorism Center in November in Kuala Lumpur.

ASEAN, China pledge cooperation in field of non-traditional security issues

PHNOM PENH (Via PLDT) – Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China today issued a Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues.

In the Joint Declaration, China and the 10 ASEAN states pledged to cooperate in addressing the problems of terrorism, trafficking in illegal drugs, people smuggling including trafficking of women and children, sea piracy, arms smuggling, money laundering, international economic crime and cyber crime.

The 10 ASEAN members are the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, Myanmar, Lao, Vietnam and Cambodia.

The 11 countries committed to strengthen information exchange; personnel exchange and training as well as capacity-building; joint research on non-traditional security issues; and the exploration of other areas and modalities of cooperation.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo earlier today stressed before ASEAN leaders the urgency of efforts to further enhance person-to-person contacts for coordinating anti-terrorist operations; sharing of airline passenger lists and shipping passenger manifests; and the deployment of more law enforcement officials to identified illegal entry and exit points.

These measures, the President said, are necessary, if ASEAN is to erase the perception that the region is a hotbed for terrorism.

The 11 countries declared their commitment to “enhance their capacity in dealing with non-traditional security issues; promote their stability and development and safeguard regional peace and security.”

The 11 state leaders also committed to “task our Ministers concerned to follow up on the implementation of this declaration.”

The declaration also provides that ASEAN and China will “use existing ASEAN mechanisms, as far as possible, such as the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime and the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime, to pursue the cooperation.”

“Long-term and mid-term cooperation plans will be formulated based on the purposes and principles of the Joint Declaration to serve as guidance for cooperation,” the leaders stated.

They also announced the creation of ad hoc working groups for cooperation in relevant fields to implement the plans through ASEAN mechanisms, “supported by the competent authorities in ASEAN member-countries and China.”

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: November 4, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029131306/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov04.htm>

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RP sees significant rise in trade with China with Free Trade Act

PHNOM PEHN (PNA via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is optimistic that tension in the South China Sea, including the Spratlys, would be effectively diminished following today's signing of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.

Claimants to the disputed Spratly Islands finally committed to a code of conduct on the resolution of their conflicting claims, as they affixed their signature to the declaration.

The signatories to the agreement are Brunei Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Haji Mohamed Bolkiah, China Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi, Cambodia Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Hor Namhong, Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Hassan Wirayuda of Indonesia, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Somsavat Lengsavad and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar of Malaysia, Foreign Affairs Minister Foreign Affairs Minister Win Aung of the Union of Myanmar, Secretary Blas Ople, Singapore Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar, Thailand Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai and Vietnam Foreign Minister Nguyen Dy Nien.

The signing was witnessed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and other heads of state of the claimant countries attending the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) summit, as well as Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji.

“The signing would contribute significantly towards building trust and good neighborliness among countries in the region. The signing also manifests the parties' commitment to the maintenance of peace and stability which are requisites to regional growth and development,” Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye quoted President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as saying.

The document declares that the claimants would no longer engage in the construction of new structures in the disputed territories, to avoid further conflict, and ensure the peaceful resolution to the issue.

“The parties undertake to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability including, among others, refraining from action of inhabiting on the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, cays and other features and to handle their differences in a constructive manner,” the document declared.

It also states that the parties shall “undertake to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force, through friendly consultations and negotiations by sovereign states directly concerned, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.”

While the declaration is not as binding as a formal agreement or a treaty among the claimants, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro Baja earlier said the document will likely bind the six parties to work for the peaceful resolution of the dispute.

Although it does not specifically declare the areas covered by the declaration, Baja explained that the mere mention of South China Sea already indicates that it includes the Spratly Islands disputed by the Philippines, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, along with the Scarborough Shoal being claimed also by Manila and Beijing, and the Paracel Islands which is subject of conflict between China and Vietnam.

The declaration likewise aired the commitment of the signatories “to enhancing the principles and objectives of the 1997 Joint Statement of the Meeting of the Heads of State/Government of the member-states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the president of the Peoples’ Republic of China.

In the same declaration, the claimants committed to hold dialogue and exchange of views between their defense and military officials and exchange relevant information.

At the same time, the agreed to undertake cooperative activities in the disputed territories including marine environment protection, marine scientific research, safety of navigation and communication at sea, search and rescue operation, and combating transnational crime, including, but not limited to illicit drugs, piracy and armed robbery at sea and illegal traffic in arms.

GMA optimistic signing of Code of Conduct to reduce tension in South China Sea

PHNOM PENH (Via PLDT) – Philippine trade officials are optimistic that the country’s trade surplus with China would significantly go up following the conclusion of a framework agreement between Beijing and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to establish a free trade area.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II and Philippine International Trading Corp. president and chief executive officer Anthony Abad said the Philippines anxiously looks forward to taking a share of China’s market of 1.7 billion consumers as it joins the nine other ASEAN members – Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar – in signing the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation with China.

The Framework Agreement sets the tone for the establishment of an ASEAN-China Free Trade Area within 10 years.

Abad said the framework agreement seeks to open the gateway to talks between ASEAN and China for a free trade agreement that is expected to allow Southeast Asian nations to penetrate the Chinese market which has a combined gross domestic product of \$1.5 trillion to \$2 trillion and two-way trade of \$1.2 trillion.

The framework binds ASEAN member-states and China “to begin negotiations next year on the creation of an ASEAN-China Free Trade Area within a decade, aimed at liberalizing trade in goods and services and developing a transparent and liberal investment regime.”

The agreement, which will come into force on July 1, 2003, is expected to facilitate the elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade in goods and services over a period of 10 years.

Trade and Industry Secretary Roxas sees the agreement as a means to promote the economic integration of ASEAN and bridge the development gap among the member-states.

The agreement also contains a provision for an early harvest of goods and services with reduced tariff rates within three years, as well as the simplification and standardization of customs procedures.

“We hope to be able to avail of those flexibilities for ourselves,” Roxas said, as he assured that the Philippines would not be left at the losing end, once the free trade agreement comes into full force.

Roxas assured that the free trade agreement “will have a feature... something called an early harvest where ASEAN will be able to harvest or benefit earlier than China.”

By early harvest, Roxas explained the Philippines will be able to gain greater access to the Chinese market “ahead of their having similar access to us.”

Abad noted that the Philippines has a recourse it can take, to be able to survive competition, even with the free trade with China, adding that there are relief measures available to “industries that are challenged by Chinese products or products coming from any other part of the world.”

He said the Philippines could invoke agreements with the World Trade Organization (WTO) providing for safeguards against unfair competition for Philippine local industries that are in distress.

“Philippine industries that require time to adjust its WTO obligations can impose a safeguard measure, which may be an increase in tariffs across-the-board on a particular product, provided that the Philippine industry which is in trouble, or requires rehabilitation is rehabilitated,” Abad said.

He stressed that “the challenge now is for ASEAN to become more integrated as a single economy that we are able to provide counter-weight against China and become also more competitive with economies of scale.”

GMA, other ASEAN leaders sign framework pact with China for economic cooperation

PHNOM PENH (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the nine other leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed with Chinese leaders last night a framework agreement on comprehensive economic cooperation that includes elements of the establishment of an ASEAN-China Free Trade Area within 10 years.

The President and the leaders of China, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar individually affixed their signature to the agreement during ceremonies following the ASEAN+China Summit at the Intercontinental Hotel here.

Under the Framework Agreement, a free trade area covering trade in goods, services and investment will be realized for Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand by 2010. The free trade area will be extended to the newer ASEAN members by 2015.

In signing the framework agreement, the ASEAN and Chinese leaders recognized the important role of the private sector and the need to promote future business opportunities.

In expanding trade and investment, the leaders of ASEAN and China expressed their desire to minimize barriers and deepen economic ties, creating bigger and more efficient market with greater opportunities and economies of scale.

The Framework Agreement is designed to strengthen economic cooperation between Southeast Asia and China by progressively liberalizing and promoting trade in goods and services while creating a transparent and liberal investment regime.

Leaders of both sides likewise agreed to explore new areas and develop appropriate measures for closer cooperation and to facilitate the more effective integration of the newer ASEAN members and to bridge the development gap among countries.

The agreement also calls for both the ASEAN and Chinese leaders to progressively eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers on “substantially all” trade in goods while taking similar steps to free trade in services.

ASEAN and China also agreed to establish an “open and competitive” investment regime, which provides for “special and differential treatment” and “flexibility” for the newer members of ASEAN to address the sensitive sectors of any of the contracting parties.

Measures to make trade and investment easier include simplifying customs procedures and concluding mutual-recognition agreements.

To accelerate trade liberalization, the agreement provides for an “Early Harvest” program for selected agricultural items, which covers eight chapters ranging from live animals, meat, fish, dairy and other animal products to live trees and vegetables as well as fruits and nuts.

For services, ASEAN and Chinese leaders agreed to explore the feasibility of an “Early Harvest” program early 2003.

They also agreed to strengthen cooperation in five priority sectors of agriculture, information and communications technology, human resource development, investment and Mekong River Basin development.

Cooperation between the two parties will be extended to other areas including banking, finance, tourism, industrial cooperation, transport, telecommunications, intellectual property rights, small and medium-sized enterprises, the environment, biotechnology, fisheries, forestry and forest products, mining, energy and sub-regional development.

Measures to promote and facilitate trade and investment include the assessment of standards and conformance, technical barriers to trade, non-tariff measures and cooperation in the area of customs.

Other steps to strengthen cooperation also include increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, promoting electronic commerce, capacity building and technology transfer.

Under the time frames for implementing the agreement, negotiations to reduce and eliminate tariffs will start early next year and be concluded by mid-2004. For services and investment, negotiations will start early next year and be concluded as expeditiously as possible.

During the signing ceremonies, China accorded Most-Favored Nation treatment to Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Vietnam, three ASEAN countries that are not yet members of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The agreement also stipulates for the protection of national security and articles of artistic, historic and archaeological value as well as public morals along with human, animal or plant life and health. It likewise provides for a dispute-settlement mechanism to be set up within a year of the agreement coming into force on July 1, 2003.

Negotiations between ASEAN and Chinese leaders are to be carried out by an existing body known as the ASEAN-China Trade Negotiation Committee, which will report regularly to ASEAN Economic Ministers and China’s Ministry of Foreign Trade on the progress and outcomes of negotiations, with support from the ASEAN secretariat and China.

PMS adopts novel computer leasing program

In this age of rapid advancement in information technology (IT), buying hundreds of new computers can saddle an organization with obsolete IT in a few years, when faster, more powerful and cheaper machines hit the market. One solution: lease PCs, thus cutting costs while constantly equipping with the latest hardware.

That is what the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) of the Office of the President has done in a novel agreement with IBM Philippines, Inc. and the latter's business partner, Advance Solutions, Inc, PMS will lease 300 desktop and 45 laptop computers for P8.1 million a year, renewable for two more years.

The lease agreement breaks new ground in government IT procurement, where purchasing remains the norm. Leasing PC workstations could lower the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). The three-year contract will provide PMS officials and personnel with the latest desktop and notebook PCs while keeping expenditure down at a time of budget constraints. The agreement comes with full service maintenance, training and on-call technicians.

In addition, as a unique public-service feature of the agreement, the Advance Solutions, Inc. agreed to donate the 345 computers to the Department of Education (DepEd) or to any public schools designated by DepEd for their IT program at the end of the lease period in 2005. Thus, the deal will enhance information technology not only at the highest levels of government, but among Filipino schoolchildren as well.

The Office of the President and the PMS are finalizing three other contracts for the lease of computer servers, printers and other support equipment for the OP/PMS to use in critical applications such as secure e-mail and other support requirements in Malacañang.

No mass layoff of 7,000 state workers Boncodin assures public for the nth time

Secretary Emilia Boncodin of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) today called on the media to be more objective in their reporting as she assured the public for the nth time that there will be no mass layoff of some 7,000 state employees.

In a radio interview, Boncodin said she could not understand why some sectors in the media continued to report the so-called mass layoff when she has been saying all along that this is not going to happen.

"Let us not conclude that there will be a lay-off of 7,000 and I would like to appeal to the media and to all those who are making all these pronouncements," Boncodin said.

Boncodin clarified that there is indeed an ongoing study on the operation of some 14 small government agencies whose functions may have overlapped with those of other agencies or are so small that their functions could be merged with other existing offices.

"Ang sinasabi ko ay pinag-aaralan namin ang mga opisinang ito na ang kabuuan nga ay 7,000 ang empleyado para-i-improve ang operations nila (What I have said is that we are still studying how we can improve the operations of these agencies that have a total of 7,000 employees)," Boncodin said.

She said she could not understand the logic or the conclusion arrived at by some media practitioners that this would mean the outright dismissal of 7,000 employees.

"Ang concept natin ay i-streamline ang operations (Our concept is to streamline the operations)," Boncodin said.

One example that Boncodin cited was the National Printing Office (NPO), whose operations, she said, are now being reviewed.

According to Boncodin, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye has assured her that the NPO is willing to improve its operations to make it more efficient and profitable.

GMA thanks Asian nations for supporting Philippine bid for seat in U.N. Security Council

PHNOM PENH (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has expressed her sincere appreciation for the other Asian countries’ endorsement of the Philippine bid for a seat in the United Nations Security Council in 2004-2005.

In a statement she issued at the ASEAN+3 summit conference yesterday, the President assured the nine other leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the heads of Japan, South Korea and China that the Philippines will do its best to “represent Asia’s vision and role in world peace and stability, and to stand, on our own behalf and for the group, in service of our collective interest within the larger community of nations.”

During the ASEAN+3 summit, the President also invited the governments of Japan, South Korea and China to an international Conference on Anti-Terrorism and Tourism Recovery in Manila towards this weekend.

The President said she would like to invite participants not only from ASEAN – which is composed of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam – but also from China, Japan, and Korea to join the conference, especially since tourism in the region has been severely affected by terrorist incidents.

In this connection, she conveyed her thanks and appreciation that Japan, Korea and China are the Philippines’ biggest tourist markets.

The President, at the same time, joined the other ASEAN members in appealing to all nations not to issue discouraging travel advisories, saying that the members of the regional grouping are, more than ever, working together to protect tourist destinations from terrorist attacks.

As part of the joint anti-terrorist activities, the President said that the Philippines will host in December or early next year Multilateral Seminar Games on Emergency Responses to terrorist threats.

The President likewise invited the security, defense and police officials of Japan, South Korea and China to participate in these seminar games.

She noted that the Philippine government is hosting these games in compliance with one of the initiatives in last year’s ASEAN summit meeting in Brunei Darussalam.

The President explained that the Simulation Games would be a practicum in security cooperation where existing hotlines and person-to-person contacts for coordinating anti-terrorist operations would be put to the test.

She also said that through these games, the sharing of airline passenger lists and shipping passenger manifests to fix and apprehend suspects could be explored.

According to the President, the Seminar Games could also simulate the deployment of more law enforcement officials to identified entry and exit points used by potential terrorists.

The President likewise emphasized the need for developed countries to exert more efforts in opening their markets.

She expressed the hope that developed countries in East Asia would consider providing more funds and resources for capacity-building to enhance supply-side capacities, improve private sector competitiveness, implement trade agreements, and meet continuing obligations under those agreements.

Asean, Japan sign joint declaration on comprehensive economic partnership

PHNOM PENH — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the other leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Japan signed today a joint declaration on Comprehensive Economic Partnership that would further expand trade and boost growth between the 10-member regional grouping and Japan.

The declaration, which was signed on the second day of the two-day ASEAN summit here, underscored the importance of economic partnerships and linkages between the 10-member grouping and Japan in promoting not only economic growth but also political stability in the region.

“We viewed that a comprehensive economic partnership between ASEAN and Japan would provide greater market opportunities to their economies, through the creation of larger and new markets and enabling the industries to enjoy bigger economies of scale, and that such partnership would bring about greater stability and prosperity to this region, nurturing a sense of community between ASEAN and Japan,” the declaration said.

The declaration said that by the year 2020, the export value from ASEAN to Japan would increase by \$20,630 million, which would be equivalent to 44.2 percent of that in the base year 1997. The export value from Japan to ASEAN would also increase by \$20,022 million, which would be equivalent to 27.5 percent of that in the base year.

The leaders also recognized that ASEAN and Japan should seek broad-based economic partnership to cover not only liberalization of trade and investments but also trade and investment promotion and facilitation measures such as those involving customs procedures, standard conformance and non-tariff measures.

Through the declaration, ASEAN and Japan also sought co-operation in such areas as financial services, information and communications technology, science and technology, human resource development, small and medium enterprises, tourism, transport, energy and food security.

The leaders decided that ASEAN and Japan should develop a framework that would provide a basis for concrete plans and elements towards realizing an ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership “in accordance with such guiding principles as comprehensiveness of countries and sectors, reciprocity and mutual benefits.”

The leaders also affirmed the need for providing “special and differential treatment” to developing countries in ASEAN in accordance with World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements. There is also a need for “additional flexibility” for new members of ASEAN, referring to Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam.

The declaration was signed by Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan of Brunei Darussalam; Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia; President Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; Prime Minister Bounnhang Vorachith of Laos; Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad of Malaysia; Prime Minister Senior General Than Shwe of Myanmar; President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines; Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore; Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand; and Prime Minister Phan Van Khai of Vietnam.

GMA welcomes China’s growing cooperation in regional affairs

PHNOM PENH (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today welcomed China’s growing cooperation and participation in regional affairs, particularly in economic development and security concerns.

The President cited in particular the signing of the Framework Agreement on Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-China Comprehensive Economic Cooperation, the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the ASEAN-China Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the field of non-traditional security issues.

The President said the framework agreement on economic cooperation signed yesterday on the first day of the Eighth ASEAN Summit at the Intercontinental Hotel here is the appropriate legal instrument to define the vision and future direction of the ASEAN-China economic relationship.

She said that the signing of the agreement was an occasion for the nations of ASEAN to reflect on “our own economies to determine how best we can position ourselves to ensure the continued competitiveness of our exports and capitalize on the opportunities presented by a more open China.”

She said it is imperative that the implementation of the framework agreement ensures economic growth, employment, and development for all.

According to the President, if the parties concerned do not benefit from it, the benefits of trade liberalization could be put in doubt and the system could lose credibility.

This could undermine the ability to mobilize support for trade policy reforms, she stressed.

She thus emphasized the need for flexibility in order to have a realistic implementation process of the Free Trade Area components.

The President Macapagal-Arroyo also welcomed China's participation not only in the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation Project but also in the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area or BIMP-EAGA.

She also reiterated her invitation to China to explore opportunities for human resources and product development on food and energy in the BIMP-EAGA sub-region.

On the signing of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, the President said Asean and China deserve accolade from the entire community of nations after working, sometimes contentiously, for over three years on the document.

She said she is proud of the role played by the Philippines in this effort.

Immediately after the 1998 Hanoi Plan of Action called for efforts to establish a Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, the Philippines shepherded the draft through various amendments and proposals.

In 1999, ASEAN submitted an initial draft to China and, in January 2000, ASEAN adopted the Philippine proposal to establish a task team to focus on the code. By October of the same year, China and ASEAN came up with three consolidated texts, each time narrowing the differences between them.

During the ASEAN+China Summit, the President said the Philippines is also honored that its fellow ASEAN claimant-countries nominated Senior Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro Baja, Jr. to represent them in the initialing of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea

The President also expressed the hope that through the ASEAN-China Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the field of non-traditional security issues, China would help in addressing terrorism, trafficking in illegal drugs, human smuggling, sea piracy, arms smuggling, money laundering and cyber crime.

GMA joins call for North Korea to abandon nuke arms development

PHNOM PENH (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today joined the call for North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons development program and open up to the rest of the world.

The President raised the warning at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ASEAN+Korea summit at the Hotel Intercontinental here.

Addressing the leaders of ASEAN and Korea, the President said the Philippines associates itself with the views of the Republic of Korea on the situation in the Korean Peninsula.

She specifically cited the Philippine position favoring the call for the peaceful disarmament of North Korea and the need for the communist state to implement reforms.

The President also warned that the development of nuclear weapons by North Korea could threaten regional stability.

In the same meeting, President Macapagal-Arroyo cited the common stand of the Philippines and the Republic of Korea against terrorism, adding that she foresees the building of strongest alliance among East Asian nations.

The President likewise lauded the efforts of the Republic of Korea, particularly its role in the establishment of the East Asia Vision Group and the East Asia Study Group.

The creation of the two groups was proposed by Korean President Kim Dae-Jung to provide a concrete framework by which ASEAN members as well as China, Japan and Korea can pursue their collective vision of a united East Asian community.

GMA cites India's vital contribution to Southeast Asian growth

PHNOM PENH (via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited India's increasing involvement in and vital contribution to Southeast Asia's development arising from its "Look East" policy.

In her remarks during the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) + India meeting at 2:00 p.m. (Cambodia time), the Chief Executive said India's world renowned information technology capabilities, as well as its advancements in science and technology, must be the pillars of ASEAN-India cooperation.

On the part of the Philippines, the President said that in addition to information and communications technology (ICT), the country enjoys a unique partnership with India in the fight against poverty in the Philippines.

To provide affordable medicines for the vast majority of the Filipino people, the President said the Philippines imports medicine and materials for medicine from India.

The President said this is in recognition of the advanced capability and competence of India's pharmaceutical industry.

She said she looks forward to expanding the country's relationship with India to address the need for affordable but quality medicines for the Filipino people, particularly the poor.

The President likewise welcomed Indian Prime Minister Atal Vajpajee to the ASEAN fold.

The inaugural ASEAN-Summit in Cambodia marks a milestone in the relations between ASEAN and India which began a decade ago with India being admitted as a sectoral dialogue partner in 1992 in the areas of trade and investment, science and technology and tourism.

The ASEAN-India Summit here also provided an important venue to chart the strategic direction towards strengthening ties and fostering closer economic integration between Southeast Asia and South Asia.

India was elevated to a full dialogue partner of ASEAN in December 1995 and it participated in the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, the Post Ministerial Conference and the ASEAN Regional Forum in July 1996 in Jakarta.

In 1998, ASEAN-India relations developed further through intensified cooperation in human resources development, science and technology, with India extending its technical and economic cooperation programs to ASEAN.

This year, India has agreed to assist in the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI), adopting ICT as a major thrust of the cooperative efforts.

In politics and security, India can contribute to the regional balance of power that impacts on the stability, peace and prosperity of Asia.

Strengthening its relations with ASEAN and East Asia is the focus of its “Look East” policy initiated by India in 1991 and the realization of the ASEAN-India Summit is a major achievement in this policy.

GMA: Signing of Code of Conduct to allow claimants to focus energies on development

PHNOM PENH (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the signing of the Declaration of the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea will finally allow parties to the territorial disputes to shift their energies and resources towards broader cooperation in economic and social development.

The President issued the statement a day after the signing of the declaration which Senior Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro Baja, Jr. had described as “essentially a Philippine draft.”

“The document should give our people peace of mind. It is also important to the stability and progress of Asia,” the President said.

The signing of the declaration, the President said, has turned the South China Sea from a major flashpoint in Asia to “an avenue for shared prosperity.”

“Now we can ease our anxieties. Under the declaration, all claimants are now committed to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes through peaceful means without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with the recognized principles of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,” the President said.

The President said “the claimants have also agreed to hold dialogues and exchange of views among their defense and military officials.”

“They will also step up coordinative activities to combat transnational crime and terrorism” she added.

The President cited the years of effort the Philippines had put in, trying to forge an agreement among the claimants to the disputed territories in South China Sea, particularly the Spratlys for the resolution of the issue.

“I would like to commend the entire government team headed by the Department of Foreign Affairs that worked on this issue over several years,” she said.

Now that anxieties over the dispute in the Spratlys, Scarborough Shoal and Paracel Islands have settled down, the President said “ASEAN and China could now shift their energies and resources towards broader cooperation in economic and social development.”

“This would mean ultimately, more jobs, and economic opportunities for the people, and the speedier alleviation of poverty in the region and in the Philippines,” she said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: November 5, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030063349/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov05.htm>

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Palace: new amnesty plan to be submitted to Congress for concurrence

Malacañang today said that a new presidential proclamation that would extend amnesty to members of rebel groups in the country would be submitted to both houses of Congress for concurrence.

In an interview, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said that the National Amnesty Commission (NAC) would brief the Cabinet early next week on the proposed amnesty proclamation.

Ermita explained that there are now a total of 2,603 applications for amnesty that the NAC could not act on because there is no applicable amnesty proclamation.

The last amnesty proclamation, issued during the term of former President Joseph Estrada, expired last August 2001, Ermita said.

According to Ermita, the offer of amnesty to members of the New People's Army (NPA) and other anti-government groups has nothing to do with the declaration of the CPP-NPA by the United States and European Union as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO).

He said that the NAC has submitted drafts of a new amnesty proclamation in August and September this year, or even before the inclusion of the CPP-NPA in the list of FTOs by the US and the EU.

Ermita said that the Cabinet would deliberate on what kind of amnesty would be offered, whether it would be general, conditional or selective as well as when it will take effect and for how long.

On the report that the CPP-NPA has scuttled the peace process with the government, Ermita said that the government side has not received any official communication in this regard from Luis Jalandoni, official negotiator of the National Democratic Front (NDF), the political arm of the CPP-NPA.

Ermita said that what has been reported could be just individual reactions to the inclusion of the CPP-NPA as well as CPP founder and former chairman, Jose Maria Sison, in the list of terrorist individuals and groups by the US and the European community.

Growth in exports, inflation rate drop sure signs of RP economy rebound, GMA tells Filipinos in Hanoi

HANOI, Vietnam — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that the growth in exports and the continued decline in the inflation and interest rates in the Philippines are sure indicators that the country's economy is in for a rebound.

In her remarks before members of the Filipino community here, the President said the almost 20 percent growth in Philippine exports has surprised even Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and business executives in the Silicon Valley.

The President starts her two-day state visit here after attending the Eighth ASEAN Summit held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The President said that based on the reports from Manila, the inflation rate in October slowed down to 2.7 percent from the 2.9 percent in September this year.

"Ang layunin natin ay para bumuti ang ating ekonomiya at magkaroon ng trabaho ang ating mga mamamayan (Our goal is to improve the economy and provide jobs for our countrymen)," the President told her audience.

The President also cited the 40 percent growth in Philippine tourism despite the terrorist threats in the Southern Philippines and in Metro Manila.

Earlier in Phnom Penh, the President said that the country's inflation rate is at its lowest point over a decade and the country's economic growth is among the highest in Asia.

"We have done significant reforms, including anti-money laundering, privatization, banking asset reforms, among others," the President said.

Because of the decline in inflation rate, the President said, prices of prime commodities in the Philippines have not gone up, adding that the price of ordinary rice has been pegged at P14 to P15 per kilo while the well-milled rice is at P18 per kilo.

In a statement, the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP) said that the average inflation rate of 3.2 percent for the first 10 months of this year remains consistent with the BSP's assessment of a benign inflation environment for the remainder of 2002.

"Against a backdrop of benign future inflation, the BSP believes that the current monetary policy stance remains appropriately supportive of the economy's growth objective while guarding firmly against price pressures," the BSP said.

The President said that reports reaching her from the Department of Agriculture also indicated that there would be a bumper crop this year.

The DA said that good weather and increased government support to rice farmers are expected to push the 2002 domestic palay production to a new record of 13.11 million metric ton (MT), up by 1.2 percent from last year's high of 12.95 MT.

Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor reported that despite initial expectations of output declining to 12.68 million MT due to a prolonged dry spell in the second quarter, government intervention is expected to lead to a rebound in the fourth quarter.

Montemayor said that sufficient rainfall in the third quarter, coupled with the government's quick turnaround (QTA) planting scheme for rice, is expected to increase palay production in the fourth quarter by as much as 440,000 MT.

A National Statistics Office (NSO) said that year-on-year inflation slowed down to 2.7 percent in October from 2.9 percent in September this year as the inflation rates of food, beverages and tobacco (FBT) and housing and repairs (H&R) went down, comparatively taking into account the 5.5 inflation rate a year ago.

The NSO said that the country's merchandise export performance increased by 16.8 percent this September, with both electronics component and manufactured goods accelerating by 17 percent and 17.1 percent, respectively.

The NSO report noted that the inflation rate in the National Capital Region (NCR) decreased by 0.3 percentage point to 2.6 percent in October from 2.9 percent in September, the lowest inflation since February 2000. This was brought about by the slowdown in the inflation rates of FBT, H&R and fuel, light and water (FLW).

Inflation rate in areas outside the NCR remained at its September rate of 2.8 percent as mixed trends were observed in the regions.

The NSO report also said that for September 2002, merchandise exports earnings went up by 16.8 percent to \$3.190 billion from \$2.731 billion during the same month a year ago.

The top four export earners as of September this year are:

- Electronic components, accounting for 53 percent of the aggregate export revenue for the month, increased by 17.0 percent to \$1.690 billion from \$1.445 billion last year;
- Apparel and clothing accessories remained as the country's second top earner with a combined share of 8.1 percent and an aggregate receipt of \$257.62 million or 39.4 percent higher than \$184.82 million a year ago;
- Products manufactured from materials imported on consignment basis, ranked third with a total revenue of \$50.51 million reflecting a 21.3 percent increase from \$41.64 million last year;
- Coconut oil ranked fourth with sales amounting to \$45.46 million, a year-on-year growth of 75.8 percent from \$25.87 million;

GMA arrives in Hanoi for two-day state visit

HANOI, Vietnam (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived at the Noi Bai International Airport at exactly 10:00 a.m. (Hanoi time) on board a chartered Philippine Airlines plane from Phnom Penh where she attended the ASEAN Summit.

The President and her delegation were received warmly at the airport by ranking officials of the Vietnam government.

In her two-day state visit here, the President is accompanied by Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, Presidential Management Staff Head Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr., Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro Baja, and Anthony Abad, former National Food Authority administrator and now the president and CEO of the Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC).

From Noi Bai International Airport, the President and her official party motored to the Melia Hanoi Hotel, where they are to be billeted.

Upon arrival at the hotel, the President took a one-hour rest before meeting the members of the Filipino community here.

In her impromptu speech, the President informed the 100 Filipinos, who attended the meeting, on the ongoing programs and developments of her two-year-old administration.

After the Fil-com meeting, the President motored to the Presidential Palace for a courtesy call on President Tran Duc Loung.

Immediately after her call, the President will have an expanded bilateral meeting and signing ceremony at the Presidential Palace.

She is also expected to meet with Prime Minister Phan Vai Khai at the Government's Office.

The President will also meet Nong Duc Manh, general secretary of the Communist Party.

At 8:00 tonight, she will be the guest at a state banquet hosted by Vietnamese President Loung.

On her second day of visit here, the President is expected to make a short visit at the Hao Chi Minh Mausoleum and will go back to the Presidential Palace for a farewell call on Loung before flying back to Manila.

Statement issued by the office of the National Security Adviser

On the initiative of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, per instructions she gave on the day she departed 24 October 2002 for the APEC Meeting, the Philippines is hosting an International Conference on International Terrorism and Tourism Recovery to be held 8-9 November 2002.

Participants are senior officials from ASEAN countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and the Philippines) and the U.S., China, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Canada, U.K., Australia. Interpol will also participate.

Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon will be the presiding officer in the session on Tourism, which will discuss the effects of terrorism on tourism.

National Security Adviser Roilo Golez will be the presiding officer in the session on International Terrorism which will discuss the terrorism threats and what measures can be taken by the participating countries and entities.

The discussions on terrorism will revolve around the presentations to be given by a powerhouse panel of presentors, namely:

- Head of the Terrorism Directorate, Interpol to make a presentation on Global Threat Assessment
- Head of the Counterterrorism Center of the US Department of State
- Ambassador for International Counterterrorism Cooperation of Japan
- Deputy Chief of Criminal Investigation of Indonesian National Police (who is the one overseeing the investigation of the Bali bombing)
- First Assistant Secretary, International Security Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
- DILG Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., on the 10-point Police Community Anti-Terrorism Plan of the Philippines
- Ambassador of U.K. to discuss Counterterrorism: the British Experience
- Assistant Director General, NSC, Philippines, on the 14-point Counterterrorism program of the Philippine government

The immediate and positive response of the participating countries on such a very short notice is indicative of the leadership of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the region in the fight against international terrorism.

The objectives of the conference are:

1. To learn from the experience of countries, particularly those who have been victimized by terrorist attacks.
2. To reach a common position on the threat of terrorism.

3. To forge cooperation among countries in the fight against terrorism (i.e. framework for a crisis plan)
4. To identify doable projects to counter terrorism

The Chairman of the Conference is Secretary Blas F. Ople while Secretary Gordon and Secretary Golez are co-chairmen.

GMA: RP's balance of trade with China proves Manila to gain out of free trade with Beijing

PHNOM PENH — The balance of trade between the Philippines and China after the latter's entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO) indicated that Beijing will not gobble up the economy of Manila even with free trade.

This was the argument raised by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Tuesday night's press conference at the Hotel Intercontinental here after the signing of Thailand's accession to the agreement on exchange of information among the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia.

"Before China entered WTO last year, our trade imbalance was US\$300 million. After China entered the WTO, we have a positive balance of trade with China to the tune of US\$700 million," the President said.

Even before its accession to WTO agreements, the President said "China has in fact assured us that she is not interested in gobbling up all our countries. She is interested in being a good citizen of the international trading community."

The President added that the fact that all 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation with China was a clear proof that not one of them see free trade with Beijing as disadvantageous to their respective economies.

The framework signed between ASEAN members and China opens the gateway to further talks for a free trade agreement that is expected to allow Southeast Asian nations to penetrate the Chinese market which has a combined gross domestic product of US\$15 trillion to US\$2 trillion and two-way trade of US\$1.2 trillion.

"The fact is that all 10 ASEAN countries signed and we're determined to take advantage of the (trade) opportunities (with China)," the President said.

But she was quick to add that "of course, we will protect ourselves against the threat by maximizing the flexibilities that we asserted during the negotiations."

Among these flexibilities embodied in the framework was the provision for an early harvest of goods and services with reduced tariff rates within three years, as well as the simplification and standardization of Custom procedures.

Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II earlier explained that under the framework, Asean member-economies will be able to harvest or benefit from free trade earlier than China.

Roxas explained the early harvest provision to mean that the Philippines will be able to gain greater market access to China "ahead of their having similar access to US."

GMA accomplishes goals in Cambodia trip

PHNOM PENH — Philippine officials wrapped up their work at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) here, confident that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo accomplished the goals she set for her administration during the summit.

In an interview, Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II said what was significant in the President's trip to Cambodia was that she was able to strengthen the Philippines' linkages not only with Asean members, but even with Japan, China, Republic of Korea and India.

The two-day meeting of ASEAN leaders also included the ASEAN-China, ASEAN-Korea and ASEAN-India summit, expanding the talks to include other countries in Asia beyond the 10 regular members of the regional grouping.

According to Roxas, a major accomplishment of the President's trip is that the Philippines was able to prove that we are serious about fighting terrorism as reflected in the ASEAN Declaration, and is committed to promote tourism and further enhance trade with other ASEAN members as well as with Japan, China, South Korea and India.

The declaration on anti-terrorism alone, Roxas said, was already a clear indication that ASEAN countries are committed to addressing the problem of international terrorism.

"And this increases the attractiveness, not only of the Philippines, but even of the rest of ASEAN, to investors," Roxas said.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople said the summit displayed the ASEAN members' determination to expand economic cooperation and raise standards of regional security amid persistent talks of Al-Qaeda terrorist cells penetrating the Southeast Asian region.

Ople also cited the forging of the landmark agreement to promote ASEAN as a single tourist destination with improved security and favorable conditions for all travelers, as a dramatic response to adverse travel advisories being issued by the United States and other countries.

"This tourism agreement underscores the strong commitment of ASEAN to fight against unfair propaganda meant to depict the sub-region as an alleged hotbed of terrorism. ASEAN as a tourism brand name will be collectively carried by all member-countries," he said.

Ople likewise cited the signing of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea among claimants to the disputed territories in the area, as a major accomplishment of the Philippine government.

"What began as a Philippine initiative four years ago is now historic agreement that upholds peaceful means of resolving territorial and jurisdictional issues between and among these member countries with China," Ople said.

19 countries confirm participation in international tourism, terrorism meet

HANOI, Vietnam (Via PLDT) — The Department of Foreign Affairs today said at least 19 countries have already confirmed that they are taking part in the International Conference on International Terrorism and Tourism Recovery to be held in Manila on Friday and Saturday.

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Political Affairs Lauro Baja said leading the list of countries attending the conference are the nine other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea and China.

Aside from the Philippines, the other ASEAN members are Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.

Baja said that the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila confirmed that these countries are sending at least 75 representatives to the conference.

GMA pledges RP support for Viet admission in WTO

HANOI, Vietnam (VIA PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today pledged the Philippine government’s continued support to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam’s bid into the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In her opening statement during the bilateral meeting with Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong at the Presidential Palace here, the Chief Executive said the Philippines will continue to strongly endorse Vietnam’s bid for admission into the WTO.

She added that Vietnam’s admission as a WTO member would further enhance its pursuit of integration and competitiveness in the global economy.

The President, however, said that the struggle for economic competitiveness of both the Philippines and Vietnam need a foundation of security – an environment where people and commerce can feel safe as they go about the business of nation building.

In this connection, the President urged President Tran Duc Luong to work together with the Philippine government to eradicate the murderous destructiveness of terrorism.

President Macapagal-Arroyo stressed that in light of present realities, there is a dire need for greater cooperation in combating terrorism.

She invited Vietnam to accede to the Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communication Procedures which the Philippines signed together with Indonesia and Malaysia last May, and which was acceded to by Cambodia last July and by Thailand yesterday (November 5) during the Eighth ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The President stressed that the agreement is a model tool for transnational cooperation in the common fight against terrorism. She added that this would be logical for Vietnam, which has been very active in the international community of nations.

She likewise thanked Vietnam for its support to the Philippine effort to formulate a framework to guide the behavior of stakeholders in the South China Sea with the signing of the Regional Code of Conduct.

She also expressed the hope that the two countries can finally resolve the issue of the remaining Vietnamese nationals in the Philippines.

The President noted that many of them have expressed their desire to settle in the Philippines. But there are also those who wish to return to their homeland, she added.

“We hope that Vietnam will continue to accept and facilitate the process of repatriation,” the President said.

“I assure you that we welcome them because they have become law-abiding and productive members of Philippine society and a reminder of the friendship and fraternity between our two countries,” she added.

Earlier, President Macapagal-Arroyo thanked the Vietnamese leader for the warm and gracious hospitality that the people and government of Vietnam have accorded her and her official delegation.

She also congratulated the Vietnamese leader for his country’s good economic performance and congratulated him for the successful conduct of in Vietnam with a 100-percent voters turnout. The President was referring to the re-election of a number of key officials of Vietnam, including President Tran Duc Luong.

President Tran Duc Luong described the Filipino leader’s two-day state visit to Vietnam as coming at a “crucial time for both our countries in the context of changes in regional and in work situation.”

He said the President's visit is "a wonderful opportunity for a new momentum for the growth of our relations."

"It is a good opportunity for us to see each other after the Asean Summit in Cambodia," the Vietnamese President said.

GMA hails Filipinos in Vietnam

HANOI, Vietnam (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the 500 professional Filipino workers here for their contribution to the development of Vietnam and the Philippine economy.

In her speech before members of the Filipino community here, the President said: "Nagpapasalamat ako dahil sa maganda ninyong kontribusyon sa ating ekonomiya at sa ibinibigay ninyong tulong sa pag-unlad ng Vietnamese government (thank you for your contribution to our economy and for your help in the development of the Vietnamese government)."

The President also informed the members of the Filipino community, many of whom occupy top managerial and executive positions in the big corporations in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, of the passage of the absentee voting bill by both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The President said the absentee voting bill is now in the bicameral conference committee of the Congress.

Based on the record of the Philippine Embassy, the Filipino workers here include engineers, accountants, managers, singers and garment factory workers

The President also told the Filipino community here that despite the economic slowdown in the world after the terrorist attack in the United States last year, the Philippines and Vietnam have posted the highest growth rates in Asia.

She added that the tourism industry in the Philippines is now enjoying a 40 percent growth rate after the Abu Sayyaf Group was neutralized by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also told the Filipino here that her administration is seriously pursuing an anti-corruption campaign in the government.

She also said that her administration is now working to cut down the budget deficit, improving the revenue collection of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and keeping the inflation rate down.

RP, Vietnam agree to resolve refugee issue

HANOI — The Philippines and Vietnam today agreed to resolve the issue involving the 1,600 Vietnamese refugees who fled their homeland during the Vietnam war in the 1970s.

The commitment was sealed in the Framework of Bilateral Cooperation between the Philippines and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the Next Quarter Century and Beyond.

Signed at the Presidential Palace here this afternoon, the agreement covers a wide range of issues, including economic and defense cooperation, as well as other concerns such as the refugees issue.

Before the signing, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo told top Vietnamese officials here that the Philippines appreciates their willingness to welcome home their countrymen who have fled their homeland years ago.

“For those who wish to come home to Vietnam, we hope that you will continue to accept them and facilitate the process of their repatriation,” the President said during her expanded bilateral meeting with Vietnamese officials at the Presidential Palace.

According to Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro Baja, Jr. over 1,500 Vietnamese refugees are still in the Philippines, and have not been accepted by the host countries in the West where they had applied for asylum.

“They were supposed to go to third-party countries like the United States, Australia, Scandinavian countries, but somehow, along the way, they were not able to fulfill certain requirements for entry,” Baja said.

Under the framework, the two countries declared that they “will cooperate in resolving the Remaining Vietnamese Nations (RVN) issue and in implementing the Orderly Departure Program (ODP).”

ODP involves the sending by Vietnam of a mission to the Philippines to examine the identities of the refugees and determine whether they are indeed Vietnamese.

If found to be Vietnamese, Baja said they will be interviewed whether they are interested in coming home to Vietnam.

“They are interviewed if they want to return home. The mission determines whether they are Vietnamese, and second, if they have something or somebody to return to, in Vietnam,” Baja said.

He said most of the Vietnamese refugees still in the Philippines have already intermarried with Filipinos.

RP, Vietnam sign landmark agreement

HANOI — The Philippines and Vietnam today signed a landmark agreement identifying the areas of cooperation the two countries will explore in the future, further strengthening their economic and diplomatic ties.

In the same framework, the two countries declared their determination to “continue with the process of confidence-building despite territorial disputes among various parties in the South China Sea.”

The two countries are among the six claimants to the Spratly Islands. The other claimants are China, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan.

“While seeking a long-term fundamental solution to these disputes, the parties will refrain from any action that may further complicate the situation and negatively affect the friendship and cooperation between the two countries,” the document stated.

Under the framework of bilateral cooperation between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the two countries set the direction of their diplomatic, economic and security ties in the next 25 years.

The framework agreement was signed by Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople for the Philippines and Foreign Minister Nguyen Dy Nien, in the presence of Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Vietnam President Tran Duc Luong at the Mirror Room of the Presidential Palace here.

The signing was set just hours after the President and her official delegation arrived at the Noi Bai International Airport here, from a three-day visit to Cambodia where she attended the 8th summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In an interview, Senior Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro Baja, Jr. said the framework would serve as the guidespot for negotiations for future agreements on matters involving the two countries' economic and security relations.

Under the agreement, the two countries committed to promote cooperation in the field of defense "with a view to enhancing mutual understanding and trust, building closer relations between the two countries' defense institutions and armed forces and expanding cooperation in security and crime control between the two governments and their security and police forces."

The defense cooperation outlined in the framework include exchange of information on anti-piracy as well as search-and-rescue operations.

The two countries also agreed to strengthen and expand their bilateral cooperation in the fields of agriculture, fishery, education and training, culture, science and technology, civil aviation, taxation, healthcare, labor and employment, telecommunications, information technology, tourism and sports.

"The parties attach great importance to their economic development and agree to strengthen and expand the bilateral cooperation in above-mentioned areas of exchanging information and expertise, and by organizing joint promotion programs targeting specific markets in North America, Europe and other potential regions," the document read.

At the same time, the two countries committed to "pursue mutually beneficial joint ventures in order to benefit from various ASEAN economic cooperation schemes such as the ASEAN Industrial Cooperation (AICO), and ASEAN Investment Area (AIA)."

Among the areas identified in the agreement where the two countries would engage in joint ventures are manufacturing, agriculture, forestry, fishery and mining.

In closing, the two countries assured that they will conduct frequent consultations on regional and international issues, especially those relating to ASEAN "with a view to building a Southeast Asia of peace, stability, cooperation and development and an ASEAN of solidarity and cooperation on the basis of non-interference, consensus, equal and mutually beneficial cooperation and equitable development."

A new step forward in RP-Vietnam cooperation

HANOI, Vietnam (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that her two-day state visit to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam added another "new step" in the development of the friendship and cooperation between the Philippines and Vietnam since the establishment of diplomatic relations 26 years ago.

Meeting Prime Minister Phan Van Khai of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam at the Government Office here this afternoon, the Chief Executive indicated that her visit shows the government's continuing commitment to promote stronger and greater bonds of friendship and cooperation between the Filipino and Vietnamese people.

She also congratulated the Vietnamese government and its people on the holding of peaceful, fair and democratic elections for members of the National Assembly last May.

She also expressed sympathy for the victims of floods in the Central provinces in Vietnam.

On regional issues, President Macapagal-Arroyo told the Vietnamese Prime Minister that with the recent developments, it has become even more imperative for individual nations of Southeast Asia to work together and speak as one.

She added that it is in this context that the Philippines' commitment to ASEAN regionalism has become even stronger.

The President mentioned to the Vietnamese leader the successful outcome of the just-concluded ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh.

She also reiterated the Philippines' commitment to the attainment of ASEAN's objective of narrowing the development divide between its older and newer members.

According to the President, the signing of the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea is an important achievement, saying that it shows the steadfast consistency of Philippine-Vietnam taking the same position that led to the signing of the Declaration of the Regional Code of Conduct to achieve peace and security in the region.

The draft regional code of conduct was initiated during the ASEAN Summit in Hanoi four years ago under the Hanoi Plan of Action.

The Prime Minister said the most important event that took place this afternoon here was the signing of the Framework of Bilateral Cooperation Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the next quarter century and beyond.

He lauded President Macapagal-Arroyo for her leadership in the political and economic development of the Republic of the Philippines, saying that despite the global economic crisis, she was able to achieve significant growth in her country as a whole.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 6, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071116102232/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov06.htm>

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GMA lauds Vietnam's hosting of AIPO, sees closer ties with Vietnam

HANOI, Vietnam (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded Chairman Nguyen Van An of the National Assembly of Vietnam for the successful hosting by the Vietnam government of the 23rd General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO) in September this year.

The President, who met with Nguyen Van An at the Government House here yesterday afternoon, said the successful hosting by Vietnam of the AIPO signaled the beginning of his country's capability to hold other international conferences in the years ahead. These include the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 2004 and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders Meeting in 2006.

"We have similar viewpoints about realities in the region and in the world," she said as she touched on the Philippine government's foreign policy.

"We move together as ASEAN and we give importance to three active nations, namely, the United States, China, and Japan – countries with huge economic potentials," the President said.

The President said the steadfastness of both the Philippines and Vietnam together with other ASEAN nations led to the signing of the Declaration of the Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

She expressed the hope that the two countries will "move together in this direction and in all our other initiatives as well."

The chairman of Vietnam's National Assembly, who warmly received President Macapagal-Arroyo, said her visit to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam "is a leap forward in our relations in the years ahead."

He told the President that during the recent elections of Vietnam's National Assembly, there was an increase of 27.31 percent of women parliamentarians elected.

"Women in Vietnam played important roles in the past struggles to defend the country," Nguyen Van An said adding that today women play very important role in building the country.

He told the President that he was delighted to see her because "this is the first time I met a woman-President."

In closing, the Vietnamese official said the exchange of high-level visits between the Philippines and Vietnam "set the growing foundations to improve relations and enhance mutual understanding between the two countries."

Among those who accompanied the President during her call on Nguyen Van An were Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, Philippine Ambassador to Vietnam Guillermo Wong, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable, Jr. and DFA Undersecretary Lauro Baja, Jr.

Statement of the Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao on reports about coup plots

Reports of coup plots in this country in this day and age have assumed the genre of UFO-and men-from-Mars sightings that have been played up in the 1950s and 60s American grocery-counter tabloids.

Media reports of “coup plots” however gravely distort the image of our country in the world. Worse, they insult the integrity and loyalty of the overwhelming majority of our soldiers and policemen who again and again have proven their loyalty to their Commander-In-Chief, the President of the Philippine Republic, and to our Constitution.

Officers and men of the Armed Forces of the Philippines have repeatedly expressed to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo their appreciation of her efforts to improve their and their family’s quality of life. Our soldiers who have been wounded and killed to uphold their duty to defend the Republic are our national heroes of today.

President Macapagal-Arroyo early last year pushed with all her political resources for the passage of the bill, sponsored by Senator Ramon Magsaysay, Jr. which granted pay increases to our military to put their salaries on the same level as policemen ordered by a 1999 law.

The full implementation of the 1999 law for policemen’s salaries was undertaken on three steps within a span of three years, because of our country’s budget constraints. The law to increase the soldiers’ and officers’ pay will be implemented in just 15 months, which began October 1. We have received reports that a few disgruntled scalawags in the military are distorting this issue to invent reports of soldiers “low morale”, leading to fabrications of “coup plots.” They are only spitting upon the Republic’s image in the eyes of the world, and upon the integrity of our soldiers.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo deeply appreciates the patriotism and understanding of our soldiers that the pay increases, as in the case of policemen’s salaries cannot be fully implemented in one swoop, to ensure that such spikes in expenditures do not derail our budgetary program.

The President has often emphasized to her officials that ways and means must be found to help our soldiers and their families achieved a comfortable life even with their net take-home pay set by law of as low as 4,000 pesos.

As one way of achieving this, the President gave specific orders to Housing Secretary Mike Defensor to implement within six months the first phase of a massive housing program for our soldiers.

Secretary Defensor on Wednesday had reported to Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo that these housing projects are on the way towards becoming reality in six months in 21 camps and military reservations all over the country. Among these are those to be built in a 20-hectare land in Camp Riego de Dios, Cavite, 30 has. In Camp Aquino, Tarlac; and 20 has. in Camp Evangelista in Cagayan de Oro City.

RP, Vietnam form bilateral commission to further strengthen economic ties

HANOI, Vietnam (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has announced that the Philippines and Vietnam have agreed to form a joint bilateral commission to further strengthen the counter-trade between the two countries.

The President made the announcement in her press conference held at the Melia Hanoi Hotel Wednesday night.

The Chief Executive said that in order to achieve a counter-trade volume of \$600 million per year, she and Vietnamese Prime Minister Tran Duc Luong have agreed to create a joint bilateral commission.

The President explained that the joint bilateral commission will be chaired by the ministers of foreign affairs of both countries “so that they can operationalize the framework agreement for the next 25 years.”

She said that there will be no problem in the implementation of joint bilateral agreement since the two countries have many things to sell and buy from each other.

“Only a narrow avenue, a sea, separates us, not an ocean but a narrow sea, and that’s the South China Sea. And although we did not know each other well for many years when we had different economic and political systems during the Cold War in the 21st century, in fact in the 1990s, we began to know each other and understand each other more and behave more like neighbors,” she said.

In working for the Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea, the President said that the Philippines and Vietnam are always working together, always pushing together, in the same policy direction.

On the signing of sports agreement by both countries, the President said she expects a lot of benefits for both the Philippines and Vietnam, such as in training one another in areas where one country is an expert.

The President wished good luck to Vietnam for its hosting next year Southeast Asian Games.

To start the operational framework of the counter trade, the President said that the Philippines intends to buy more Vietnam rice.

The President also clarified that the Philippines has a big advantage in the field of tourism, because despite of all the threats in South East Asia, between October last year to October this year, the country’s tourism grew by 40 percent.

She said that her administration is now making sure that all the country’s beach resorts and other tourist spots are secure and safe.

GMA cites key role played by Vietnam in the forging of the South China Sea pact

HANOI, Vietnam — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has cited the important role played by Vietnam in the forging of the Declaration of the Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

In a press conference held Wednesday night at the Melia Hanoi Hotel here, the President said Vietnam’s “unstinting cooperation” during the four years that the declaration was being negotiated paved the way for its adoption during the 8th Leaders’ Meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The declaration, the President said, should give people in the region “peace of mind.”

“It is also important to the stability and progress of Asia, the South China Sea being a main artery in the regional and global trade,” the President said.

Aside from Vietnam and the Philippines, the string of islands, islets and atolls that straddle the South China Sea, are being claimed in part or wholly by China, Brunei Darussalam, Taiwan, and Malaysia.

According to the President, negotiations for the adoption of the declaration started four years ago after the ASEAN promulgated the 1998 Hanoi Plan of Action that called for a regional code of conduct in the South China Sea.

Instead of being a potential flashpoint or area of conflict, the South China Sea will now be an avenue for shared prosperity since all claimants are now committed to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes through peaceful means without resorting to the threat or use of force, the President said.

“But the most important principle is the principle of no occupation which is contained in the declaration,” the President said.

She said this principle means the claimant countries would not go to war against each other “but go to war against global terrorism.”

Vietnam good place for RP investments, says GMA

HANOI, Vietnam — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has expressed confidence that with her visit to Vietnam bilateral trade arrangements, including investments, can be expanded between the Philippines and Vietnam.

In a press conference held at the Melia Hanoi Hotel here Wednesday night, the President said the Philippines has always recognized Vietnam as a good place for investments, with the Philippines having big investments already in Vietnam.

“We have a brewery here, we have pharmaceutical companies here, we have packaging companies here and we have a car manufacturing here,” the President said enumerating the various investments of the Philippines in Vietnam.

She said she is not aware of any developing country where the Philippines has a large investments except Vietnam.

“We also buy rice from Vietnam so we have many sources of good bilateral arrangements and I hope that with my visit they can be expanded,” the President said.

With the signing of the sports agreement with Vietnam, the President also expressed the hope that both Vietnam and the Philippines will be able to benefit by helping one another, training one another in the areas where one is an expert.

The President said that she discussed with the Vietnamese Prime Minister a counter-trade volume of about \$600 million a year.

As the Philippines is buying rice from Vietnam, Vietnam will also buy fertilizer and other products from the Philippines, the President said.

To achieve this, the President said the Philippines and Vietnam have agreed to form a joint bilateral commission to be chaired by the ministers of foreign affairs of the two countries.

Foreign trips part of mission to create more jobs for Filipinos, says GMA

HANOI, Vietnam — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said her recent trips to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders’ Meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico, the 8th Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Conference in Cambodia, and to Vietnam for a two-day state visit were all done as part of her mission to create jobs in the Philippines and to build on the regional and global cooperation in a war against terrorism.

The President attended the APEC Summit from October 26 to 27, the ASEAN Summit from November 4 and 5. From the ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh, she proceeded to Vietnam for a state visit.

In both the APEC and ASEAN meetings, the President stood pat on her stand that the eradication of terrorism hinges on the success in fighting poverty.

In a press conference held at the Melia Hanoi Hotel here Wednesday night, the President said “whether the issue is the defense of the nation’s sovereignty or fighting global terrorism, at the end of the day, it is always about the economy and improving the lives of our citizens.”

The President noted that the Philippines had a particular competitive advantage in terms of skills and human resource, making the service sectors, like information and technology industry, a good pool for employment locally and offshore. However, job creation, the President implied, hinges on a secure world economy.

“We support the principle of secure trade since developing countries cannot as yet pay the cost of all the detailed components of secure trade. We have proposed, and many developed countries agreed, capacity building in terms of training and acquisition of new technology be extended to developing economies to enable us to comply with rigid timetables and prosperity,” the President said.

The President acknowledged that there is a need to strengthen cooperation among nations in the global fight against terrorism. “But just as we’re taking security measures to prevent terrorist acts, we should also address the poverty and hopelessness that provide recruits for terrorism,” she said.

“The gap between developed and developing economies has not really narrowed and even with our own developing economy we have to be constantly mindful of the effects of the steps we take on small communities and small enterprises,” the President pointed out.

The President stressed that “just as we search out and destroy terrorism we must search out and destroy the terror of poverty.”

“There is evil in being hungry just as evil in being a destructive terrorist. We must work together as a family of nations to alleviate both,” the President said.

The President pointed out that to secure world economy there is a need to expand deterrent measures to include port security, travel documents, air cargo security and others. “We support measures on a secure trade and movement of goods from port of origin to port of destination in the same manner that we support measures will deter movement of terrorists across borders,” she said.

GMA to lead nation in National Day of Prayer and Fasting

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will lead the country in celebrating the annual National Day of Prayer and Fasting (NDPF) to rally the nation to overcome challenges and adversities through prayer and action on Saturday November 9, 2002. The theme of this year’s NDPF is “We Shall Overcome.” It is also the title of a well known civil rights and Church song.

The national program, an Inter-Faith Prayer Rally, will be held in Boni Avenue corner San Joaquin Street, Barangay Plain View, Mandaluyong City from 3 to 4 p.m. and will be broadcast live. There will be similar activities in all provincial, city, and town centers initiated by local governments and religious leaders.

This year’s celebration is pursuant to Proclamation No 47, declaring the second Saturday of November as National Day of Prayer and Fasting (NDPF). The NDPF is the day government sets aside for the nation to come together in fasting and prayer for the intentions of the nation.

Instead of the traditional mammoth prayer rally at the Luneta Park, this year’s national prayer event will be simultaneously held in six locations: two in Luzon, two in Visayas, and two in Mindanao. The nation’s top government officials will lead the six prayer rallies.

In Mandaluyong City, Mayor Ben-Hur Abalos, Congressman Neptali Gonzales II, Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal L. Sin and other religious leaders will pray for “National Renewal, the Poor, Penance, and Devotion.”

Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. will be at the Dr. Torres Memorial Hospital in Lamitan, Basilan to pray for “Protection Against Violence and Terror and the Development of Mindanao.”

Senate President Franklin Drilon will be in Sea Front, Iloilo City to pray for “Moral Renewal and for Families and the Youth.”

In Igorot Park in Baguio City, House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. will pray for “Environmental Protection and the Preservation of Cultural Traditions.”

Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide will be in the provincial capitol in Cebu City to pray for “Justice, Good Governance and for Livelihood and Sharing of Economic Gains.”

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Governor Parouk Hussin will also pray for “Peace, Unity and Global Understanding” at Camp Duma Sinsuat, formerly Camp Abubakar.

President Macapagal-Arroyo will then cap the prayer rally by leading the nation in the “National Prayer for Peace, Progress” in Mandaluyong City.

The National Day of Prayer and Fasting national program will be broadcast live on television networks NBN 4, RPN 9, IBC 13, ANC 21 and over the radio stations of MBC-DZRH, RMN-DZXL, and the Bureau of Broadcasts.

GMA back from highly successful trip to Cambodia, Hanoi

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived this afternoon from a highly successful trip in Cambodia, where she attended the Eighth Association of Southeast Asian Nation Summit and Vietnam.

The President arrived on board a chartered Philippine Airlines flight at around 1:25 p.m. at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

She was accorded foyer honors and was welcomed by Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr., Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Soliman, Presidential Adviser on Education Mona Valisno, Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao and Foreign Undersecretary Franklin Ebdalin.

Presidential daughter Evangeline Lourdes “Luli” Arroyo was also on hand to welcome the President.

In her statement distributed at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport by Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, the President said her visit to the two countries immensely contributed to the Philippine economy and national security.

“They are important to the well-being of our people and the alleviation of poverty through more investments and jobs,” the President said.

The President noted that in Hanoi, she and Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong agreed to step up bilateral trade to \$500 million to \$600 million within the next five years following the signing of a comprehensive Framework of Cooperation for the next 25 years.

The two countries, she further noted, would immediately work on a countertrade arrangement wherein the Philippines will increase fertilizer exports to that country in exchange for rice imports from Vietnam. This proposal is part of the first item to be tackled by the Philippines-Vietnam Joint Commission which will meet soon, the President said.

The President also said the two countries agreed to work for the upgrading of the newly signed ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea to a Code of Conduct that would be more binding and more detailed.

“From the point of view of our national interest, this is the most important document produced during the eight ASEAN Summit,” she said.

According to the President, the Philippines and Vietnam have consistently advocated common positions on the peaceful resolution of disputes in the South China Sea following the launching of multilateral negotiations on the issue after ASEAN’s Hanoi Plan of Action in 1998.

Vietnam has also agreed to favorably consider signing into the Trilateral Agreement on Terrorism entered into by the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia last July, and shortly thereafter by Cambodia. Thailand also signed in the course of the ASEAN summit.

The President said overall regional security against terrorism would improve greatly if the six nations sharing common seas were part of the accord. She was referring to the claimants to parts or the whole of the Spratly group of island. The claimants include the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, China, Brunei Darussalam and Taiwan.

The President also noted that during the summit, ASEAN also entered into a tourism agreement, considering that tourist arrivals in the Philippines increased by 40 percent in October compared to the same period last year.

“My trip to Phnom Penh and Hanoi integrated very well with the same economic and security goals in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit and in my trade mission to Silicon Valley in California last week,” the President said.

During her trip to the APEC, United States President George W. Bush unveiled the Enterprise-ASEAN Initiative, which aims to open up bilateral free trade agreement between the U.S. and ASEAN, the President said.

After the arrival ceremonies at the NAIA, the President went straight to the Makati Medical Center, where her daughter-in-law, Angela Montenegro Arroyo, gave birth to a healthy daughter last November 4.

At the hospital suite, the President doted on Mikaela Gloria Arroyo her first granddaughter, holding her attentively.

The President said first and foremost, she felt happy with the arrival of her Mikaela Gloria.

When asked by reporters if she wants her first grandchild to follow her footsteps, the President said, “I hope she grows up to be a good servant of the Lord.”

“I want her to be what God wants her to be,” she added.

With the President at the hospital were Angela Montenegro Arroyo, her mother Rosario Montenegro and members of both Montenegro and Arroyo families.

GMA to host dinner for participants in int’l meet

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will be the guest of honor at a dinner in honor of the participants in the two-day International Conference on International Terrorism and Tourism Recovery tomorrow.

National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said that senior officials from several countries—including the other nine members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea and China—will converge at the Shangri-la Hotel in Makati to discuss the fight against international terrorism and salvaging Asia’s battered tourist industry.

According to Golez, the meeting will seek to identify “doable projects” and discuss the experience of participating countries in fighting terrorism.

President Macapagal-Arroyo first proposed the meeting during this week's ASEAN summit conference in Phnom Penh.

According to Golez, the first day of the "International Conference on International Terrorism and Tourism Recovery" would discuss the fallout of the bombings in Indonesia and the Philippines on the region's tourism industry.

He said the terrorism problem would take center stage on the final day, Saturday.

GMA says talks with NDF may continue but only if reds renounce terrorism

HANOI, Nov. 7 (PNA) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said her administration is still willing to formally go back to the negotiating table with communist rebels, but only if they renounce terrorism.

The President stressed this in a durian party she hosted last night for members of the delegation accompanying her on her state visit to Vietnam.

The President's pronouncement came after the government successfully secured the support of the European Union in declaring the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) as a foreign terrorist group.

The declaration was necessary to stop the flow of financial aid to the NPA that has allowed the group to engage in what the administration has declared as terrorist attacks against civilian establishments and individuals.

"The peace talks will not resume unless they renounce terrorism," the President said in an interview with Manila-based reporters here.

The President stayed here overnight after a three-day stay in Cambodia where she attended the eight summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The President assured that her administration remains committed to arriving at a peace agreement with the communist rebels.

Security and defense officials have stated that the government has not closed the door on communist rebels willing to talk peace.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 7, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071112102947/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov07.htm>

The President's Day: November 8, 2002

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- **GMA, Taylor discuss strengthening of counterterrorism capabilities**
- **GMA leads day of prayer, fasting rites tomorrow**
- **Tomas sees more demand for Filipino health professionals abroad**
- **Peso to strengthen as remittances from OFWs start coming in**

GMA, Taylor discuss strengthening of counterterrorism capabilities

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today discussed with Ambassador Francis Taylor, the United States government's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, ways and means of strengthening the counter-terrorism capabilities of the Philippines and other countries in Southeast Asia.

Taylor, who heads the US delegation to the two-day International Conference on Terrorism and Tourism Recovery which opened today at the Shangri-la Hotel in Makati, also gave the President an update on his visit to other countries in the Asian region which centered on regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

Specifically, the President and Taylor, who is one of US President George W. Bush's advisers, talked about increased sharing of intelligence, the rooting out of terrorist cells, tightening of border security and disrupting of terrorist money flows.

The President proposed that a Philippine-US training exercise be conducted jointly in the Philippines for the police.

She also proposed the holding of an intelligence gathering exercise, in the same manner that joint training exercises are being held for Filipino and US soldiers.

The President and Taylor also discussed the status of the Anti-Terrorism Bill and amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Law which they emphasized were vital to efforts to stop the flow of money being used by terrorist groups.

During the two-day international terrorism and anti-terrorism conference, Taylor is expected to propose strategies for building international and regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

"I come here to support the tremendous effort of the government of the Philippines to work together against terrorism and, more specifically, from a regional perspective," Taylor said.

Aside from the subject of combating terrorism, the President likewise brought up the plight of the Filipino veterans in the US.

The President also asked for Taylor's help for Filipino airport screeners who stand to lose their jobs in view of a requirement in the US Aviation and Transportation Security Act that all airport security screeners be US citizens. Airport security screeners are the ones who check passengers and baggage at the airport before they are allowed on board planes.

"They will be losing their jobs next week," the President told Taylor. The US official assured the President he will see what he can do on the matter.

Taylor is a former brigadier general who served with distinction in numerous command and staff positions in his 31 years in the US military service. Prior to his appointment as State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism with the rank of Ambassador at Large, Taylor headed the US Air Force Office of Special Investigations, where he was

responsible for providing commanders of all Air Force activities independent professional investigative services in fraud, counterintelligence and major criminal matters.

As head of the federal Office of Counterterrorism, Taylor coordinates all US government efforts to improve counterterrorism cooperation with foreign governments.

As the Coordinator, he chairs the inter agency Working Group on Counter terrorism and the State Department's terrorism task force to coordinate responses to major international terrorist incidents that are in progress.

Taylor was accompanied to Malacañang by US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone.

GMA leads day of prayer, fasting rites tomorrow

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will lead the nation in tomorrow's celebration of the National Day of Prayer and Fasting (NDPF) with an Inter-Faith Prayer Rally on Boni Avenue, Mandaluyong City starting at 3 p.m.

Under Proclamation No. 47, the second Saturday of November has been designated as a National Day of Prayer and Fasting for National Strength and Unity Against All Adversities.

This year's celebration, under the theme "We Shall Overcome," will also be held simultaneously in six locations: two in Luzon, two in the Visayas, and two in Mindanao.

This year's celebration is intended to rally the nation to overcome challenges and adversities through prayer and action.

The country's top government officials will lead the six prayer rallies. Among them: Vice President Teofisto Guingona (Dr. Torres Memorial Hospital in Lamitan, Basilan); Senate President Franklin Drilon (Sea Front, Iloilo City); House Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., (Igorot Park, Baguio City); Chief Justice Hilario Davide (Provincial Capitol, Cebu City); and Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Governor Parouk Hussin (Camp Duma Sinsuat, formerly Camp Abubakar).

The President will then cap the prayer rally by leading the nation in the "National Prayer for Peace and Progress" in Mandaluyong City.

Sto. Tomas sees more demand for Filipino health professionals abroad

Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas has said that emerging trends in the health services sector of countries in Europe, North America and Asia all point to an increasing demand for Filipino doctors, nurses, dentists and other health-related workers.

In a report, Sto. Tomas said the Philippines does not have a policy of exporting people but the character of overseas employment is basically shaped by international demand for foreign workers.

The world has become one global workplace and this has facilitated the rising demand for Filipino workers abroad, especially in the health professions," she said.

Sto. Tomas said that health education institutions must continuously upgrade their curriculum, and put premium to training and upgrading of skills and competencies.

"Perhaps we can pattern the training for the nursing profession after the training specialization curriculum for medical doctors to avoid shortages in emergency room nurses in critical areas," Sto. Tomas said.

She noted the difficulty in hiring emergency room nurses both for foreign and local hospitals because of the relative differences in the training of emergency nurses to those of ordinary nurses.

Sto. Tomas revealed that 20,000 nurses are now needed in The Netherlands; 1,000 in Milan; 3,500 in Norway; and 7,500 more in the United Kingdom.

In Malaysia, 2,500 pharmacists and doctors for government hospitals are needed while Canada, Ireland, Japan, Singapore, Guam, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia, have all expressed their desire to hire foreign workers in the nursing and other related fields, Sto. Tomas said.

With this demand, she said, the 16,240 professional nurses who were deployed from 1998 to 2000 are expected to further increase, citing as reason aging population of developed countries, along with expanding opportunities in home care and out-patient surgical centers, and the growing number of older and more acutely ill hospitalized patients.

Sto. Tomas said that in 2001 alone, overseas deployment of health professionals – including nurses, dentists, doctors, pharmacists, midwives, and medical technicians – reached more than 16,472, or 69.3 percent higher than the 9,716 health workers deployed the previous year.

Sto. Tomas said that the Philippines should not stop at the numbers but should aim for higher international comparability and standards, if we are to truly participate as a global leader in the supply of health services and maximize opportunities in the global market.”

Peso to strengthen as remittances from OFWs start coming in

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) has said the peso should strengthen in the coming weeks as dollar remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) have started to come in.

The BSP said the peso should stabilize this month until December considering the expected flow of dollars from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), the bullish export performance, and a correction in oil prices.

The government expects dollar remittances from OFWs to reach \$8 billion this year, or 43 percent more than the 2001 level.

The BSP also reported the country's gross international reserves (GIR) reached \$15.945 billion as of end-October 2002. This level was slightly lower than the end-September 2002 level of \$16.025 billion.

The current GIR level is equivalent to 5.1 months of imports of goods and payment of services and income.

The minimal decline in the GIR, the BSP said, was due primarily to debt service payments for maturing obligations of the BSP and the national government, including the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR).

Meanwhile, the BSP's net international reserves (BSP-NIR) as of end-October 2002 reached \$12.283 billion from \$12.606 billion a month ago.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 8, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029212916/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov08.htm>

The President's Day: November 9, 2002

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- **President's radio/TV message**
- **GMA dissuades Western nations from issuing travel warnings**
- **GMA lauds big labor group's unilateral move not to press wage increase at this time**
- **Let's all fight, not fear terrorism — GMA**
- **GMA confident on professionalism of our military**
- **GMA to AFP commanders: coordinate closely with counterparts among claimant countries in Spratlys**
- **GMA to DND: operationalize Philippines-Malaysia-Indonesia-Cambodia-Thailand anti-terrorist agreement**
- **GMA names PA chief to replace outgoing AFP Chief of Staff Defensor**
- **GMA leads nation in prayer for peace and unity**

President's radio/TV message

Mga kababayan, wala nang atrasan ang pakikibaka natin sa terorismo. nakiki-isa tayo sa hinagpis at pagdurusa ng mga pamilyang nasawi o nasaktan sa mga atake ng terorista. At dapat tayong humanap ng lakas sa pagkilos sa halip na magtago sa takot.

Dapat makipag-tulungan tayo sa mga bansa ng buong mundo upang labanan ang terorismo. Hindi dapat magwalang bahala. Kailangang tugisin ang mga terorista bago nila wasakin hindi lamang turismo, kundi pati ang pamumuhay natin mismo.

Pag-upo ko pa lamang bilang pangulo, inilunsad ko na ang digma laban sa terorismo. Kaya nung nangyari iyong mga pangyayari noong Sept. 11, 2002, agad akong lumahok sa koalisyong pan-daigdig kontra terorismo.

Hindi ako nagsisisi sa masigasig nating pagdurog ng terorismo sa Pilipinas at sa hangad nating magsanib ang mga bansa ng Asya laban sa terorismo. Samantala, ginagawa natin ang lahat upang ipagtanggol ang mga mamamayan, ang pamahalaan at lahat ng nasa Pilipinas.

Walang relihiyon na nagtatakdang paslangin ang walang malay at walang sala. Tanging hangad ng mga tunay na Muslim sa Pilipinas ang kapayapaan at pag-angat sa buhay. Lumalabag sa Islam ang teroristang kinakasangkapan ang relihiyon para sa karahasan. Hindi sila maka-Diyos o maka-bayan, kungdi mga mamamatay-tao na walang ideolohiya. Kundi paghahasik ng ligalig.

Digmaang pandaigdig ang pagsugpo sa terorismo. Dapat tayong makipag-palitan ng impormasyon tungkol sa mga terorista, at handlangan ang paglilipat nila ng pera sa iba't-ibang bansa. Dapat ding tuntunin at wasakin ang mga lungga ng terorista, saan man sila nakapag-ugat.

Kaya naman, aktibo ang Pilipinas at ang inyong lingkod upang isulong ang alyansiya ng mga bansa sa asya kontra terorismo. Sa katatapos na mga pagpupulong ng APEC sa Mexico at Asean sa Cambodia, masigasig nating ipaglaban ang mga deklarasyon kontra terorismo at kooperasyon sa larangan ng seguridad at pani-niktik o intelligence.

Lumahok sa alyansiyang itinatag ng Pilipinas, Malaysia at Indonesia, ng Thailand at Cambodia. Sa kabilang dako, sa pamamagitan ng kasunduan tungkol sa pagkilos ng mga bansa sa South China Sea, lalakas ang pakikipag-tulungan upang masawata ang pag-galaw ng masasamang loob sa karagatan.

Sa tapang ng ating mga sundalo't pulis at sa tulong ng mga ka-alyado nating bansa, nananalo na tayo laban sa mga terorista sa Pilipinas. Lubha ng nanghina ang Abu Sayyaf at ipit na sa Sulu. Daan-daan ang mga kasapi nilang

nalipol o nahuli, at napuksa ang marami nilang Intelligence Cells. Hindi na rin makakakilos nang malaya ang mga teroristang banyaga matapos mahuli ang ilan nilang pinuno at mabigo ang mga planong pag-bobomba.

Gayunpaman, upang tunay na magwagi sa terorismo, kailangang magtulungan ang maunlad at umuunlad na bansa upang wakasan ang karalitaan. Sapagkat kahirapan ng buhay ang nagtutulak sa maraming sawing-palad na maakit sa terorismo at sa mga huwad na pangako ng mga terorista.

Kailangan ding magtulungan ang iba't-ibang bansa upang malabanan ang kahirapan. Kaya naman nananawagan ako sa APEC na buksan ng mga mayamang bansa ang mga merkado nila sa mga produkto natin. Dapat din nilang dagdagan ang puhunan at salaping tulong para sa mga bansang umuunlad. At sa ating bansa naman, isinusulong ko ang pag-unlad sa agrikultura at negosyong munti upang lumikha ng milyong trabaho at makaahon ang milyun-milyong Pilipino sa kahirapan.

Ito ang laban nating mga pilipino kontra karahasan at kahirapan. Sa tapang, sigasig at pagkakaisa natin at sa awa ng maykapal, magwawagi tayo.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat.

GMA dissuades Western nations from issuing travel warnings

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Friday asked Western nations to refrain from issuing travel warnings and advisories that discourage tourism and investment into affected countries.

“We should not be penalized by those who are well aware of the tough decisions and actions we’ve taken to not only deal with terrorists on our own shores but also to work with other countries to ensure that in our region and around the world, we cooperate by sharing intelligence and assisting in apprehending terrorists who are not restricted by national borders,” the President said in her speech before the opening of the International Conference on Terrorism and Tourism Recovery at Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City.

The President said that in the case of the Philippines, the strongest argument that the nation has against such penalties is the reputation of the Filipino workers all over the world.

She said she hopes that friends in the western world and elsewhere will think long and hard about how they can support the efforts of the Philippines to not only remove the scourge of terrorism from the Philippines and other countries in Southeast Asia but also the work being done to ensure that countries in our region are just as active in fighting this global war.

“We need cooperation from our friends internationally, not misguided condemnation,” she said.

The President noted that at the end of the day, the Western countries must realize that no nation is not doing anything to fight terrorism.

On the part of the Philippines I would say that while there are many others fighting this as much as we are, nobody is fighting more than we are,” she said.

She said she looks forward to working closely with the western world and neighbors in what is unfortunately going to be a long war.

She noted that just as nations search out and destroy terrorism we must search out and destroy the terror of poverty.

“Whether it’s the fight against global terrorism or the promotion of tourism, at the end of the day it’s always about the economy and improving the lives of our citizens,” she said.

GMA lauds big labor group's unilateral move not to press wage increase at this time

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Friday night said she's glad over the decision of the Labor Solidarity Movement, the umbrella organization of the country's mainstream labor groups, not to press for wage increase at this time.

In her keynote speech on the first day of the International Conference on Terrorism and Tourism Recovery at the Shangri-La Hotel In Makati, the President called the movement's decision as an act of patriotism. The movement is composed of Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), Federation of Free Workers (FFW), Alliance of Filipino Workers (AFW) and the Trade Union of the Philippines and Allied Services (TUPAS).

"This patriotic act by the four biggest labor unions of the country is one such mechanism by which existing jobs can be preserved," the President said.

The President also noted the efforts made by the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), which committed to pay for any increases in workers' contribution in Social Security System premiums for as long as there are still no wage increases.

"While government works hard at creating new jobs through investment as well as through tourism and the encouragement of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to build up domestic demand, we must also put in place job preservation mechanisms at a time when the world is in economic difficulty," the President said.

"This patriotic act by the four biggest labor unions of the country is one such mechanism by which existing jobs can be preserved. The same is true of the employers' group who made their own contribution through a social accord that will allow us to weather this difficult time," she added.

On the part of government, the President said she has ordered agencies to ensure that government does its share in jobs preservation.

"We must learn to conserve our gains during difficult times. More important we must stand together to move this country, our country, forward," she said.

Her orders are:

- The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to strictly enforce existing labor standards so workers may get their lawful due;
- The National Food Authority (NFA) to assist workers to get cheaper rice and other basic necessities;
- The Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) to intensify its drive to provide affordable housing to workers through rent-to-own and similar schemes to allow workers decent dwelling places.

Let's all fight, not fear terrorism — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Friday enjoined countries to come together and pour efforts in fighting terrorism instead of seeking refuge in fear.

At the same time, the President announced the Philippine hosting of multilateral seminar games on emergency responses to terrorist threats tentatively set in December.

"We must work together as nations around the world fight terrorism. We cannot sit back and wait. We must take this fight to the terrorists before they undermine not only our tourism but our very way of living," she said during her

keynote speech at the two-day International Conference on Terrorism and Tourism Recovery at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City.

The President also expressed gladness over the heavy turnout of delegates from around the world. “The fact that you all arrived in such short notice only emphasizes the urgency and importance of our undertaking,” she said.

She noted that terrorism impacts directly on tourism, saying that as forum for facilitating the movement of people across borders, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) indeed has a stake in making sure that we are able to have a safe place in this world today.

“It’s a twin job that is very important. Achieving the goal of making goods move and people move, but also taking necessary steps to protect them against terrorism. This requires a combination of the application of new technology and cross-border cooperation among government agencies,” she said.

The President further noted the challenge terrorism posed for all countries that value peace and order. “It confirms that we must continue to take a firm stand against terrorism and work diligently with the family of nations in the global campaign to end the scourge of terrorism once and for all,” she said.

On the Philippines’ efforts against terrorism, the President said the government has set to work to crush terrorism militarily and economically, moving aggressively to challenge the Abu Sayyaf in their turf, cutting their numbers to less than or about 200 from over a thousand.

“The Abu Sayyaf remain a threat but a diminished one. We have worked to crush their armed soldiers and break up their intelligence cells,” she said.

She also noted that the government is pursuing inter-faith dialogs to promote Christian and Muslim solidarity. “Terrorists wish to instigate a religious war. We must make this an opportunity for religious understanding, ecumenism and solidarity,” she added.

On the Al-Qaeda connection in the Philippines, the President confirmed that this is real but that it is not necessarily strong.

“The Philippines is just one of many nations scattered throughout the world, including US and Europe, where Al-Qaeda is trying to operate. If anything, we’re better prepared and taking more aggressive steps to stop terrorism in the Philippines than in many other parts of the world, because we know from first-hand experience the pain of terrorism. It becomes a cancer if you don’t cut it out,” she said.

The President reiterated that the government supports a United Nations’ resolution on Iraq as she stressed that this must be a fight of the community of nations against a nation that seemingly refuses to abide by UN resolutions asking it (Iraq) to destroy its weapons of mass destruction.

She also emphasized that she is not making apologies for aggressively seeking to root out terrorism in the Philippines and to putting considerable effort in seeking regional consensus on fighting terrorism.

Citing the three-nation anti-terrorist working arrangement among the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia and supported by Cambodia and Thailand, the President said the government is working to promote cohesion and cooperation at the regional level.

“Through this coalition which is now a five-way coalition, we work to share intelligence on terrorist activities. We will tighten border patrols and if necessary, partake in joint peacekeeping operations. We are looking forward to take more aggressive action through this international conference on terrorism and tourism recovery,” she said.

GMA confident on professionalism of our military

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today, during a joint Armed Forces of the Philippines-Philippine National Police (AFP-PNP) Command Conference in Malacañang, reiterated her confidence in the professionalism of the Filipino soldiers.

“I have faith in the men and women of the Armed Forces and the men and women of the Philippine National Police,” the President said brushing aside rumors of coup as figments of the self-interest of certain political grandstanders.

The President, however, believes that issues such as pay increases of soldiers, should really be explained within the military organization, and not just to the public.

The President pointed out that it is only in her administration that the full implementation of the 1999 law for policemen’s salary increases was undertaken. “Even if there is no budget for it, because this came in the middle of the budget year, we gave our initial 20 percent increase,” she said.

The President said that the law to increase the soldiers’ pay will be implemented in just 15 months beginning October 1 this year.

The President expressed the hope that people, particularly the soldiers, be informed that it is the Macapagal-Arroyo administration which made it possible for soldiers to get the same pay as the teachers.

“There has to be more reaching out to them (soldiers) about these facts, so that we can neutralize the rumor mill and the misperception that provides the environment for misplaced discontent,” the President said.

Secretary Emilia Boncodin of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said Friday that the pay hike for soldiers was approved by Congress last July but its effectivity was moved to October because only P1 billion is available for the purpose.

Secretary Boncodin doused speculations that the Philippine National Police is favored over that of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in terms of salary adjustments.

She said it took more than three years before the 100% salary hike for PNP was fully implemented.

Boncodin pointed out that the law passed by Congress mandates a 20 percent increase for the pay hike of soldiers’ pay for 2002, 30 percent in 2003 and 50 percent in 2004.

She said it is only the Macapagal-Arroyo administration which is trying to correct the disparity in the pay scales between soldiers and policemen.

GMA to AFP commanders: coordinate closely with counterparts among claimant countries in Spratlys

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo directed her military commanders to take note of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations-China Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea.

The ASEAN-China Declaration of the Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea was formally forged during the Nov. 4-5 Eighth ASEAN Leaders Meeting held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Under the ASEAN-China Regional Code of Conduct, the principle of no occupation should be observed.

The President, giving her guidance during the joint AFP-PNP command conference in Malacañang, said the declaration calls for a closer coordination and communication among military commanders of the claimant countries in the South China Sea.

“I’d like you to take note of this and come up with a broader ‘keep in touch program’ with the Chinese defense and military establishments as well as other claimant countries,” the President said.

She said that the coordination must be on the ground level so that the declaration can be pushed forward and, possibly upgraded into a formal code of conduct in the future.

“But for now, this declaration is sufficient,” she said, emphasizing that the central provision of the declaration is that there will be no new occupations.

GMA to DND: operationalize Philippines-Malaysia-Indonesia-Cambodia-Thailand anti- terrorist agreement

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo directed the Defense Department headed by Secretary Angelo Reyes to operationalize the anti-terrorist exchange of intelligence agreement with Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia and, recently, with Thailand.

During today’s Armed Forces of the Philippines-Philippine National Police (AFP-PNP) Joint Command Conference in Malacañang, the President also discussed the importance of the accession of Thailand with the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and recently Cambodia to the agreement to fight terrorism in the region.

Thailand’s accession to the tripartite agreement to fight terrorism between the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia and, recently, Cambodia was forged during the 8th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Leaders Meeting held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia last November 4 to 5.

“We must take this framework and hammer it into a detailed blue print,” the President said.

The President also underscored the importance of the continued creation of unfriendly communities for terrorists.

“We have to empower people and set mechanisms for their participation in detection of terrorists,” she said.

She said that quick reaction mechanism to counter and respond to terrorist activities must be established.

The President welcomed Malaysian Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir’s statement saying “we really should be having more joint border patrols.”

“I think that these joint border patrols are very useful,” the President said, citing for instance people who take a plane trip to Manado, Indonesia with the idea of sneaking into Mindanao. “If we have joint patrol, then that can be minimized,” she said.

The President recalled that she initiated the multilateral anti-terrorist coalition with Malaysia and Indonesia last year.

Thailand acceded to the coalition during the recent ASEAN summit, while Cambodia also acceded last July.

GMA names PA chief to replace outgoing AFP Chief of Staff Defensor

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today named Philippine Army Chief Lt. Gen. Dionisio Santiago as the new Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao said that Santiago will succeed Defensor when he retires on November 18.

“The extension period is finished,” Tiglao said of Defensor whose term has been automatically extended by two months and four days by the President.

“The President believes that given the criteria for the Chief of Staff, Gen. Santiago complies with all those criteria and she has full confidence in Gen. Santiago,” Tiglao said. He said that Santiago has proven his loyalty to the Constitution.

Tiglao clarified that as November 18 is fast approaching, the President decided to make the announcement now. “The decision was finalized yesterday,” she said.

“And so she thought that rather than leaving these things in a cloud of speculation, it would be appropriate for her to announce it,” Tiglao added.

Santiago, an alumnus of the Philippine Military Academy, class 1970, was an International Fellowship Program awardee in the US Army War College from 1993-94.

In fact, he received a Certificate of Honor from the International Fellows Hall of Fame at the US Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania only last October 18, 2002.

Born in Navotas, Metro Manila on April 19, 1946, Santiago is married to Hermogena Santiago, with one daughter and two sons.

GMA leads nation in prayer for peace and unity

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the nation in prayer, imploring the Almighty Lord to bring peace and unity in the hearts and minds of every Filipino.

In ceremonies held in Mandaluyong on the occasion of National Day of Prayer and Fasting, the President noted that we are now living in a world torn by strife, poverty, terror and deceit where the essence of our humanity is dulled.

“And so, we pray, remind us of the reasons for our being and that we are all created in our image and likeness. Remind us of our strength as a handmaid of Your love, so You can selfishly share our character, talents and resources in the spirit of love, courage, power and justice that You bestowed upon us,” the President said.

The President beseeched God to bring strength to each and everyone so that “we may rise above the situation and realize self-reliance.”

“When we are weakened, we can find strength. When we are shackled by oppression, we can fight for freedom. When we find ourselves in the midst of struggle, we pursue with perseverance. When we find suffering, we offer compassion and action. When we are divided by different beliefs, we stand in tolerance and understanding. When we see greed and corruption, we stand up with conscientiousness and honesty.”

Dear God, open our eyes to the truth of Love, Peace, Hope and Joy amidst adversity. Help us to believe in Your goodness and look straight in the eyes of our brothers and sisters and see that same goodness in them. Help us to build our country not in the illusion of material wealth, aggression, influence, and coercion. Help us to see that You alone, God, are the firm foundation of our nation, and despite differences in color and creed, we can be one in praise, power and purpose,” the President said.

With the President at the Mandaluyong event were former President Fidel V. Ramos, Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin, Mandaluyong Mayor Benhur Abalos, Rep. Neptali Gonzales III, Commission on Elections Chairman Benjamin Abalos and Presidential Assistant for Media and Ecclesiastical Affairs Conrado Limcaoco.

The President’s prayer formed part of the prayer for national renewal, penance and devotion to God. In the same occasion, religious leaders recited their own separate petitions.

Simultaneous prayer rites led by government officials in various parts of the country exhorted the people to a national prayer.

Among these officials are Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. in Lamitan, Basilan, Chief Justice Hilario Davide in Cebu City, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. in Baguio City, Senate President Franklin Drilon in Iloilo City and Governor Parouk Hussin in Maguindanao.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 9, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029214151/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov09.htm>

The President's Day: November 11, 2002

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- **GMA launches 'Pabahay' plan in Cavite**
- **GMA prods APEC youth leaders to enhance regional cooperation**
- **Issuance of a new amnesty proclamation now in the offing, says Palace**
- **GMA still has full trust, confidence in Camacho, says Palace**
- **Bunye says he, Tiglao part of same team, work for same president**
- **GMA orders speedy probe of crash, consoles victims at hospitals**

GMA launches 'Pabahay' plan in Cavite

TANZA, Cavite – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today launched the “Pabahay para sa Pamilyang Pilipino” inside a 72-hectare master- planned community for socialized, low-cost and mid-cost housing at Grosvenor Place here.

The President arrived here at exactly 10:00 a.m. and was welcomed by Cavite Governor Erineo “Ayong” Maliksi; Rep. Gilbert Remulla (Second District, Cavite); Secretary Marita Jimenez who is Cabinet Officer for Regional Development (CORD) in Cavite; Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Michael Defensor; James L. Go, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Robinsons Homes; and Frederick D. Go, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Robinsons Homes.

The President also led the ceremonial planting of trees in the planned community before unveiling the marker for the housing project.

She was also given a briefing by Frederick D. Go and Marilu Alferez, senior vice president and general manager of Robinsons Homes, on the new project that will benefit low and middle-income groups.

During the briefing, the President congratulated James Go for the company's success and for winning the Outstanding Developers of the Year Award last year.

The President later inspected the models for socialized housing units that would benefit at least 5,500 families.

In a meeting with the local officials after the inspection and launching of the housing project, the President had an informal meeting with some of the mayors and other local officials of Cavite on her ongoing One Town, One Product, One Million Peso project to help municipalities improve and develop livelihood programs through small and medium enterprises (SME).

She also turned over a check for P1 million to Tanza Mayor Raymundo del Rosario to support the SME and livelihood programs in his municipality

Among the mayors present during the meeting in Tanza were Elpidio Gonzaga of Dasmaringas; Walter Echevaria of General Mariano Alvarez; and Roy Loyola of Carmona.

Grosvenor Place is a joint venture of Robinsons Homes, Inc. and Engineering Equipment Inc. Realty Corp. It is being developed and managed by Robinsons Homes Inc., a subsidiary of Robinsons Land Corp., founded by its chairman emeritus John Gokongwei, Jr.

Robinsons Land Corp. is committed to the delivery of affordable and quality housing to the Filipino families while its counterpart, EEI Realty Corporation, is the real estate and property development arm of EEI Corporation, a

leading Philippine company in the fields of electro-mechanical installation, construction of power plants, industrial buildings and high-rise structures.

GMA prods APEC youth leaders to enhance regional cooperation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the youth leaders of the Philippines and the other member-economies of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), extolling them to further enhance cooperation among the countries.

The youth leaders paid the President a courtesy call in Malacañang this afternoon before proceeding to convene the Fourth APEC Future Leaders' Forum.

"I'm very honored to have you here today," the President told the participants.

The conference, organized by the University of Asia and the Pacific School of Management, has the theme "Challenges and Opportunities for Business, Government and Social Sector Partnerships in Building Civil Society."

The conference proper will be held starting today until November 13 at the UA&P campus in Ortigas, Pasig while fellowship activities will be held on November 14 and 15 at Subic Bay, Zambales.

Leading the participants were Dean Jose Rene Gayo of the UA&P School of Management; Hareesh Daswani, president of the Asia-Pacific Association for Student Exchange; (APASE) and Stephen Gan, former president of APASE.

During her trip to the APEC summit in Los Cabos, Mexico, the President was able to accomplish her mission to further the Philippines' interest in the forum.

She was likewise able to meet with America investors as well as Filipino communities in the United States.

Issuance of a new amnesty proclamation now in the offing, says Palace

Malacañang today said there has been a consensus to approve the proposal to issue a new presidential amnesty proclamation but certain procedural matters are still being threshed out.

In his regular press briefing this afternoon, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said the consensus on the need for a new amnesty proclamation was arrived at in today's meeting of the executive committee of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security chaired by Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo.

Bunye said that in an earlier meeting, the National Amnesty Commission (NAC) reported that there are some 2,600 applicants for amnesty but their applications could not be acted upon because of the absence of a new amnesty proclamation.

According to Bunye, of the total amnesty applicants, some 1,500 are active members of the New People's Army (NPA) while the rest belong to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and other rebel groups.

"The proposal is to extend the proclamation period by one year from effectivity of a new proclamation that will be signed by the President," Bunye said.

Bunye explained that the previous declaration by the government and other foreign countries that the NPA is a terrorist organization would not pose a problem.

He said the government would have to make a distinction between the group and the individual members who want to avail themselves of the proposed amnesty program.

“In other words, mere membership in this organization, which has been identified as a terrorist group by the EU and other countries, will not disqualify the individual members from applying,” Bunye said.

In an earlier interview, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said that any presidential proclamation that would extend amnesty to members of the rebel groups would have to be submitted to both houses of Congress for concurrence.

Ermita explained that there are now a total of 2,603 applications for amnesty that the NAC could not act on because there is no applicable amnesty proclamation.

The last amnesty proclamation, issued during the term of former President Joseph Estrada, expired last August 2001, Ermita said.

Ermita said the Cabinet would deliberate on what kind of amnesty would be offered, whether it would be general, conditional or selective, as well as when it will take effect and for how long.

On the report that the CPP-NPA has scuttled the peace process with the government, Ermita said that the government side has not received any official communication in this regard from Luis Jalandoni, official negotiator of the National Democratic Front, the political arm of the CPP-NPA.

Ermita said that what has been reported could be just individual reactions to the inclusion of the CPP-NPA as well as CPP founder and former chairman, Jose Maria Sison, in the list of terrorist individuals and groups by the US and the European community.

GMA still has full trust, confidence in Camacho, says Palace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has continued to have trust and confidence in Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Malacañang said today as it continued to brush aside reports that there is an impending Cabinet shakeup.

In his press briefing this afternoon, Bunye said that although the President respects the opinion expressed by some legislators, the position of Camacho is one of trust and confidence.

“And Mr. Camacho continues to enjoy the trust and confidence of the President,” Bunye said.

Some senators, including one coming from the administration party, have called for the resignation of Camacho for his alleged failure to curb the ballooning budget deficit.

When asked why the President herself has not personally issued a denial on the Camacho case, Bunye said “that’s the reason why we’re here. We’re authorized to issue statements for and on behalf of the President.”

Bunye also continued to categorically deny that there is going to be a major revamp in the Cabinet.

He said that former Senator Ernesto Herrera, who was mentioned as a replacement for Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, has specifically denied in a radio interview that he was offered the post of Sto. Tomas in the supposed revamp.

Bunye also reiterated his earlier statement that the President has given a general instruction to the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) to conduct a lifestyle check on government officials.

“If there are any allegations of a possible lifestyle out of the ordinary, then this should be investigated. And the President was very categorical when she stated that the PAGC can start with the First Gentleman,” Bunye said.

Bunye says he, Tiglao part of same team, work for same president

“I welcome working with (Presidential Spokesman) Secretary (Rigoberto) Tiglao.”

Thus said, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye when asked by members of the Malacañang Press Corps how he will delineate his working relationship with Tiglao, who is now back to his position as Presidential Spokesman, during a briefing this afternoon at Malacañang.

Bunye said he has a high regard for Tiglao and “we both feel that we are working for the same President.”

He said that as government officials, they are part of the same team working under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Bunye emphasized that working with Tiglao, as far as coordination is concerned, “is not really a problem.”

“But what happened, as you know, Secretary Tiglao came in on October 23rd and on October 24th, I left for the United States. So, we hardly had time to really get to talk to one another during that period,” Bunye explained.

“But now that we’re back, hopefully for a longer period, then all these coordination matters could be threshed out,” he added.

Bunye stressed that he is now working full time as Press Secretary and as such he is mandated to act as information officer of the national leadership and the national government.

“That includes exercising oversight functions over the information functions of agencies of the government such as PIA (Philippine Information Agency), the government-owned and controlled television and radio stations and the National Printing Office,” he said.

GMA orders speedy probe of crash, consoles victims at hospitals

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Air Transportation Office to conduct a speedy investigation into the crash of a Laoag Air Fokker plane in Manila Bay.

The President issued the order immediately upon learning of the air tragedy this morning.

Before noon, after attending a scheduled engagement in Tanza, Cavite, to inaugurate a housing project for the poor and middle-income, the President asked to be driven directly to the San Juan de Dios Hospital in Pasay City to console the plane crash survivors.

Later in the afternoon, after attending another previously scheduled engagement in Malacañang, the President proceeded to the Ospital ng Maynila, where some of the other survivors and victims were taken by rescuers.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President has also asked the Air Transport Office, the Philippine Coast Guard and Philippine Navy to intensify their search and rescue operations.

During her visit to the San Juan de Dios Hospital, the President consoled passenger Nemia Castillejos, flight attendant Adhika Espinosa and another passenger who survived the plane crash.

Later in the afternoon, she also visited three survivors at the intensive care unit of the Ospital ng Maynila and three other crash victims who suffered only minor injuries and were being treated at the infirmary of the same hospital.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 11, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030062655/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov11.htm>

The President's Day: November 12, 2002

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- **GMA says nation proud of Filipino car racer**
- **GMA lauds PSG officer for successful defense of world title in powerlifting championship**
- **GMA okays measures to strengthen disaster response mechanism**
- **Cabinet officials asked to focus on priority projects not on 2004 polls, says Palace**
- **Barangay info, assistance center project pilot-tested in 35 villages in Metro Manila**
- **GMA certifies anti-terror bill as urgent**
- **GMA accepts Ang resignation with regrets**
- **GMA lauds Manila Bay crash rescuers, consoles relatives of victims**

GMA says nation proud of Filipino car racer

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today applauded the victory of Enzo Pastor, the 20-year-old winner of the 2002 Asian Formula Renault Championship, saying the Philippines is very proud of his achievement.

Pastor, along with Mark Goddard, the Asian Formula 3 Managing Director and champion of the Asian F3 2002, paid the President a courtesy call in Malacañang this morning.

The two brought along their champion F3 cars and trophies and showed these to the President.

“We are very proud of you,” the President told Pastor, who is set to leave for Macau today for another race.

Accompanying Pastor during the call on the President were his parents, Tomas Pastor, president of Colby Ventures and promote of F3 in the Philippines, Remedios Pastor, vice president of Colby Ventures, and Ed Pena, chairman of F3.

Pastor ruled the Subic International Raceway inside the Subic Bay Freeport, the seventh leg of the 2002 Asian Formula Challenge, Asia's first truly international championship for Formula 3 and Formula Renault Cars.

The sixth leg was held at the Johor Circuit in Malaysia, where the 20-year-old Pastor ruled Rounds 11 and 12 to overtake the erstwhile leader, Franky Cheng of China, in the Asian Formula Renault Series.

The last time a Filipino captured an auto racing series was in the '80s, when the late Jovy Marcelo took the drivers' title in the United States Auto Racing Club Formula Atlantic Series.

GMA lauds PSG officer for successful defense of world title in powerlifting championship

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the victory of Lt. Col. Antonio Taguibao of the Presidential Security Group (PSG) for successfully defending his World Title in Powerlifting Championships for the third time last October 10 and 11 in Cordoba, Argentina.

The President described Taguibao as a world-class Filipino for bringing honor to the country. Taguibao serves as a veterinarian of the PSG's K-9 unit,

As reward, the President is bestowing Taguibao with P200,000 as prize and P100, 000 to the PSG as bonus. “Paratuluy-tuloy ang panalo mo (so that your victory will continue),” she said.

In this year's competition, Taguibao defended his World Masters title in the flyweight category (bodyweight from 114 pounds and below) to become World Champion for the third consecutive year.

Meanwhile, Taguibao's teammate Renato Dio won third place overall in the lightweight category (bodyweight from 165-181.5 lbs.). Dio improved his sixth place overall standing in last year's World Masters Powerlifting Championship in Saskatchewan, Canada.

Two years ago, Taguibao won three gold medals and one bronze in the 2000 World Masters Powerlifting Championships in Ustinad Labem in the Czech Republic in October 2000.

Taguibao won two gold medals in the Master A Category (40-49 years old) by lifting 165 kg in the squat event and 190 kg in the deadlift. He won a third gold with a total lift of 435 kg. He won the bronze with a lift of 80 kg in the bench press.

The Czech competition was the first international tournament participated in by the Powerlifting Association of the Philippines, which is supported by the Philippine Sports Commission and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

A year later, Taguibao defended his world title when he brought honors to the PSG and to the country for winning the gold medal in all four events of the flyweight (114 lbs.) category in the 2001 World Masters Powerlifting Championship in Saskatchewan, Canada in October 2001.

Taguibao lifted 385 lbs in the squat, 187 lbs. in the bench press and 435 lbs. in the dead lift for a total of 1007 lbs.

GMA okays measures to strengthen disaster response mechanism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, during the regular Cabinet meeting today, approved several measures aimed at strengthening the country's disaster response mechanism.

The President directed the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), chaired by Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, to draft a presidential issuance updating the NDCC's implementation of contingency plans that would incorporate the consequences of terrorist-initiated incidents.

Reyes cited the bombings that rocked the island resort of Bali, Indonesia, stressing that through the way it was carried out, one can deduce that it was carefully planned and timed to maximize the number of casualties.

To cope with an incident of similar magnitude, Secretary Reyes recommended the following measures that will improve the current system of handling such a disaster:

- To minimize confusion and chaos during emergency situations, local disaster coordinating councils (DCCs) should familiarize themselves, to include the local Philippine National Police (PNP) and Bureau of Fire Protection units under them, with operational procedures of the NDCC incident command system;
- Local DCCs should improve law enforcement within the incident area through the local police, auxiliaries and AFP units in the area;
- Local DCCs should strengthen their damage and needs assessment capability for post-disaster rapid assessment activities which shall be the basis for prioritizing needed resources;
- Local DCCs should mobilize emergency relief operations in accordance with the initial results of a rapid damage and needs assessment;
- Local chief executives should create an area coordination center in all local government units (LGUs). This will be a permanent facility that can also serve as emergency operations;
- Local DCCs should ensure the availability of temporary evacuation centers and transportation for hauling of evacuees, basic services for the evacuees and victims to include psycho-social care services, emergency medical service units for deployment during emergencies, and communication lines between the incident command posts and the area coordinating center (ACC); and

- Local DCCs should develop search and rescue capabilities and maintain linkages with volunteers response groups for possible deployment during emergencies.

In the event of a partial or complete incapacity of the local government, or the magnitude is beyond its capability to handle, the national command system takes over, Reyes said.

According to the NDCC chairman, the recommended measures are also aimed at enhancing the implementation of the government's pillars of policy and action.

Specifically, these measures are in conjunction with the policy that prescribed an internal focus against terrorism which calls for the support and active participation of all local government units down to the barangay level, non-government organizations and private citizens.

Cabinet officials asked to focus on priority projects not on 2004 polls, says Palace

Malacañang today denied reports that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has given the go-signal for her Cabinet secretaries interested in running for senator in the 2004 national elections to start campaigning now.

In an interview, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said on the contrary the President has called on her Cabinet secretaries to give full attention to their priority projects.

“Sa katunayan, gusto nang Pangulo na asikasuhin muna ng mga Cabinet officials yong mga priority projects na dapat ipatupad at huwag munang pag-isipan itong eleksiyon total malayo pa naman iyan (The truth is that the President wants the Cabinet officials to work on their priority projects and not to think of the elections which are still far),” Bunye said.

Bunye also continued to deny that there is going to be a revamp in the Cabinet.

“We have repeatedly denied that there will be a major revamp to be implemented November 30,” Bunye said.

But Bunye said that the President would make a major policy announcement around November 30. He said he did not have the details yet on this announcement.

Barangay info, assistance center project pilot-tested in 35 villages in Metro Manila

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. reported to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the Cabinet today that pilot-testing for the Gabay sa Mamamayan Aksyon (GMA) Center has been done successfully in 35 barangays in the National Capitol Region.

In his report to the Cabinet, Lina said the full implementation of the project, which seeks to establish information and action centers in every barangay nationwide, will start in January 2003 and be completed by June, 2003, with all barangays having a GMA Center.

The GMA Centers, ordered established through Executive Order 130 which was issued on September 30, 2002, ensure the people immediate access to information on government services such as livelihood and job opportunities, peace and order and public safety, health and sanitation, education and social welfare, agricultural support services, infrastructure development, environmental management and sports development.

The GMA Centers also ensure fast and efficient delivery of government services as the barangay residents and leaders themselves serve as frontliners in the provision of information and delivery of services.

The GMA Centers thus constitute a vital component of the President's campaign to win the war against poverty.

In his briefing for the Cabinet during its regular meeting this morning, Lina said the pre-implementation and piloting phase for the project is being conducted from September to December, 2002.

The GMA Centers are to be headed by the *Punong Barangay* or barangay head as executive officer. He will be assisted by the Barangay Kagawad or councilmen and the chairman of the Sangguniang Kabataan as head information action officers for the various government services.

The local government units in every town, city and province are expected to provide administrative, technical and financial assistance to the GMA Centers.

The national government would provide the GMA Centers with technical assistance through training, and ensure the supply of agency brochures and other reference materials responsive to the information needs of community residents.

The partner agencies for the various government services are:

- Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Labor and Employment for livelihood and job opportunities;
- Department of National Defense and Department of the Interior and Local Government for peace and order and public safety;
- Department of Health for health and sanitation;
- Department of Education and Department of Social Welfare and Development for Education and Social Welfare;
- Department of Agriculture for agricultural and support services;
- Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council and the Department of Public Works and Highways for housing and infrastructure development;
- Department of Environment and Natural Resources for environmental management; and
- Philippine Sports Commission for sports development.

GMA certifies anti-terror bill as urgent

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has certified as urgent the anti-terror bill to show the government's firm resolve to win in the fight against violence and terrorism in the country.

In a statement, Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao said that the certification of the anti-terror bill as urgent was made in response to the growing menace of terrorism not just inside the country but also in the entire civilized community of nations.

"Terrorism respects neither race nor religion. It knows no boundaries. It follows no laws and respects no Constitution," Tiglao said.

Tiglao said that at the end of the day, what would count is how to protect our children, our homes and our communities.

He said that the President is confident that the legislators can craft a law which will not only address the problem of terrorism but also would take into consideration the rights of persons who we are trying to protect.

In another development, Tiglao said the amnesty proposal being worked out by the Cabinet is a sincere effort of the government to welcome back to the mainstream of society those who have been misled into joining "a useless and futile campaign" to bring about a new order in our country.

"Many of these misguided Filipinos are tired of fighting and want to return home to their families," Tiglao said.

He said that the administration has been seriously implementing reforms that address the roots of their grievances.

“The amnesty offer is the government’s way of giving them a chance to once again live normal lives,” Tiglao said.

GMA accepts Ang resignation with regrets

Presidential Spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao today said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has accepted with regrets the resignation of Dante Ang as his Presidential Consultant on Public Relations.

“The President wishes him good luck in his business interests and she hopes that Mr. Ang’s business interests would redound to the benefit of the economy,” Tiglao said in a press briefing in Malacanang.

According to Tiglao, Ang resigned from his government post out of delicadeza. “And the President appreciates that kind of response from his consultant,” Tiglao said.

“And we have a press secretary who handles the President’s publicity needs,” he said.

Tiglao clarified that Ang would like to have time to cleanse his name.

“*Ang gusto niya ituloy-tuloy na ito* (He wants to continue this up to the end),” Tiglao said.

“That’s delicadeza and I think such kind of delicadeza is very praiseworthy,” Tiglao said.

GMA lauds Manila Bay crash rescuers, consoles relatives of victims

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Philippine Coast Guard, the Philippine Navy, the Philippine National Police and civilian volunteers for their swift action to recover the survivors and remaining casualties in the plane crash in Manila Bay.

The President motored to the PCG headquarters this afternoon after her regular Cabinet meeting in Malacañang to personally observe the search and rescue operations for victims of the Laoag International Airlines crash and get a briefing from Rear Admiral Reuben Lista, Coast Guard chief, on the status of retrieval operations.

Lista informed the President that early this morning, three more bodies were recovered by Philippine Navy frogmen. Lista also said a total of 16 fatalities have been identified and two other victims remained nameless.

Lista also told the President that a total of 15 survivors were accounted for and one passenger, an Australian, was still missing.

Lista assured the President that the PCG, the PNP, Navy frogmen and civilian volunteers are still working to recover the missing Australian national.

After the briefing, the President met with Cherrie Ann Mata to console her and express her deepest condolences over the death of her husband, passenger Jefferson Mata.

President also gave Mrs. Mata, who has been married for only nine months, a Mass card and financial assistance.

She also handed over three Mass cards to Australian Ambassador Ruth Pierce and expressed her condolences over the death of Australian nationals.

From the PCG headquarters, the President motored to La Funeraria Oro in Sampaloc, Manila and visited the wake of another plane crash victim, Joaquin Padilla, an engineer of the Department of Public Works and Highway assigned in Batanes, and Normita Mata.

The President also expressed her condolences and gave Mass cards and financial assistance to Virginia Padilla, wife of engineer Padilla, and Norman Mata, son of Normita.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 12, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213635/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov12.htm>

The President's Day: November 13, 2002

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- **GMA signs new Balikbayan law, 4 other bills**
- **GMA orders DOTC to conduct separate probe on Manila Bay plane crash**
- **GMA reveals plan to form Council of Economic Advisers**
- **GMA signs law extending period for filing applications for free patent to public lands**

GMA signs new Balikbayan law, 4 other bills

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today signed into law a bill amending the Balikbayan law, granting special privileges to overseas Filipino workers and former Filipinos and their families, and four other measures of national interest.

The new Balikbayan law, Republic Act No. 9174, acknowledges the contribution of the overseas Filipino workers and former Filipino citizens to the Philippine economy through the foreign exchange inflows and revenues they generate.

The new law also provides additional benefits and privileges to all overseas Filipino once they come and visit their motherland.

Among the perks is the “kabuhayan shopping privilege” allowing tax-exempt purchase of livelihood tools that would enable them to become economically self-reliant members of society upon their return to the country.

Such tools refer to instruments, including computers and accessories, necessary in the practice of one's trade or profession.

The law also entitles the balikbayan and his or her family to tax-exempt purchases in the amount of \$1,500 at duty-free shops; discounted rates in domestic carriers; and visa-free entry to the Philippines for a period of one year for foreign passport holders, among others.

The President also signed Republic Act No. 9175, also known as the Chain Saw Act of 2002, which regulates the ownership, possession, unlawful importation or manufacturing and use of chain saws to prevent them from being used in illegal logging or unauthorized clearing of forest.

The Chain Saw Act shall impose a stiff penalty on any person who sells, purchases, transfers the ownership, engages in the unlawful importation or manufacturing and distribution or otherwise disposes or possesses a chain saw without first securing the necessary permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

She also signed Republic Act No. 9176, or Free Patent Law, extending until December 31, 2020 the period for the filing of applications for administrative legalization and judicial confirmation of imperfect and incomplete titles to alienable and disposable lands of the public domain.

The President also signed Republic Act No. 9177, declaring the first day of Shawwal, the tenth month of the Islamic Calendar, as a national holiday for the observance of Eidul Fitr; and the tenth day of Zhul Hijja, the twelfth month of the Islamic Calendar, as a regional holiday in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) for the observance of Eidul Dha.

The President also signed Republic Act No. 9178, or Barangay Micro Business Enterprises (BMBEs) Act of 2002, in order to hasten the country's economic development enterprises.

GMA orders DOTC to conduct separate probe on Manila Bay plane crash

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza to conduct a separate investigation at the department level on the Laoag International Airline (LIA) Fokker 27 plane that crashed Monday into the Manila Bay.

“I have asked Larry Mendoza that the investigation must be elevated to him. I talked to him this morning. So, he is constituting a board at the level of the department to investigate the accident,” the Chief Executive said in her regular meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps.

The President said that while it is automatic for the Air Transportation Office (ATO) to investigate the accident, she had also asked Mendoza to “conduct an investigation at the department level.”

“People want to know what happened. Praise God our plane accidents are quite rare. So that when it happens people really want to know as soon as possible what happened and they want as much as possible an objective investigation,” she said.

The President pointed out that a C-130 of the Philippine Air Force will be used to transport the victims and their families to Batanes because now that the LIA planes are grounded, there are no flights to Batanes.

She stressed that even before the plane accident, she had released additional funds to the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) so that it can conduct more trainings for the country’s air safety inspectors.

“That’s why it is a coincidence or may be providential. I am not saying that there is a failure of inspection here. But what I am saying is that we are continuously upgrading the capability of the regulatory framework for air safety especially at the time when we have a terrorist threat,” she said.

The President said that Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin has released an initial P35 million upon her instructions from the budget of DOTC.

GMA reveals plan to form Council of Economic Advisers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today told reporters not to expect Cabinet changes on November 30 but rather major policy directions for the coming year.

In her regular luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President gave a hint of what to expect: “I want to form a Council of Economic Advisers made up of professional economists who are not in the executive.”

The President said changes in the Cabinet have been a continuing thing. “It is not exactly the same Cabinet I started with,” the President said.

She said here is nothing unusual to expect on November 30 with regard to the Cabinet. “Right now, I have nobody in mind for announcing on November 30,” the President said.

In revealing her plans for the formation of a Council of Economic Advisers, the President stressed the importance of having people who are not in government provide a different outlook.

“When you are already immersed in the work, you are in the forest,” the President said. “So it is very important to have people look at it from outside the forest.”

GMA signs law extending period for filing applications for free patent to public lands

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today signed Republic Act No. 9176, known as the Free Patent Law, extending until December 31, 2020 the period for the filing of applications for administrative legalization and judicial confirmation of imperfect and incomplete titles to alienable and disposable public lands.

The law, signed in the presence of members of the Senate and the House of Representatives at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall this morning, gives impetus to the President's campaign for agricultural modernization and the empowerment of the people.

The President said this law will enable landowners to secure financing for business ventures that they may wish to go into.

Landowners and claimants to the alienable and public domain lands will now have enough time to register their land.

However, the law provides that the extension period shall apply only where the area applied for does not exceed twelve hectares.

The applications for the free patents may be filed in the DENR – Community Environment and Natural Resources Office in every region.

After the establishment of the American government in the Philippines, the United States Congress passed the Philippine Bill of July 1, 1902 for the methods of disposing of the public domain ceded to the United States by Spain.

It authorized the Philippine government to dispose of the public agricultural lands in the country by means of free patent, among others.

In accordance with said authority, the Philippine Commission passed Public Land Law No. 926 which was later superseded by Act No. 2874 which in turn has been superseded by the present Public Land Law known as Commonwealth Act No. 141.

A deadline to avail for legalization (free patent) was set by Republic Act No. 107 until December 31, 1957. This deadline was again re-set since there were many who were not able to apply. The last deadline was on December 31, 2000 and yet many still failed to apply.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 13, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029214008/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov13.htm>

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- **GMA presents suspected Abu Sayyaf bomb squad leader to media**
- **Batangas natural gas power plant lessens country's dependency on imported energy — GMA**
- **No cabinet revamp on Nov. 30, says Palace**
- **Malacañang has no business in Senate Presidency row — Bunye**
- **GMA cites KEPCO for providing electricity to Batangas barangays, investing in RP**
- **GMA prods town Mayors to play active role in anti-terrorism, anti-poverty programs**
- **Municipal Mayors play key role in a strong republic, says GMA**

GMA presents suspected Abu Sayyaf bomb squad leader to media

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the intelligence agents of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) for their swift action leading to the arrest of a suspected leader of the Abu Sayyaf Group's (ASG) urban special operations and explosive team Tuesday afternoon in Pasay City.

The President presented to media the suspected ASG bombing suspect, identified as Abdulmukim Edris y Ong who uses the aliases Mukim Edris, Hamil Hamja Ajilul, Alex, Ryan at Villamor Air Base minutes before she flew to Batangas City this morning.

The arrested bombing suspect has a P1-million reward for his capture as per joint Department of National Defense-Department of the Interior and Local Government memorandum NR:01-2001 dated June 12, 2001.

In a press conference held at Kalayaan Lounge of Villamor Air Base, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Benjamin Defensor informed the President that Edris was captured by the Philippine Air Force's 300th Air Intelligence and Security Group headed by Lt. Col. Francisco Cruz in coordination with the Intelligence Service of the AFP, PNP Intelligence Group and the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA).

President commended Cruz and the men for the successful operation. "Congratulations to you and to your men. Keep up the good work," the President said.

Defensor said the arrest of Edris was the result of six months of intelligence operations, dubbed as "Operation Gideon-Alfa," and the continuing vigilance and close coordination among the government intelligence community to uncover and neutralize terrorist plans and personalities.

Defensor reported to the President that Edris was arrested by virtue of 11 arrest orders for kidnapping and serious illegal detention, triple frustrated murder and murder issued by the Regional Trial Court of Isabela, Basilan.

The AFP chief said Edris was implicated as the mastermind in the bombing of Puriculture Food Court center last October 28, 2001 and the simultaneous bombings in Shoppers Plaza, Shop-O-Rama and Shoppers Center in Zamboanga City last October 17, 2002.

Edris and a certain Abbas were pinpointed as the ones who prepared the improvised explosive devices (IED) used in the bomb attacks.

Defensor added that Edris admitted that he trained for one month together with two others in car-bomb preparation and assembly of IED using cellular phones and digital clock as activating devices by two Yemeni nationals believed connected with the Al-Qaeda and the Jema'ah Islamiyah cell in Southeast Asia.

He said Edris was also believed to have participated in the Dos Palmas kidnapping in Palawan two years ago.

Batangas natural gas power plant lessens country's dependency on imported energy — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today flew to Batangas City this morning to witness the completion of the largest natural gas manpower generation facility in the Philippines.

Recounting her visit to the Ilijan Power Plant in Batangas before members of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) who were having their 12th General Assembly at the Manila Hotel, the President said what she witnessed this morning was a milestone event for the country.

“Because now, with the opening of the Ilijan Natural Gas Power Plant, more than 52 percent of our total energy requirements is supplied by resources from right here in the Philippines,” the President.

Prior to her administration, the President said, the country was importing most of its energy resources.

This Ilijan power plant not only accelerates the development of the country's indigenous industry but also enables increased utilization of environment-friendly fuel, because natural gas is environment friendly, she said.

The Ilijan Plant, the President pointed out, is also the largest investment exposure of South Korea in the Philippines, with a total project cost of \$1 billion.

“And the good news is that the investors told me they are still looking for other investment opportunities in the Philippines,” the President said.

Along that line, the President exhorted the municipal mayors to court these investors as well as other prospects to invest in their localities.

No cabinet revamp on Nov. 30, says Palace

Malacañang said today there will be no major re-organization of the Cabinet or major moves on November 30.

Press Secretary Ignacio “Toting” Bunye said during a press briefing in Malacañang that the matter of appointments or retention of Cabinet members is a prerogative which the President can exercise in the manner that she deems fit.

Bunye said reorganization is a presidential prerogative and it is only the President who can decide when and how, as the situation warrants.

“What is important is everything is being done in the national interest. So if somebody has to be affected, if somebody will be affected, that will be done and the proper announcement will be made,” Bunye said.

“Right now, we do not want to preempt the President,” Bunye stressed.

Yesterday during the luncheon meeting of the President with the Malacañang Press Corp, she said changes in the Cabinet have been a continuing thing. The President pointed out that the present composition of her Cabinet is not the same as when she assumed office.

The President said there is nothing unusual to expect on November 30 with regard to the Cabinet. “Right now, I have nobody in mind for announcing on November 30,” she said.

What the President revealed were plans to form a Council of Economic Advisers made up of professional economists who are not in the executive.

Malacañang has no business in Senate Presidency row — Bunye

Malacañang today reiterated that the executive branch has no business in the internal affair of the Senate especially with regards to the “gentleman’s agreement” between Senate President Franklin Drilon and Senator Renato Cayetano on term-sharing for the Senate presidency.

Press Secretary Ignacio “Toting” Bunye said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will not meddle in the issue of the Senate presidency because she consider the matter as an “internal affair” which only the senators can resolve.

“All I know is that our President is not in a business to meddle in the Senate presidency which she considers as an internal affair of the Senate,” Bunye said in his regular press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon.

Based on reports, Drilon said that he would honor his commitments to yield the post to Cayetano after 18 months.

Reports also said both Drilon and Cayetano had a “gentleman’s agreement” to share the position for a three-year term. Drilon’s three-year term ends in December.

GMA cites KEPCO for providing electricity to Batangas barangays, investing in RP

ILIJAN, BATANGAS CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded a presidential citation to the Korean Electric Corporation for investing in the development of the Philippine electric industry and generating jobs for Filipinos.

The President, who flew here to mark the completion ceremonies of the 1200-Megawatt Ilijan Natural Gas-Combined Cycle Power Plant, awarded the citation to Kepco president and chief executive officer Kang Dong Suk.

In brief remarks, the President noted Kepco’s significant contribution to government efforts to provide electricity in the barangays.

She revealed that in Kang’s letter to her, the Kepco chief expressed his company’s willingness to help in the electrification of 200 barangays.

“This is over and above the \$1 billion that they have put up in this plant, the biggest Korean investment in the Philippines today,” the President said.

Kepco will be working closely with its partner, Kepco Iligan Corp. (Keilco), in providing electricity to the barangays.

Aside from awarding the citation, the President also led the ceremonial turn-on of the Kepco power plant.

The new plant, which lies on a picturesque 25-hectare area by the sea, was put up under a build-operate-transfer scheme, with Kepco as sponsor and National Power Corp. as off-taker.

Its operation actually started in June 2002 and its target availability is expected to last for 20 years.

The 1200-MW plant has two blocks of 600-MW each, with two gas turbines running on 200 MW and one steam turbine on 200 MW.

The plants boasts of having the lowest level of sulphur.

It is considered a pillar of the \$5-billion natural gas industry in the country.

To keep the environment clean, Kepco said it strictly monitoring Stack Emission and Ambient Air quality as well as the effect, if there is any, on the water and coral reefs.

The President was accompanied during her visit here by Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, Jr., Rep. Alipio Badelles, chairman of the House Committee on Energy, and Roland Quilala, NPC president and chief executive officer.

Among those who welcomed the President were Batangas Gov. Hermilando Mandanas, Batangas City Mayor Eduardo Dimacula, Batangas Rep. Francisco Perez (2nd District), Korean Ambassador Son Sang Ha, Keilco chairman Chung Kyung Nam, Keilco president and CEO Lee Gil Gu, Mitsubishi Corp. executive vice president Naoshia Tonomura, Mirant Managing Director for Asean Region Frederick Kuester, Southern Luzon Commander Major Gen. Roy Kyamko and Philippine National Police Region IV-A Director Chief Supt. Enrique Galang.

GMA prods town Mayors to play active role in anti-terrorism, anti-poverty programs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo urged municipal mayors to take a more active role in the Department of the Interior and Local Government's (DILG) police and community-based anti-terrorism plan.

The President, speaking before members of the League of the Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) during their 12th General Assembly at the Manila Hotel today, specifically underscored the importance of implementing the four-point plan in the local government's participation in the war against criminality and terrorism. Following is the four-point plan:

- For the governors, city and municipal mayors to immediately convene their peace and order councils or committees;
- These councils and committees must adopt or implement their public safety plans, including a provision for reporting and feedback mechanism, to ensure regular monitoring of unusual and suspicious movements of people in their localities;
- Barangay assemblies all over the country, under the guidance of the mayors, must convene and educate their constituents on how to deal and cope with terrorist threats in their barangays; and
- All public safety officers must undergo mobilization and training through distance education on intelligent gathering and on the reporting system. This means the conduct of daily "rondas" or neighborhood patrols and searches in accordance with law within their areas of jurisdiction.

The President also told the mayors to take note of the Cabinet approval the other day of the draft of a presidential issuance updating the National Disaster Coordinating Council's (NDCC) contingency plans and the management of the consequences of terrorist incidents. This includes the participation of local government officials, especially the mayors, the President said.

She explained that when an incident actually occurs, it is the mayors who will be in charge of such matters as how to rescue and how to make sure that the place is safe.

The President likewise commended the LMP's workshop for confronting head-on the issues concerning the use of a municipal identification system. "Maraming salamat sa inyo doon," she said.

The President likewise lauded the town mayors for including in their agenda the issue of the selective arming of barangay tanods or neighborhood police in high-risk areas.

The condition for this, the President said, is "they must be accredited as CAFGUs (Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit) with commensurate training," the President said.

"And I am also glad that because the fight against terrorism must go hand and hand with the fight against poverty, you are supporting the Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan or Kalahi program, that was put together as a common strategy for poverty reduction," the President.

The President said that the war against poverty and the war against terrorism are two sides of one coin.

Municipal Mayors play key role in a strong republic, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today highlighted the important role of the municipal mayors in building a strong republic saying its credibility and moving force largely rest upon their shoulders.

Speaking at the 12th General Assembly of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) at the Manila Hotel, the President cited to the municipal mayors the two essential attributes of a strong Philippine Republic which her administration is aiming to achieve.

First, the Republic must be autonomous of dominant classes and sectors so that it represents the people's interest, and not only the interest of the powerful minority groups," the President said.

Second, the Republic must have the capacity, represented through strong institutions and a strong bureaucracy, to implement its policy and deliver its services, she added.

Expounding on these two attributes, the President said the first and foremost strong institution of a strong Philippine Republic is an effective government, from the national to the local governments, with a professional and dedicated civil service.

"Such a combination for an effective government delivers basic services for every one, the most important of which is an environment of peace and order, and the rule of law and the necessary infrastructure," the President pointed out.

In addition, the President said that an effective Republic must help its poorest and weakest citizens, empower them and dismantle the structures that make them poor and weak.

The President called for the strengthening of the country's justice system to become an efficient institution for all, not just for the powerful, saying that an effective government rests on the rule of law.

This is what her administration is seeking to achieve, she said, "an effective government that performs."

"A strong republic makes sure that essential services, especially peace and order, and the necessary infrastructures reach the people, whether these services are provided for by government or by the private sector," the President said.

The 1,496 members of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines, headed by its president, Mayor Ramon Guico, Jr., presented a resolution to the President, which calls for the adoption of the national identification system, arming of the barangay tanods and the implementation of nationally-funded projects to fight criminality and terrorism and win the war against poverty within the decade.

The mayors also tackled in their 12th General Assembly other programs such as environmental governance, agrarian reform, agricultural modernization and local governance performance.

Mayor Guico, who is also president of the Pangasinan Mayors League, said there is a popular clamor among local leaders to support the national ID system but mayors are pushing for its early implementation on the local level while Congress has yet to pass a law for its national implementation.

The general assembly of municipal mayors at the Manila Hotel was ushered in by the opening of government booths that doubled as express lane for national government agencies to provide quick responses to concerns of municipal mayors attending the conference, from the followup of projects being implemented in municipalities to release of funds intended for the local government units.

Among the Cabinet officials who attended the occasion were Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Agrarian Reform Hernani Braganza and National Anti-Poverty Commission Lead Convenor Teresita Deles.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 14, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213419/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov14.htm>

The President's Day: November 15, 2002

15 NOVEMBER 2002

- **Bush assures GMA of continued U.S. support in war against terrorism**
- **GMA welcomes 150 NPA rebel returnees**
- **GMA lauds joint rehab project of PNR-Sino firms**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao**
- **GMA urges foreign business leaders to continue to share vision of strong republic**
- **GMA assures foreign investors of continued good governance**

Bush assures GMA of continued U.S. support in war against terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night received the assurance of United States President George W. Bush of continued US support for the Philippine government's efforts to combat terrorism.

The US President pledged US assistance during a telephone call to Manila to discuss with the Philippine leader the current situation in the war on terrorism.

Mr. Bush "expressed appreciation for President Arroyo's leadership in combating terrorism in the Philippines, and pledged continued US support for her government's effort," White House Deputy Press Secretary Scott McClellan told White House reporters during his daily briefing in Washington.

The Philippine President has been at the forefront of regional efforts to combat terrorism in the Southeast Asian region.

She was among the first world leaders to support the US President's call for a global coalition to fight international terrorism.

The White House spokesman said "we are making tremendous progress" in the global war against terrorism.

There is a global coalition of 90 countries in the war against terrorism working to find, to hunt down and bring terrorists to justice, wherever they are, McClellan said.

Some 167 countries are also working closely together to block terrorist assets, cutting the flow of terrorist money through a number of funding pipelines.

The White House also said some 60,000 US troops are deployed around the world, including the Philippines.

GMA welcomes 150 NPA rebel returnees

BARAS, Rizal – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today welcomed back to the fold of the law some 150 former members and sympathizers of the New People's Army (NPA) from Rizal province who were presented to her at the Multi-Purpose Gym of Barangay Pinugay here.

"Welcome back, my countrymen and countrywomen. Hindi kayo magsisi na kayo ay nagbalik-loob (You will not regret your coming back to the fold of the law)," the President said.

The rebel returnees were mostly members of the urban poor communities in 17 barangays in six towns of Rizal, namely, Rodriguez, Tanay, Baras, Pililia, Morong and Antipolo.

The President said the national government will be giving to the surrenderees and others who are planning to come down from the mountains core shelters, or munting pabahay located at Barangay Pinugay here. The land was donated by the provincial government of Rizal.

“So isasama natin sa Kalahi program ang munting pabahay for the rebel returnees (We will include in the Kalahi program the construction of small houses for the rebel returnees), the President said, citing as a model the government’s housing program in Baseco in Port Area, Manila.

The core shelters, the President said, were meant to be temporary homes for the residents in Baseco until the government could find another place for them.

The President, however, said the residents were satisfied with the beautiful but small “bahay-kubos” or huts which were bigger and better than their old dwellings.

“So, okay na ito, bahala na kaming magpalaki pag umunlad ang aming kabuhayan (This is all right. We will rebuild and make extensions as our income grows),” the President quoted the residents of Baseco as saying.

Aside from the housing program, each rebel returnee received cash assistance of P2,500 from the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, a check for P2,000 from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, one-year free medical assistance from PhilHealth Insurance Corporation and food packages from the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

The former NPA rebels surrendered to the officers and men of the 2nd Infantry Division under the command of Maj. Gen. Efren Abu.

According to the surrenderees, life is hard in the mountains. There is no source of income, and even if they plant vegetables, there is no market since the marketplace is too far away.

General Abu said these rebels came to recognize that the government was sincere in helping those who wish to go back to the folds of the law and lead normal, productive lives.

The former NPAs took their oath of allegiance to the Philippine Constitution before the President.

Upon her arrival in the area, the President inspected the high-powered weapons seized and captured from the rebels which were displayed in an area near the stage.

GMA lauds joint rehab project of PNR-Sino firms

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked the Philippine National Railways (PNR) and two major companies in China for their effort to finance the rehabilitation of Mainline South railways from Calamba, Laguna to Albay and the extension of Mainline South to Matnog, Sorsogon.

The President made the statement after she witnessed the signing of Memorandum of Understanding held at Malacañang’s Ceremonial Hall this afternoon between the PNR and China National Technical Import-Export Corporation (CNTIC) and the China National Machinery Import & Export Corporation (CMC).

This project will constitutes a key component of the President’s vision of a national railway system under an integrated Philippine National Rail Authority (PNRA).

The MOU was signed in the presence of the President together with House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Chinese Ambassador Wang Chungui.

PNR Chairperson Josefa Aquino and Jose Ma. I. Sarasola, general manager of PNR, were the signatories on behalf of PNR while Jiang Xinsheng, president of CNTIC, and Li Bin, president of CMC, signed for the Chinese companies.

Also present during the signing ceremony were Zhang Ru En, vice president of China General Technology (Group) Holding, Ltd., parent company of CNTIC and CMC; and Yu Shizong, Economic and Commercial Counsellor of China.

The Chinese group is committed to complete the project study within 120 days and subsequently develop a firm, fast-track implementation of the schedule with 100% financing under the most favorable obtainable terms available from the People's Republic of China.

The completion of Mainline South will kick-start the economic development of the entire Southern Luzon region.

With regards to the creation of a rail extension to Matnog, Sorsogon, the government expects an economic magnet which will spur trade between Southern Luzon and the Visayas region.

Statement of Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao

Changes in Cabinet posts are undertaken through presidential actions, not through media speculations, and will be undertaken at any time there is a need to do so.

So-called "courtesy resignations" are neither necessary nor relevant for the President's decision to make Cabinet changes. She will make changes the moment there is a need to do so, with or without courtesy resignations.

All Cabinet members have individually expressed to the President that they have the fullest confidence in her judgment to make Cabinet changes. They all have emphasized that they serve at the pleasure of the President, and that they will leave government the minute the President thinks they are or can no longer be effective in their posts.

It is deplorable that one newspaper has been persistent for several days now in claiming – always quoting unnamed sources — a plan for a Cabinet "revamp". There is simply no such plan.

The Meralco controversy which started way back in 1994 involving whether or not the company overcharged customers since that year has been decided upon by the Third Division of the Supreme Court, appealable to the Court *en banc*.

The Executive branch of the government is mandated by the Constitution to implement all the decisions of the judicial branch of government.

We take exception to the bleak economic scenario Meralco's lawyers have foisted before the Supreme Court and the media, if their client loses its case. Meralco's lawyers should not spread in the media unfounded fears and claims intended to influence the justices' decision.

With the ongoing deregulation of the power sector, Meralco is one of the country's many electricity distribution companies. There is no doubt at all that our financial system and our national electricity infrastructure will weather the problems of one corporation.

GMA urges foreign business leaders to continue to share vision of strong republic

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged foreign business leaders to continue to share her vision of building a strong Republic.

In her speech before a luncheon meeting of the joint foreign chambers of commerce at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City, the President said her administration has done things nobody was able to do for many years.

She said that the government has worked hard to deliver a stable economy.

“In moving towards a strong Republic, when you are starting from what many have considered for a long time as a soft state, you often have to wait a while before you get the dividend of economic reform,” she said.

“Let me remind you that I have been in office 21 months. It takes three years to construct your factory from the time you conceptualized it. When I say I am moving towards a strong Republic, don’t expect that it should be there the next day,” she said.

“Before you get there, you go through all of these economic and political difficulties. I am willing to go through them but I ask you, the members of the international business community, let us share this vision together,” the President added.

In stressing the need for cooperation and unity, the President enumerated eight points that she intends to tackle in the six months. These are:

- promote the growth of the small and medium enterprises, which are the most effective and efficient leaders of capital.
- jumpstart housing, a sector considered to effect the biggest multiplier.
- reduce transport costs from Mindanao to Luzon through a P30 billion roll on-roll off port and ferry system to be funded by the Development Bank of the Philippines.
- infrastructure to decongest Metro Manila, with focus on the North Rail between Metro Manila and Clark and the continuation of the South Toll Road all the way to Batangas Port.
- mobilize the contribution of the Presidential Commission on Good Government to the fiscal resources of the government, particularly the \$600-million Marcos deposits with the Philippine National Bank and liquefy the coconut levy’s remaining 27 percent share of San Miguel Corp.
- make Makati a specific urban tourist destination with its compact, easy to secure location, world-class mall and entertainment facilities and internationally considered cheap shopping
- stimulate private investment in agriculture by pursuing legislation to enable banks to accept agricultural land as collateral
- Begin the complete staff work to make the reclamation area in Roxas Boulevard a tourism complex to be called the Bagong Nayong Pilipino Tourism Estate.

The President noted that her administration is an active reformist government. “I would be the last person to pretend that we’re always 100 percent right but we have a strong record to look to. We offer it at a time of intense international uncertainty and concern. We offer a capacity as well, a record of stability, of predictability and of knowing what we believe in a what we stand for,” she said.

In the light of negative travel advisories on the Philippines, the President urged the foreign business leaders to help bring to their countries and governments a true picture of the country.

GMA assures foreign investors of continued good governance

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured that she is working diligently to ensure that the people get the professional and clean government that they deserve.

The President made the assurance during her remarks before a luncheon meeting of the joint foreign chambers of commerce at Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City.

The President said she focuses on the need to execute the policy of fighting corruption, delivering the essential services and maintaining peace and order.

“Fighting corruption is an essential part of the broader policy that we know as good governance. I believe that the primordial requirement in building a strong Republic is good governance and fighting corruption starts with setting the example at the top,” she said.

The President noted that even her husband, First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo, is not above the law though she consider intrigues against him as simply an occupational hazard.

She said that although evidence showed the accusations were false and politically-motivated, she still encouraged her husband to face the Senate investigation and let the investigations go wherever evidence takes them.

“Because my husband has humbled himself by submitting to Senate investigations, I have enhanced my moral authority to investigate any serious allegations and hold anyone accountable if corruption is found to take place,” she said.

On corruption within the courts, the President said that with the help of the Supreme Court, some of the erring state prosecutors and bureau directors will get their walking papers very shortly.

Meanwhile, the President announced the creation of a one-stop shop that would ensure an efficient, clear and transparent service to foreign investors on key areas like taxation, customs, immigration and labor relations.

The President also emphasized the importance of the sanctity of contracts, a concern of the foreign business leaders.

“We respect the sanctity of contract even as we are aggressive in correcting what we see is illegal or grossly onerous,” she said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: November 15, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213920/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov15.htm>

The President's Day: November 16, 2002

16 NOVEMBER 2002

- **Presidential broadcast message**
- **GMA congratulates Bayer's five young environmental envoys**
- **Guardians express full support for GMA**

Presidential broadcast message

Magandang araw po sa inyong lahat.

Sa ating hangaring maitayo ang isang malakas at matatag na Republika, dapat nating palakasin at patatagin ang *partnership* ng iba't-ibang sektor ng ating lipunan. Kabilang na rito ang ugnayan ng *national government* at *local government units*, ng Ehekutibo, Lehislatura, ng kapulisan at komunidad.

Sa aking pagdalo sa *General Assembly* ng *League of Municipalities of the Philippines* noong Huwebes, binigyang-diin ko ang mahalagang papel na ginagampanan ng ating mga *mayors* para maging mapayapa at mabilis na umunlad ang ating bansa. Ang ating Republika ay lubos na umaasa sa kanilang mga pagsisikap dahil sila ang direktang nakikipag-ugnayan sa mga mamamayan. Ang kredibilidad ng gobyerno at pananaw ng mga tao sa matapat na pamamahala ay naka-atang higit sa lahat sa kanilang mga balikat.

Kaya, natutuwa ako na sa ginanap nilang pagpupulong, sama-sama nilang binalangkas ang maaari nilang gawin upang ipatupad ang mga programang tutugon sa kahirapan, lilikha ng mga gawaing pang-kaunlaran at magpapasigla ng ating ekonomiya. Pinagtibay nila ang mga plano para mapanatili ang kapayapaan at itaguyod ang sapat na pagkain, trabaho, pabahay at edukasyon sa kanilang mga nasasakupan. Ang mga ito ay angkop na pagkilos bilang suporta sa ating mga pambansang adhikain.

Isang halimbawa nito ang kanilang panukalang magpatupad ng *Municipal Identification System*. Naglaan na rin sila ng salapi para maka-likha ng *intelligence network* na susubaybay sa mga kahina-hinalang kaganapan at kilos ng mga tao sa kanilang lugar. Ako ay nagagalak na kusang-loob nilang pinag-iibayo ang ating laban kontra sa krimen at terorismo *on the ground in our communities*.

Natutuwa rin ako sa magandang samahan ng *Executive* at *Legislative branches* ng ating pamahalaan. Ang pinakahuling patunay nito ay ang limang bagong batas na aking nilagdaan. Isa rito ay tahasang makakatulong sa pagpapalago ng ekonomiya sa kanayunan, ang Batas Republika Bilang 9178, o *Magna Carta for Barangay Business Enterprises*.

Pasisiglahin nito ang pagtatayo ng maliliit na negosyo sa mga barangay, hindi sila kailangang magbayad ng *income tax*. Magandang dagdag ito sa ating programang "Isang Bayan, Isang Produkto, Isang Milyong Piso" na naglalayong palawakin ang *small and medium-scale enterprises* sa ating mga lungsod at bayan.

Ang partisipasyon naman ng komunidad sa ating *anti-terrorism plan* ay napakahalaga para mas maging epektibo ang ating pagpapatupad ng batas.

Marami sa mga tagumpay ng *police operations* nitong mga huling buwan ay bunga ng bugso ng impormasyong binigay ng mga mamamayan tungkol sa kasamaang nagaganap sa kanilang paligid — mula sa pagkapatay sa mga *kidnapper* na tulad ni Faisal Marohombsar at Rolando Patinio hanggang sa pagkahuli sa mga suspek sa pagbomba sa Kidapawan at Zamboanga.

Sa ating *10-Point Police-Community Anti-Terrorism Plan*, ang mga mamamayan ay hinihikayat na maging alerto at kaagad *i-report* sa mga awtoridad ang mga kahina-hinalang tao, bagahe o iba pang bagay na kanilang mapapansin. Ang mga may-ari ng mga establisiyemento naman ay hinihimok na pahusayin pa ang kanilang seguridad at

siyasating mabuti ang mga pumapasok at kanilang dala-dalahan sa mga gusali. Ang mga *sectoral organization* naman, tulad ng NGO's, mga grupo ng simbahan, at mga asosasyong sibiko, ay inaasahang tutulong para ipabatid sa mga mamamayan kung papano nila haaharapin ang anumang banta ng krimen o terorismo.

Malaki rin ang maitutulong ng mga *local government units*, mga barangay, at lalung-lalo na ang mga mamamayan sa ating kampanya laban sa *graft and corruption*.

Maaari ninyong *i-monitor* ang pagpapatupad ng mga proyekto ng gobyerno, tulad ng imprastruktura, at siguraduhin na walang iregularidad o anomalyang nagaganap dito. Maaari rin ninyong isumbong ang mga nagtrabaho sa pamahalaan na nagpapayaman sa kanilang tungkulin at namumuhay ng marangya, kagaya nang ipinag-utos kong *lifestyle check* sa matataas na opisyal ng aking administrasyon. Tiyakin lamang ninyo na mayroon kayong matibay na ebidensiya para suportahan ang inyong alegasyon nang sa ganoon ay hindi ito maging maliwanag na paninira lamang.

Ang ganitong mga pagka-kasama at pakikipag-ugnayan ang kinakailangan ng ating matatag na Republikang Pilipinas. Ito ay isang Republika na may mga epektibong institusyon para protektahan ang mahihina. Ang isang matatag na Republika ay may mapagkaka-tiwalaang pagpapatupad ng mga batas para tiyakin ang katarungan para sa lahat. Ang isang matatag na Republika ay may masiglang kultura na pananagutan ng bawa't isa upang ang bawa't mamamayan ay maging mahalagang bahagi ng ating pagiging isang bansa.

Ganyan ang pangarap nating malakas at matatag na Republikang Pilipinas. Kaya, palakasin at patatagin natin ang ating samahan upang makamit natin ang pangarap na iyan.

Maraming salamat po.

GMA congratulates Bayer's five young environmental envoys

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the top five Bayer Young Environmental Envoys, who, based on the presentation and defense of their respective action plans, were proclaimed winners during awards night held at the Heritage Hotel on September 23, 2002.

The President, during a courtesy call in Malacañang, wished these five young envoys good luck when they embark on an educational trip to Germany from November 17 to 23. They were accompanied to Malacañang by Senator Loren Legarda-Leviste.

Together with their counterparts from Thailand, Singapore and India, these envoys will have the opportunity to observe environmental best practices in a highly developed country like Germany.

The Bayer Young Environmental Envoy Program originated in Thailand in 1995 under the auspices of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and a group of companies operating in Thailand.

Bayer Thai has always been a major supporter of the program that seeks to educate the youth in the global efforts to save and protect the environment.

Owing to its success, the project expanded to an international level. In 2001, Bayer Philippines decided to adopt the same project in the country.

Bayer Philippines and Luntiang Pilipinas program established a joint project in cooperation with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to look for qualified applicants for environmental envoys.

Applicants were required to submit their resumes and write an essay on "My personal contribution to the environment and how it has made a difference" in no more than 500 words.

During their call on the Palace, the five envoys presented to the President their action plans, while at the same time sought her endorsement that these be implemented in their respective localities with the help of their governors.

Bonar Laureto from the Central Mindanao University in Musuan, Bukidnon presented his action plan on non-industrial solid waste segregation program.

Shenna Rhea Maranguit of the University of the Immaculate Conception in Davao City expounded on her Sagip watershed action plan, while Jennifer Orbeso of the Universidad de Santa Isabel in Naga City, explained her “three year development plan for Universidad de Santa Isabel Ecological Park.

Ivan Pumaren of the West Visayas State University in La Paz, Iloilo presented his composting project and Stephanie Sunshine Sy of the De La Salle University in Manila gave an action plan for her “pay it green forward” project.

Guardians express full support for GMA

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna — The Guardians Philippines Anti-Crime Organization Incorporated (GPI) today expressed full support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her administration during the First National Congress of the GPI held at the Philippine Council of Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD) complex here.

The GPI, through its national president Bernard Corela, presented a signed manifesto of support to the President.

The manifesto declared the group’s unequivocal support for the President’s programs and projects, including those that address poverty and efforts to lift the Filipino nation and its people.

“Maraming salamat sa inyong suporta (Thank you for your support),” the President said in her speech.

The President said she believes in the sincerity of the Guardians efforts to bring peace and prosperity to the nation.

“The various activities you have undertaken this year indicate your mission of relevance and involvement in nation-building,” she said.

The President noted that the Guardians have come a long way since its inception years ago.

She further noted that times have changed so much in such a short time as information technology has rapidly succeeded in changing lifestyle.

“Kailangan natin ng bagong paraan ng pagsugpo sa krimen at lalong kailangan natin ng bagong pananaw para sa lahat ng mga nagnanais sumali sa laban sa kriminalidad. Kaya pinupuri ko kayo sa inyong pagkukusang makipagtulungan upang magapi ang terorismo at ibang uri ng krimen sa bansa (We need new ways of combating crimes and, more so, new ideas for those who wish to join the fight against criminality. I praise you all for your voluntary support to eradicate terrorism and other forms of criminality),” she said.

She enjoined the leaders of the group to inspire their members to take on the challenges of responsible citizenship.

“I know and I hope and I’m confident that you will inspire the rest of your colleagues who are all over the country and even all over the world along the road of responsible citizenship,” the President said.

The President also noted the Guardians advocacy of democracy, unity, peace, stability and progress. “These are the very same aspirations of a strong Philippine Republic. Democracy, through strong institution of representation. Peace, through strong institutions of conflict resolution and stability, through strong institutions of justice,” she said.

Meanwhile, the President said she is designating retired Police Gen. Nestorio Gualberto (former Chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group), to draw proposals and necessary papers for the conduct of orientation seminars and trainings for Guardian members.

The seminar, dealing with aspects of counterterrorism, is to be handled by the PNP.

“Bagamat tapos na ang career niya bilang police, inaasahan ko pa rin na hindi pa tapos ang kanyang papel sa aking administrasyon. Meron pa siyang second career na inaasahan kong makatulong sa aking pagbuo ng matatag na Republika ng Pilipinas,” (Although his career as a policeman is over, I still hope he still has a role to play in my administration. He still has a new career, and that is, help me build a strong Republic), the President said.

The President praised Gualberto for successfully apprehending the syndicates behind fake videos and raiding illegal video factories just before he retired.

“I said to him, what a fitting curtain call for your police career,” she said.

The President recalled that her office made available a P1 Million loan for the group’s livelihood programs.

“Our strong Republic requires the efforts of all citizens to fortify the economy and win the war against terrorism and poverty. Nasa pagkakaisa at pagtutulungan ang katatagan ng republika kaya salamat na narito kayo. Palagay ko gusto kong asahan na ang ibig sabihin nito ay sinasamahan ninyo ako parati. Magtayo tayo ng malakas at matatag na Republika ng Pilipias,” (The strength of a Republic is in our unity and your support, and for this, I thank you. It’s my hope that your support means you are with me. Be with me always. Let us build a strong and firm Republic), she said.

The President was welcomed at the occasion by Laguna Governor Teresita Lazaro, Los Banos Mayor Cesar Perez, Laguna Rep. Joaquin Chipeco (2nd district), Calamba City Mayor Severino Lara, guardians Grand Master Founder Liborio Jangao, GPI International Chairman Nestorio Gualberto, GPI National Adviser Major Gen. Alberto Braganza, Southern Luzon Commander Major Gen. Roy Kyamko and Philippine National Police Region 4-A Director Enrique Galang.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. also attended the event.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: November 16, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029130202/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov16.htm>

The President's Day: November 17, 2002

17 NOVEMBER 2002

- **GMA to youth: Pray in time of challenges and for discernment**

GMA to youth: Pray in time of challenges and for discernment

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday advised the youth to make prayerful discernment and look for the confluence of events in times of challenges and major decisions in their lives.

The President, who made an unscheduled visit to the First Youth for Christ Metro Manila Conference here Saturday (Nov. 16) in the Philippine High School for the Arts, said she based many of her career decisions on these two things.

She said it is easy to discern what is wrong and right, sin or not sin, but it is sometimes difficult to discern what God wants us to do.

“Sa aking buong karera, mula nang ako ay naguumpisa pa lamang, kinilala ko ang discernment, papano maka-discern (In my whole career, even from the start I have recognized discernment, how I can discern). What does God want to do for you,” the President said.

The President told the youth to work to have a prayerful common sense. “Magdasal para mabigyan ng linaw ng Panginoon. Gamitin ang utak para mag-analyze kung ano ang dapat gawin at hintayin sa mga kilos ng panahon kung iko-confirm ng Lord o hindi niya iko-confirm yung inaakala nating yun ang gusto niyang gawin (Pray so the Lord may grant you enlightenment. Use your mind in analyzing what should be done and let the confluence of events confirm the Lord's will),” the President said.

She said that in other words, after praying and prayerful analyzing, one must watch out for the confluence of events.

The Chief Executive noted that doing so helped her accept events in life.

She noted that her unscheduled visit to the YFC event is an example of a confluence of events, saying she had a schedule with the Guardians Philippines Inc. at a nearby venue, which had been arranged early on.

“But I found out that you are here, and so I feel that God wants me to be with you,” she said.

The President related that during the impeachment crisis, her popularity rating plunged from being the highest to the least popular public official.

“Sabi ko, Lord, bakit nagkaganito? Yun pala, magiging Pangulo ako dahil sa EDSA Dos. Parang ang mensahe sa akin ng Diyos,” Gloria hindi ka naging Presidente dahil popular ka at magaling ka, naging Presidente ka nung ikaw ay pinakamababa sa yung popularity dahil ako ang nagluklok sa iyo bilang Pangulo’ (I said, Lord, why is this happening? What I didn’t know is I will become President because of EDSA Dos. Looking back, it seems that the message of the Lord was: Gloria, you didn’t become President because you’re popular or good. You became President even when your popularity was at its lowest because I willed it),” she said.

The President noted that there are many instances when she felt that the guidance from the Lord is strongest when she makes a prayerful discernment of things.

She noted that when she first ran for Senator, her ranking plunged from being sixth to twelfth in the ballot counting.

“Yun pala, bagong politician ako, yun pala, I never knew there was such a thing as bawas-dagdag.”

“Yun ang halimbawa ng mga malalaking broadstrokes sa aking career, na may kinalaman sa ating national history, kung saan nararamdaman ko ang kilos ng Panginoon, ngunit kahit na maliit na bagay, nakikita ko yung kanyang confirmation kapag gumawa ako ng decision through prayerful discernment na tama ang aking ginawa (These are just the example of the big broadstrokes in my career that in a way have something to do with our history and from which I felt the works of the Lord. But even in small ways, I can see His confirmation every time I make a decision through prayerful discernment and, in the end, I can see that my decision was right).”

She further noted that when she invited the heirs of the Sultan of Sulu to Malacañang to discuss the Sabah issue on a randomly picked date, one when her schedule was not that busy, she found out later that that day was the anniversary of the Sultanate of Sulu from its inception in the 1300s.

The President said God must be telling her that her decision to meet the heirs is a right thing to do.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 17, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029131918/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov17.htm>

The President's Day: November 18, 2002

18 NOVEMBER 2002

- **GMA welcomes Cambodian Prince on 5-day visit**

GMA welcomes Cambodian Prince on 5-day visit

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today welcomed Cambodian Prince Norodom Ranariddh who is in the country for a five-day visit.

In her remarks during a luncheon for the Prince, the President said she was happy to note that Ranariddh, who is also president of Cambodia's National Assembly, was among a number of parliamentarians in the Southeast Asian region who are working towards the establishment of an Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) parliament, similar to the European parliament.

Prince Ranariddh, the son of King Norodom Sihanouk, arrived in the country yesterday with his wife, Princess Norodom Marie Ranariddh, and their daughter Princess Norodom Ratanederie.

The President cited the very warm and close relations between the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines.

She also noted that Cambodia would be holding elections for the National Assembly next year, adding that "Your Highness' role in ending civil strife in Cambodia which makes elections possible is well recognized."

The President wished Ranariddh continued success in his drive for peace, stability and prosperity in Cambodia.

The President said Cambodia and the Philippines can learn much from each other.

"The Philippines could consider Cambodia's rich cultural heritage and the effort to preserve and promote it as an area of bilateral cooperation," the President said.

The President took the opportunity to congratulate the Prince for his talent in filmmaking and his courageous vision for the future of Khmer art and culture.

The Prince has not only produced but also directed his first movie, "Raja Bori" or Royal Land.

The President said the desire of the leading man in the movie to preserve and promote the beauty of the Angkor Wat and the leading lady's desire to promote the Khmer dance reflect the aspirations of the Cambodian people to preserve and strengthen the Khmer culture.

On a personal note, the President said she felt sentimental to host the Prince today "because 40 years ago, my father, then-President Diosdado Macapagal, also hosted your father – his Royal Highness then, His Majesty now – in this very same room."

The President earlier received Prince Ranariddh at Malacañang's Study Room and later on joined the Prince and his wife and daughter in a luncheon at the State Dining Room.

Also present during the luncheon were First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo, Presidential Daughter Luli, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople, Senate President Franklin Drilon, and House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. and his wife Gina.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 18, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030063825/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov18.htm>

The President's Day: November 19, 2002

19 NOVEMBER 2002

- **GMA extols two fishermen, sons as 'heroes of nation' for saving plane passengers**
- **Malacañang clarifies media reports on general perceptions on corruption**
- **GMA orders Perez to organize high-level group to address Meralco problems**
- **GMA proclaims Dec. 24 as special non-working day**

GMA extols two fishermen, sons as 'heroes of nation' for saving plane passengers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today received in Malacañang two fishermen and two teenage sons, extolling them as "heroes of the nation" for saving passengers of the ill-fated Laoag International Airlines flight 585 that crashed into Manila Bay a week ago.

The President also presented two checks for P50,000 each to brothers Edgar and Crispulo Naga as token of gratitude for their heroic deeds. The two fishermen were with Elorde Naga, 12, son of Edgar, and Rico Cayabyab, 15, an adopted son of Edgar, who helped rescue plane passengers.

Edgar Naga said the money was early "pamasko" (Christmas gift) of the President to them. He said he would be used the President's gift for the schooling of Edgar and Rico.

The President said she hopes Edgar and Rico, who are out-of-school youths, would be able to finish their education.

Elorde said in an interview after their meeting with the President that he wants to become a policeman and help apprehend kidnappers.

Rico said he also wants to finish school.

Crispulo Naga said he would be use the money to send his three children through high school.

The fishermen recounted to the President that they were already at sea on that fateful morning when they saw the Fokker plane going down.

Their immediate reaction was to approach the plane and rescue passengers. They said they were the first ones to arrive at the crash site and were able to pull some of the survivors out of the sinking airplane.

Fearing an explosion and afraid that the sinking plane might also pull their boat down, the four fishermen said they had to move out of the area quickly.

They said they brought three female survivors that got onto their boat to the shore near Baclaran where other people helped bring them to hospital.

Malacañang clarifies media reports on general perceptions on corruption

Malacañang today said it was unfair and incorrect to conclude that corruption in the Philippines has worsened based on a survey of Transparency International (TI).

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, citing statements by TI itself, said the media was using the wrong analytical framework, which is the ranking of the Philippines.

“This is irrelevant since the number of countries identified in the survey changes every year. The number of countries surveyed increased from 91 in 2001 to 102 in 2002. As a result, the Philippines ranked 77th as opposed to the 65th in 2001. This does not mean its absolute ranking dropped since its Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score only moved .3 points,” he stressed.

The media erroneously reported this as a drop of 11 ranks, Bunye said.

TI itself says “comparisons to the results from previous years should be based on a country’s score, not its rank. A country’s rank can change simply because new countries enter the index and others drop out.”

The truth is that the Philippines only dropped by .3 points in the 1-10 index, which is negligible, Bunye said.

Bunye said this year’s CPI score for the Philippines of 2.6 with a 0.6 standard deviation, is close to the score of 2.9 in 2001, indicating a more or less steady view by business people, risk analysts and the general public of the degree of corruption in government over the last few years.

“TI uses the annual CPI scores of countries to rank relative degrees of corruption. To determine whether corruption is perceived to be worsening or not, TI recommends that CPI comparisons be made based on an individual country’s year-to-year CPI scores,” he said.

Bunye stressed that TI further cautions that year-to-year shifts in a country’s score can also result from changes in sample and methodology, not just from changing perception of a country’s performance.

According to Bunye, data for this year’s survey were culled from 15 polls from nine institutions, as compared to 14 polls from seven institutions for 2001.

“The CPI score relates the degree of corruption as perceived by business people and risk analysts and the general public in government. Rates for the degree of perceived corruption ranges from 1, meaning highly corrupt, to 10, meaning highly transparent and clean,” he said.

Bunye also said that countries subjected to the survey are then ranked according to CPI scores.

In a separate finding, Bunye said, the Political Economic Risk Consultancy, Inc. (PERC) last year, noted that the risk of doing business in the Philippines is lower because of government effectiveness.

GMA orders Perez to organize high-level group to address Meralco problems

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered Energy Secretary Vicente Perez to organize a high-level working group, composed of Manila Electric Company’s official representatives and the company’s major creditors, including government stakeholders, to address the company’s problems and formulate a plan to maintain its financial stability as a public utility.

In his regular press briefing, Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao said the President’s order was given in light of the Supreme Court Third Division’s decision on the issue of the firm’s having overcharged its customers since 1994.

Tiglao said the President, accompanied by her economic advisers, had a meeting with the Lopez group in Malacañang last Friday.

Tiglao said that during the meeting, members of the Lopez group maintained that the Supreme Court’s decision was not right. “The President simply remarked that the Supreme Court is a very independent institution,” Tiglao said.

“No mention at all or appeal to the President to do anything about it,” Tiglao added.

Tiglao said Secretary Perez has scheduled a meeting with Meralco officials and the company’s creditors to undertake initial discussions to address the company’s problems and to reach a consensus on the creation of such a working group, which is tasked to formulate a detailed plan to maintain the utility firm’s credit standing.

Tiglao assured that the President is committed to implement strictly the Supreme Court’s decision, as soon as it is executory and as soon as the Energy Regulatory Commission, a quasi-judicial body that by law deals with electric rates, formulates the details and mechanism for implementing the High Court’s decision.

With the President during the meeting were Tiglao, Perez, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho and Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz while the Lopez group was represented by, among others, Oscar Lopez, Gabby Lopez and Manolo Lopez.

GMA proclaims Dec. 24 as special non-working day

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today declared December 24, Christmas Eve, as a special non-working day.

In issuing Proclamation No. 292, the President noted that December 24 has, in the past, been declared a special public holiday to give the people the full opportunity to enjoy the Christmas holidays with their families, relatives and friends.

The proclamation of December 24 this year, a Tuesday, as a special non-working day was recommended by the Department of Tourism.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: November 19, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029041349/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov03.htm>

The President's Day: November 20, 2002

20 NOVEMBER 2002

- **GMA donates one-month salary to Children's Hour**
- **GMA orders Perez to review power policies**
- **GMA meets U.S. trade industry envoy on ASEAN-U.S. economic ties**
- **Opening of NAIA 3 deferred due to security, safety concerns**

GMA donates one-month salary to Children's Hour

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo donated last night the equivalent of one month of her salary to Children's Hour, a fund-raising program to champion the cause of less fortunate children and youth.

Presidential Daughter Evangeline Lourdes "Luli" Arroyo also made a donation to the program which invests funds in carefully selected projects addressing child abuse and deprivation as well as health care and education.

The President led government and business leaders in the Children's Hour fund-raising dinner held at the Le Souffle at the Fort in Fort Bonifacio.

Among the other officials present during the affair were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Benjamin Defensor, and retired general and former Executive Secretary Renato de Villa.

During the benefit dinner, the Children's Hour raised P3 million, P1.2 million of which came from the employees of Globe Company who voluntarily donated one hour of their monthly salaries.

The global fund-raising campaign involves the donation of one hour's worth of earnings to Children's Hour, which, to date, has raised about P40 million from companies, employees and private individuals.

In his welcome remarks, Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II, honorary chair of Children's Hour, said the Children's Hour Steering Committee is inviting more government and business leaders to champion the cause of the children and youth.

"We wish to build on the wellspring of generosity to re-launch the Children's Hour to give them once again an opportunity to champion the cause of children among their employees and company executives. We can then advocate among other companies to come and join us in this campaign to save our children from illiteracy, homelessness, hunger and abuse," Zobel said.

Children's Hour was launched in the Philippines in 1999 and again this year to assist millions of Filipino children in need.

Children's Hour has helped over 88,000 Filipino children and youth through hospitals and organizations that provide preventive and rehabilitative services, temporary shelter, feeding and nutrition programs and education.

Organizations that have been supported by Children's Hour include Bantay Bata, the Center of Excellence in Public Elementary Education, Tuloy sa Don Bosco Street Children Project, Tabang Mindanaw II, International Deaf Education Association, Kamalayan Development Foundation and the Bulig Foundation.

Children's Hour was re-launched in Manila, Davao and Cebu this year and the institution is currently led by a steering committee composed of Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II as chair and Gina Lopez as vice chair. Its members include Emily Abrera, Corazon Alma de Leon, Ramon del Rosario Jr., De Villa, Carlos Dominguez,

Susana A.S. Madrigal, Narcisa L. Escaler, Bob D. Gothong, Patricia B. Licuanan, Guillermo M. Luz, Justo A. Ortiz, Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez, Mayan Quebral, Pedro Roxas, Bienvenido Tan Jr. and Bishop Socrates.

GMA orders Perez to review power policies

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered Energy Secretary Vicente Perez to immediately review the country's power policies and programs, as well as the changing legal framework, to ensure that the energy sector would continue to attract private investments.

In a statement, Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao said that the President's directive to Perez was also aimed at ensuring that the energy requirements of the people would be served.

The President's order came on the heels of the Supreme Court decision ordering the Manila Electric Company (Meralco) to refund its more than three million customers for over billing dating back to 1994.

Tiglao said that the President's efforts in the past several days are intended to ensure Meralco's "stability to continue electricity distribution, and to undertake an orderly, yet strict compliance with the law the minute the Supreme Court orders the refund."

He stressed that "no refund can be made if Meralco is unable to continue its operations and ceases to exist."

According to Tiglao, for Meralco's customers to be refunded, the moment the Supreme Court issues its final ruling and it becomes executory, there must be an entity that will handle the refunding.

The President has earlier directed Perez to form a working group, consisting of Meralco's officials and creditors, including government stakeholders, to address the company's problems and to formulate a plan to maintain the firm's financial stability as a public utility.

This presidential directive for the formation of a working group represents one of the President's efforts to find ways and means to ensure the stability of the public utility and its capability to comply with a Supreme Court final decision on the refund, Tiglao said.

Tiglao clarified that it is Meralco as a public utility, and not any private shareholder in the company, that the government is mandated to support.

GMA meets U.S. trade industry envoy on ASEAN-U.S. economic ties

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today met with Ambassador Robert Zoellick, United States Trade Representative, and discussed with him the implementation of President George W. Bush's initiative to further enhance Association of Southeast Asian Nations-United States (ASEAN-US) economic ties.

The Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative (EAI), launched by President Bush during the last APEC meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico, offered the prospect of bilateral free trade agreements between the United States and ASEAN countries that are committed to economic reforms and openness.

The President said that while she is "sticking her neck out" in her support of the US policies and decisions such as the fight against international terrorism and other US policies on trade, the President called on the US to give ASEAN countries, specially the Philippines, more access to the US market.

The President also said the Philippines must first address the perils of globalization by insisting on a rule-based multilateral trading system which ensures economic growth and employment for the people.

“There are barriers and sanctions that the Filipino people perceive to be adding to the poverty of the nation,” she said, stressing that these must be removed, if not minimized.

The President also pointed out that the Philippines is moving toward its intellectual property rights. She cited the “substantial and dramatic” achievement in this field, saying that the government has closed down the big factories that manufactured pirated copies of films and CDs.

The President likewise reiterated his congratulations to President Bush for the latter’s recent victory in the passage of the United Nations Security Council Resolution on the inspecting for weapons of mass destruction, Iraq.

After the meeting of President Macapagal-Arroyo with Ambassador Zoellick at the State Dining Room of Malacañang, the two proceeded to have lunch with five ASEAN Economic Ministers at the Music Room of Malacañang wherein Ambassador Zoellick also discussed the Enterprise ASEAN Initiative.

Aside from Ambassador Zoellick, also present at the luncheon meeting were Thai Economic Minister Adisai Bodharamik, Singaporean Economic Minister George Yeo, Lao People’s Democratic Republic Economic Minister Sovlivong Daravong, Vietnam Economic Minister Truong Dinh, Philippine Ambassador to the US Albert del Rosario and US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone.

Opening of NAIA 3 deferred due to security, safety concerns

Malacañang announced today that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) to postpone the “soft opening” of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 3 on December 15 due to security and public safety issues that have not yet been addressed by PIATCO.

Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao said the deferment of the opening of NAIA 3 was based on the recommendation of Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza.

“It was Secretary Mendoza’s recommendation, which means he provided arguments for that. Other officials and advisers of the President agreed on the recommendation,” Tiglao said during a press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon.

Tiglao said that once an independent audit body tells the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) that the terminal is ready to open, then the government will abide, Tiglao said.

“We have repeatedly said that this is not a kind of sari-sari store. This is an airport. You are risking the lives of the people here if you do not strictly comply with the contract requirements,” Tiglao added.

Mendoza has sought the President’s reconsideration of plans to open the airport terminal on December 15, informing her of significant security and safety issues that have to be resolved.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: November 20, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029043224/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov20.htm>

The President's Day: November 21, 2002

21 NOVEMBER 2002

- **BIR to enforce stringent measures to hike tax collections, says Camacho**
- **GMA gets CREBA support for housing**
- **Palace readies alternative vending sites, livelihood for sidewalk vendors**
- **Landbank okays P210 M for individual coco farmers**
- **Urban Poor Week celebration to highlight asset reform, livelihood**
- **Key economic indicators show positive growth despite breach in budget deficit target, says DBM**
- **GMA lauds awardees of 8th Gawad Galing Pook**
- **If final decision is refund, you will get your refund, GMA assures people**
- **500,000 homes to be built until 2004, GMA assured**

BIR to enforce stringent measures to hike tax collections, says Camacho

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) will continue to implement more stringent measures to increase its tax collections.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said the budget deficit requires the government to be merciless in the enforcement of tax laws.

“While the budget deficit remains a challenge, we are taking concrete steps to address it,” he said.

Camacho said the BIR is cross checking the importation data of the Bureau of Customs (BOC) with its corresponding tax filings.

“In fact, this process has already helped the BIR identify such corporate tax delinquents and we have sent them demand letters with a payment deadline. If they fail to meet the deadline, they face closure and prosecution,” he said.

Camacho said audit intensification for both corporate and individuals has also helped increase BIR's tax collections.

The agency likewise will promote the wide availability now of online-payment option, he said.

Also, the passage of other revenue-generating reform measures that have been submitted to Congress is expected to enhance long-term revenues, Camacho added.

These include bills to create an excise tax, a tax on auto imports and sales, and a documentary stamp tax.

The finance chief said these measures are deemed necessary in meeting the revenue target for 2002. BIR's tax collections account for 70 percent of the government's revenue.

Camacho said government spending is on track, providing adequate stimulation to the economy while “remaining within the budget authorized by Congress.”

“The economy is on track to achieve a 4 to 4.5 percent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2002,” he said.

GDP, the common measure of economic performance, already grew 4.1 percent for the first semester of this year.

Economic planners expected the domestic economy to have grown 3.9 percent to 4.4 percent in the third quarter.

Camacho said other key indicators that the economy could grow as targeted are the low inflation and interest rates, growth in imports that transferred to higher exports and a healthy balance of payments.

GMA gets CREBA support for housing

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has received a pledge of support from the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations Inc. (CREBA) for her program to provide decent housing and basic services to homeless citizens.

In a statement issued last night by its national president Florentino Dulalia Jr., Creba acknowledged the President efforts to provide affordable housing to the masses, "synergizing the housing industry and its scores of allied industries, and creating more employment opportunities for thousands of workers and professionals, thereby promoting economic growth."

Dulalia said that responding to the call of the President, Creba is committed to build 325, 456 housing units within the next couple of years, as part of the effort to transform into reality the aspiration and dream of every Filipino to own a decent shelter for himself and his family.

"With this commitment, backed by our unity of purpose, vision, political will and conviction, all Creba developers throughout the country are ready to respond firmly and affirmatively to the challenges of a viable housing program for homeless Filipinos and thereby achieve the goal of enhancing the quality of life of every Filipino," Dulalia said.

Dulalia conveyed Creba's support to the President during the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) among the Department of Agrarian Reform, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Creba, and other non-government organizations on equitable land access and the availability of at least 200, 000 hectares of land for housing and urban development for the next 20 years.

"It will now be possible to reduce by at least 50 percent the current shortage of housing units, estimated at some 5 million, by the year 2010," Dulalia said.

Palace readies alternative vending sites, livelihood for sidewalk vendors

The National Anti-Poverty Commission and the Workers in the Informal Sectors (NAPC-WIS) today reported to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that the organization of sidewalk vendors has undertaken a listing of "legitimate" members in their area and submitted this to the mayors in Metro Manila for relocation or integration to other forms of livelihood.

At the same time, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. said the mayors have also conducted their own mapping to determine the number and location of sidewalk vendors, and identified alternative vending sites for them.

It was also reported to the President that the Development Bank of the Philippines has come up with P7 billion window program for 17 Metro Manila local government units, plus Angono, Rizal, that can be used for alternative livelihood plans for the street vendors.

The local executives will be encouraging the vendors to join existing cooperatives so that those who want to shift to other means of livelihood can be accommodated.

Workers in the Informal Sector (WIS) Representative Susanita Tesiorna recognized the efforts of the government in addressing the issues of the vulnerable sectors in Metro Manila, at the same time emphasizing support to the government efforts in clearing the sidewalks in the metropolis and giving back the streets to the citizenry.

Tesiorna reported to the President that a meeting between the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) board and the NAPC revealed the following:

- Quezon City, according to its survey, has 7,088 vendors, of which 2,588 vendors are located in critical areas;
- Muntinlupa has provided 186 vendors with free rental of stalls, allowing these vendors to pay only a market entrance fee;
- The city government of Mandaluyong has provided the amount of P5,000 each for vendors to help finance deposit payments for private market stalls while a private bank has allowed the use of its vacant lot to be converted into jeepney terminals with provisions for vendors;
- In Makati, the Office of the City Mayor facilitated the bidding of food ambulant stalls as a replacement for the previous jeepney stalls for informal sectors;
- In Pasay, the city government is requesting the assistance of the vendors themselves to establish an alternative vending site for 2,000 vendors, with the city government providing assistance in the negotiation for the purchase of the site;
- In San Juan, the Office of the Mayor has provided the amount of P7,500 to support the microfinance activities of the vulnerable street vendors who are willing to use vacant public market stalls;
- The Caloocan City government is undertaking several initiatives to help the vendors in their respective areas.

Other LGUs are reported to be conducting regular meetings with the street vendors for the latter to identify alternative vending sites, renegotiate private market fees on behalf of these vendors, and implement alternative livelihood program for those who opt to shift to other forms of livelihood.

Landbank okays P210-M for individual coco farmers

The Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) today reported to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that it will make the amount of P210 million available to Quedancor and/or farmers cooperatives and small coconut farmers organizations which will serve as loan conduits to qualified individual small coconut farmers.

The Land Bank said during the Fourth National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) meeting in Malacañang that under this program, small coconut farmers can avail themselves of a loan averaging P10,000 each within the next six months.

The LBP will also lend the amount of P90 million to accredited coconut farmers cooperatives that will serve as credit conduits to oil mills and other coconut processors.

Philippine Coconut Authority Administrator Danilo Coronacion said there are 1.6-million coconut farming families deserving of livelihood assistance. They include small farmers with landholdings of five hectares and below.

Livelihood projects may include direct copra marketing, farm diversification through high value crops, intercropping, livestock raising, aquaculture, and production of other coconut by-products.

The PCA Administrator said that as directed by the President in the last NAPC en banc meeting in Malacañang, the lending program will prioritize the highly affected famine-stricken coconut farmers in the Bondoc Peninsula and the Visayas region.

Urban Poor Week celebration to highlight asset reform, livelihood

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will be the guest of honor and speaker at the celebration of the Urban Poor Week 2002 at the Quezon City Memorial Circle on December 7, 2002.

According to Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP) Chairman Percival Chavez, this year's celebration is a one-day fair and celebration in three major cities across the country. It will focus on two of the five cornerstones of the anti-poverty program of this government — asset reform and livelihood.

“This focus is hinged on the growing recognition that security of land tenure and livelihood are at the core of the urban poor’s struggle towards a better life,” Chavez said.

This year’s celebration aims at showcasing President Macapagal-Arroyo’s programs and accomplishments on security of land tenure and livelihood and the role the urban poor sector plays in bringing these issues to the government agenda, Chavez said.

To stress the role of the urban poor groups in these efforts, PCUP said it has invited urban poor leaders to share their perspectives on current developments concerning general programs and specific projects.

“The idea is to communicate that the urban poor groups’ efforts at making their concerns known to government is fundamental to the success of these programs,” Chavez said.

Key economic indicators show positive growth despite breach in budget deficit target, says DBM

The country’s key economic indicators continued to show positive growth despite the shortfall in revenue collections that has resulted in a higher budget deficit, according to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

In a statement, DBM Secretary Emilia Boncodin said for the past 10 months of this year, the inflation and interest rates are at “all-time” lows, with inflation averaging 3.2 percent.

Boncodin said that the 3.2 percent average inflation rate is way below the target of 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent. The 91-day Treasury bill rate is averaging 5.5 percent, also below the estimated 7 percent to 8 percent, she added.

Boncodin said that the government is confident that it can meet its 2002 projection of 4 percent growth of the gross domestic product (GDP). The GDP growth for the first semester of 2002 was 4.1 percent.

The DBM chief, however, admitted that because of the shortfall in revenue collections, the national government is revising its budget deficit target for 2002 to 5.6 percent of GDP and its 2003 budget deficit target to 4.7 percent of GDP.

Boncodin expressed the belief that both these revised figures will allow the government to achieve its GDP growth target for 2002 and its 4.2 to 5.2 percent GDP growth target for next year.

“This strong level of economic growth will ensure that we are able to continue to create additional jobs, increase access to health care and education, and provide new opportunities for people throughout the country,” she said.

Boncodin said that compared with the original estimate of zero growth, the export sector grew by 7.8 percent year-to-date while imports showed a 7 percent growth compared with an estimate of 6 percent.

She said that strong remittances from expatriate Filipino workers have continued to fuel domestic consumption.

According to Boncodin, the Macapagal-Arroyo administration is committed to fiscal discipline and “only our untiring determination to do better for the country over the medium term will justify our actions today.”

Bocondin appealed to everyone’s kind understanding of the many challenges as she expressed confidence that “together we will overcome these challenges and continue walking the road toward sustainable growth and development.”

GMA lauds awardees of 8th Gawad Galing Pook

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded the Hall of Fame Award to the province of Nueva Vizcaya for consistently winning in the Top Ten Outstanding Programs in this year's 8th Gawad Galing Pook 2002.

During the ceremony held at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall this afternoon, the President, along with officials of the Galing Pook Foundation, handed out the Hall of Fame award to Nueva Vizcaya.

Galing Pook Foundation is a non-stock, non-profit organization whose mandate is to promote excellence, innovation, sustainability and citizen empowerment in local governance.

Aside from bagging the highest recognition, Nueva Vizcaya also bagged three awards: its reforestation program, called "Tree Resources for Education, Enterprises and Legacy," while two other projects – Reforming the Real Property Tax System and Empowerment of Persons with Disability – were among nine trail-blazing programs.

The top ten awardees are the following: Bataan for its Kontra Kalat sa Dagat program; Bulacan for its Constituent-Responsive Governance; Carmona, Cavite for Balik Inang Kalikasan, Balik Amang Pabrika; Davao Del Norte, Minimum Basic Needs Approach; Goa, Camarines Sur, Reorganization: An Effective Local Governance Tool in the LGU; Mandaue City, Tripartite Industrial Peace Council; Naga City, People Empowerment Program; Nueva Vizcaya, Tree Resources for Education, Enterprise and Legacy; Pasay City, Bayanihan Banking Program; and Zamboanga Del Sur for Illana Bay Regional Alliance IX Program.

The top ten awardees receive plaque of recognition from the President and a separate P100,000 cash reward from the President's Social Fund for each of the winners.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina, Jr. assisted the President in distributing the plaques of recognition to officials of the 19 winning LGUs.

The President also gave a plaque of recognition to all the winners of the Gawad Galing Pook Trailblazing Programs to the following LGUs:

Batad, Iloilo for their Pahayag sa Banwa; Cabuyao, Laguna for their Streamlining the Business Permit Process: One-Stop Shop; Linamon, Lanao Del Norte, Basura Atras, Linamon Abante sa Kalamboan; Magsaysay, Davao Del Sur's Paglilingkod Abot Kamay; Munoz, Nueva Ecija's Developing the Matingkis Farm Tourism; Negros Occidental's Bantay Kasapatan; Nueva Vizcaya's Empowerment of Persons with Disability and Reforming the Real Property Tax System and Trinidad, Bohol's Trinidad Agricultural Production Development Program.

The Gantimpalang Panglilingkod Pook or Gawad Galing Pook was launched in October 21, 1993 as a pioneering awards program on innovation and excellence in local governance.

From 1994 to 2000, a total of 133 local governance programs were awarded in the annual search for top outstanding local governance programs.

If final decision is refund, you will get your refund, GMA assures people

"If the final decision is refund, I will make sure that one way or another the consumers — you, the consumers — will get your refund."

This was the assurance given by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to the people in connection with the Supreme Court decision on the overcharging case against the Manila Electric Company (Meralco).

In her speech during a dinner meeting with the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Association (Creba) in Malacañang last night, the President assured that nothing will stand in the way of her foresworn duty to serve the public interest.

Her assurance came as part of her disclosure of the administration 's policy on the Meralco issue:

“First, we are taking steps to ensure the financial viability of Meralco as an institution”

“Second, the decision of the Supreme Court regarding Meralco’s obligations shall be implemented.”

“Third, I am duty bound to ensure that there will be no crisis in power services as a result of these financial problems.”

The President said her mind is clear on how to deal with the Meralco issue. “It will be in the context of the larger power sector as the key reform area facing us today,” she added.

The President said that through the Department of Energy, the government is shepherding a series of consultations that began the other day between Meralco and its creditors.

“We will see to it that a rehabilitation plan is set up that is fair to creditors, investors and, most of all, the public,” she said.

She also said “we shall await the finality of the (Supreme Court) decision and then act accordingly.”

“I’m constitutionally-bound to serve the public interest,” she said.

500,000 homes to be built until 2004, GMA assured

Emerging from a meeting last night with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders’ Association (CREBA) and the Subdivision and Housing Developers’ Association (SHDA) have jointly pledged to build more than 500,000 housing units until 2004, in line with the Chief Executive’s thrust to provide decent and affordable housing to the homeless.

In a press briefing at Malacañang this afternoon, Secretary Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) said CREBA committed 325,425 housing units while SHDA pledged to build 236,076 units.

Defensor said CREBA national president Florentino Dulalia Jr. has assured that all CREBA developers throughout the country are ready to respond firmly and affirmatively to the challenge of a viable housing program for the homeless Filipinos.

Defensor said SHDA’s commitment of 236,076 housing units embodied in their program called SHDA Pledge 2002 are distributed as follows: 77,000 units of low-cost housing amounting to P28.9 billion, 33,084 socialized housing units worth an estimated P6.6 billion and 66,423 middle-income units worth P33.2 billion.

According to SHDA Chairman Teofisto Guingona III, SHDA Pledge 2002 is a showcase of what the government and private sector can accomplish together if they harmonize their objectives and work for a common goal.

“This is our way of returning the support of the housing sector given by the President, Secretary Defensor and the key shelter agencies,” Guingona said.

Last night, the President also witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement among the Department of Agrarian Reform, HUDCC, CREBA, SHDA, the Builders Alliance Toward Action (BATA), National Real Estate Association (NREA), the Organization of Socialized Housing Developers’ Association (OSHDP) and the Women in Shelter and Environment (WISE).

The MOA would provide equitable land access and make available at least 200,000 hectares of land for housing and urban development for the next 20 years.

Defensor said the MOA is expected to reduce by at least 50 percent the current shortage of housing units estimated at 5 million by 2010.

Meanwhile, Defensor announced that the HUDCC has recently carried out a series of reforms to make housing more affordable for low-salaried employees.

He said PAG-IBIG has lowered interest rates as follows:

- For loans P150,000 and below, the interest rate will be 6 percent;
- For above P150, 000 but not more than P225,000, the interest rate will remain at 9 percent;
- For loans above P225,000 but not more than P500,000, the interest rate was reduced to 10 percent;
- For loans above P500,000 but not more than P2 million, the interest rate is pegged at 12 percent, provided the borrower pays on or before the due date.

“We have increased our loan to collateral value to 100 percent for loans below P150,000 to P500,000 which will further lower if not eliminate the equity requirement of home borrowers,” Defensor said.

He added that PAG-IBIG has also extended the loan term from 20 to 25 years for loans over P500,000 to further reduce the monthly amortization of homebuyers.

“We have also allowed the refinancing of an existing mortgage loan with an institution acceptable to PAG-IBIG. This is to enable qualified members to benefit from the low interest rates,” he said.

At the same time, the HUDCC chief said PAG-IBIG member-borrowers are no longer required to complete the 24 months membership to qualify for a housing loan. The amended guidelines now allow a member to make a lump sum payment equivalent to 24 monthly contributions to meet this requirement.

“These are some of the reforms that we are doing to ensure that the housing program of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration reaches those who need it most,” he said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 21, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030150805/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov21.htm>

The President's Day: November 22, 2002

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- **GMA inaugurates first satellite factory of Yazaki-Torres in Calamba**
- **GMA confers Presidential awards of distinction to outstanding OFW employers**
- **Perform well or you'll get are even without courtesy resignation, GMA warns officials**
- **Gov't making inroads in solving peace-order challenges, says GMA**
- **GMA says she won't be swayed by power politics**

GMA inaugurates first satellite factory of Yazaki-Torres in Calamba

CALAMBA, Laguna – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo inaugurated here today the first satellite factory of the Yazaki-Torres Manufacturing Incorporated.

Construction of the parts manufacturing plant started only in October but it immediately went into operation to fill up the large demand for automotive parts in the United States, Japan and Europe.

The President, who was welcomed at the new plant by Yazaki-Torres president and general manager Feliciano Torres and Yazaki Corp. vice chairman Toshihiro Suzuki, unveiled a marker located at the First Satellite factory main entrance.

Accompanying the President were Laguna Governor Teresita Lazaro, Calamba City Mayor Severino Lajara and Laguna Rep. Joaquin Chipeco (2nd district).

Among those who likewise attended the unveiling ceremonies were Yazaki-Torres Director Nora Torres, Japan Embassy Deputy Minister Akio Egawa, Southern Luzon Commander Maj. Gen. Roy Kyamko and Philippine National Police Director General Enrique Galang.

Yazaki-Torres executives gave the President a tour of the plant.

Afterwards, the President joined the executives and other guests for brunch at the factory's cafeteria.

Yazaki-Torres Manufacturing Inc., is the biggest producer of wiring harness in the Philippines.

It has remained to be the highest exporter in the Philippine automotive industry over the last 14 years, generating exports of \$170 million annually, with net foreign exchange earnings of \$90 million annually.

Employing 5,725 personnel, Yazaki-Torres generates revenue of P7 billion annually and ranks no. 87 in Top 7000 corporations listed for the year 2000.

With 27 years in operation, Yazaki-Torres provides parts manufacturing to U.S., Japan and Europe while it supplies automotive parts to Toyota Motor Philippines Corp., Ford Motor Company Philippines Inc., Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Inc., Nissan Motor Philippines Inc., Honda Cars Philippines Inc., and Columbian Motor Corp.

GMA confers Presidential awards of distinction to outstanding OFW employers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today conferred Presidential awards of distinction to outstanding international employers of overseas Filipino workers and seafarers as well as outstanding international maritime associations and ship executives.

In ceremonies held in Malacañang, the President awarded the First International Employers Awards to outstanding employers who have distinguished themselves as pioneers and leaders on overseas employment, having hired Filipino workers continuously, some of them for three decades up to the present.

“These employers have consistently manifested their preference for Filipino workers in their global operations,” Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas pointed out, adding that these employers have continuously shown their utmost care and concern for Filipino workers by providing them exemplary benefits and welfare services and career advances opportunities.

“This is proof that overseas employment can still be a haven for our countrymen,” Sto. Tomas said.

The President, assisted by Secretary Sto. Tomas and DOLE Undersecretary Manuel Imson, conferred the Presidential Awards of Distinction on the following outstanding land-based international employers: Boscalis Westminster; Chicago Bridge and Iron Corporation of USA; Dubai Duty Free; Emirate (Dubai National Air Travel Agency); Global Sta. Fe; Hyatt Regency (USA), represented by its General Manager Farid Schoucair; JGC Corporation of Japan; Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Petroleum Development of Oman; Qatar Petroleum; Saipem Global; Saudi Arabian Catering; Saudi Arabian Oil Company; Saudi Basic Industries Corporation; and Tan Holding Corporation of CNMI.

The Presidential Award of Distinction was also presented to AP Moller Shipping Group of Companies, Columbia Shipmanagement Limited, Herg Fleet Services, Holland America Line Westours, Inc., K Line, Mitsui Osk Line, NYK Line, Nissho Shipping Co., Ltd., Schulte Group, Stolt Nielsen Transportation Group, Teekay Shipping Limited, Tidewater Marine and Uglan Marine Services.

The President also awarded the following outstanding maritime organizations: Japanese Shipowners Association, Seamen’s Employment Center of Japan, International Mariners Management Association of Japan, Norwegian Shipowners Association, Norwegian Maritime Unions.

The following Outstanding Shipping Executives were also given the Presidential Distinction Award: Captain Masaaki Kobayashi of Unitra Maritime Co. Ltd; and Kenichi Iwakawa of Vermillion Overseas Management and New Century Overseas Management.

The President created, through Proclamation No. 270 dated October 15, 2002, the annual International Employers Awards and an international employers awards committee to administer the conferment of the awards.

The DOLE Secretary chaired the committee, whose members include the administrators of the DOLE’s Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and the Overseas Workers’ Welfare Administration (OWWA), and a duly-designated representative of land-based industry associations.

The President, in issuing Proclamation 270, said the overseas Filipino workers’ continued employment abroad would not have been possible without the indispensable cooperation of foreign companies, principals, employers and overseas employment providers who continue to recognize their proficiency, competency, and skills.

Perform well or you’ll get axe even without courtesy resignation, GMA warns officials

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has warned government officials, including members of the Cabinet, that she would not wait for their courtesy resignations and would dismiss them if they failed to perform well for the benefit of the people.

“I can assure you, I’m not going to wait on courtesy (resignation) if someone in my government isn’t working out for the benefit of the nation,” the President bluntly said in her address Thursday night before the 2002 General Alumni Homecoming of the College of Law of the University of the Philippines held at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City.

The President said she chose those she wants to be in her Cabinet. "I can add or subtract Cabinet members when I need to, based on performance," she said.

The President's remarks came on the heels of reports about a Cabinet revamp as well as calls for the Cabinet members to file their courtesy resignations.

In her speech, the President also reiterated her government's resolve to rid the bureaucracy of corruption, saying that this is the same resolve that the government is having in the fight against criminality.

She said that her hands-on involvement in the war against crime has in no way deprived suspects of their right to free and fair trial but does put them and others like them on notice that they cannot hide if they break the law.

"This is the same warning I have to those who practice corruption in and out of government," the President said to the applause of the audience.

Gov't making inroads in solving peace-order challenges, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said that her two-year-old administration is making significant inroads in solving peace and order challenges.

In her keynote speech during the University of the Philippines Law Alumni Association (UPLAA) homecoming last night at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City, the President said that when she took over the government in January 2001, kidnapping and organized crime were the main concern.

The President said peace and order was rated then as among the top three concerns in surveys.

She said that in the November survey, fighting terrorist groups and fighting kidnap-for-ransom syndicates rate among the top five issues "where the government is assessed to be doing a good job."

"This administration is tackling the issue of peace and order on many fronts. We have developed a formula that's working. We've become tougher on crime," the President said.

"I make no apologies for being tough on crime and criminals and terrorism and terrorists. Our people deserve no less than to feel absolutely safe to live, work, and raise a family. I will do everything in my power to improve the situation and will continue to do so," she said.

According to the President, the government looks at the drug problem as a source of the peace and order challenge, saying that a Special Drug Enforcement Agency has been set up to address this.

The President has also instructed Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane to focus on kidnapping and weeding out misfits from the police.

"We have stepped up intelligence coordination. We have a hot line, telephone number 117. And related to this, community mobilization has been very effective in locating criminal fugitives," she added.

The President noted that the Presidential Anti-organized Crime Commission Secretariat "supplements the work of the enforcement institutions."

"Now, we have inter-agency coordination mainly through stronger police work. The result is reduction in the crime rate," she said.

In order to preserve the growth and success the government achieved in this field, the President said her administration is professionalizing the police and fighting the root cause of criminality by focusing on poverty reduction and sustainable economic development.

The President announced that the government has a higher budget to “provide higher pay to the police and soldiers, who, under this new budget ,will earn as much as the teachers currently do.”

She also mentioned the increased educational requirements of the police, adding that they now have to have a college degree to enter the force.

Aside from this, the President said she had already increased the budget for training policemen.

GMA says she won't be swayed by power politics

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said that as long as she is the Chief Executive, she will act for the interest of the country and cannot be swayed by power politics.

This was the assurance made by the President during her speech at the 2002 General Alumni Homecoming of the University of the Philippines College of Law held at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City last night.

“I shall not be swayed by populist politics nor by power play. I shall not please the poor by tearing down the rich nor please the rich by ignoring the poor, because there is nothing more important to me than the future of this country,” the President said.

The President also spelled out the administration's actions on the decision of the Supreme Court on the refund to Meralco customers.

She reiterated her administration's policy to see to it that the decision of the Supreme Court regarding Meralco's obligation to its customers will be implemented.

“We do believe that this decision, whatever it is, can be manageable. And if indeed the final decision is a refund, it is my duty to see to it that one way or another, you, the consumers, will get your refund,” she added.

The President said it is her duty as President “to serve the public interest” in order to ensure that there will be no power crisis that could result from the financial problems of Meralco.

Meanwhile, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that nobody could question what the President is doing because all the programs in her administration are geared towards serving the majority of the people.

“The President is focused on what needs to be done as President and she knows that. She has to concentrate on some problems like generating jobs. She would have to address the health problems. We have to educate the next generation of Filipinos. We'll have to come up with good governance and she's doing what needs to be done along those lines,” Bunye said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 22, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071116102242/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov22.htm>

The President's Day: November 23, 2002

23 NOVEMBER 2002

- **Presidential broadcast message**
- **GMA okays P5,000 cash gift for all govt employees**
- **GMA to state workers: expect more pay packages and inclusion in govt socio-economic programs**
- **No wage increase position of labor groups patriotic — GMA**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao**

Presidential broadcast message

Ngayong malapit ng magtapos ang taon, naalala natin ang maraming bunga ng ating pagsusumikap, habang kinikinita naman natin ang marami pang kailangang gawin.

Sa dalawampung buwan kong panunungkulan sa bayan bilang inyong Pangulo, nakita ko ang sakripisyo at dedikasyon ng mga kapwa kong nanunungkulan sa Republika ng Pilipinas: ang mga government employees. Lubusan akong nagpapasalamat sa kanila, sa mga opisyal at empleyado sa mga opisina ng gobyerno, sa mga guro, sa mga sundalo't pulis.

Hindi natin lubusang magagantimpalaan ang dedikasyon at paninilbihan sa ating mga government employees and men in uniform.

Mahigpit ang ating situwasyong pananalapi. Subalit sa gitna ng lahat ng kahirapang ito at matapos ayusin ang lahat ng natitirang cash resources ng ating Pamahalaan, ipinapahayag ko ngayon ang isiguradong pagkakaloob ng siguradong limang libong pisong (P5,000.00) cash gift sa lahat ng naglilingkod sa gobyerno, pati mga guro, pati mga sundalo. Sa nakaraang taon, hindi nakakakinabang itong cash gift na nakukuha ng ibang empleyado ng gobyerno. Ito ay ipapamahagi bago mag-akinse ng Disyembre.

Ang cash gift na ito ay isang munting pasasalamat ko, at ng Republika, sa ating mga government employees. This P 5,000.00 cash gift will be given to all government employees, even those who did not get it before, including teachers, soldiers and police officers.

Ang pamahalaan natin ay lubusang kinikilala ang kontribusyon ng lahat ng nagtrabaho dito, anuman ang kanilang ranggo o saan man sila nakatalaga, sa pang-kalahatang tungkulin ng serbisyo publiko.

Ang lahat ng nagtrabaho sa gobyerno ay dapat maramdaman na sila ay kabilang sa isang organisasyon at isang pangarap — service to the higher ideals of the public interest and the common good. Paglilingkod sa mataas na mithiing malasakit ng sambayanan at kapakanan ng lahat.

Naiintindihan ko na ang pa-suweldo sa gobyerno ay mababa. Marami ang kinakailangang magsakripisyo. Pero patuloy tayong magsisikap na magkaroon ng pay packages na makatarungan at makatuwiran, at igagawad ang mga ito batay sa merit at performance.

Kasabay nito, gusto kong gamitin ang pagkakataong ito para tiyakin sa ating government employees na ginagawa natin ang lahat para mapa-sama kayo sa ating socio-economic programs. Tulad ng iba pa nating mga kababayan, ang inyong mga pangunahing pangangailangan ng kalusugan, edukasyon at lalo na ang pabahay ay aming prayoridad. Nais natin na ang inyong mga pamilya ay maging matatag at matiwasay. Ito ay mahalaga upang mas higit kayong makapaglingkod sa bayan.

Gusto kong malaman ninyo na inatasan ko ang aking gabinete at lahat ng mga pinuno ng ibang government agencies na maghanap, at gumawa ng mga programa para sa ikabubuti ng kanilang mga empleyado, para makahanap ng ibang paraan para mapabuti ang kanilang kalagayan.

Nais kong iparating sa lahat ng empleyado ng gobyerno na napakahalaga ang bawat isa sa inyo. Empleyado sa opisina, mga guro, mga sundalo, mga pulis; kayo ang mga front-liners, kayo ang mukha ng Republikang Pilipinas.

Sa ating pagtutulungan, maitatayo natin ang isang matatag na Republikang Pilipinas, na tunay na manunungkulan para sa ating lahat at sa mga darating pang henerasyon ng Pilipino.

Lubusang nagpapasalamat ako sa inyong mga kapwa kong nasa gobyerno. Ipagpatuloy ninyo ang inyong dedikasyon, tulungan ninyo ako para mapatatag natin ang bansa't gobyerno ng Pilipinas.

Maraming Salamat.

GMA okays P5,000 cash gift for all govt employees

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has approved the grant of a P5,000.00 cash gift to all government employees including teachers, soldiers and policemen who in the past did not receive an extra bonus like other state workers.

In a radio message this morning, the President said the cash gift is a small token for the dedicated service of all government employees including the men in uniform.

“Sa dalawampung buwan kong panunungkulan sa bayan bilang inyong Pangulo, nakita ko ang sakripisyo at dedikasyon ng mga kapwa kong nanunungkulan sa Republika ng Pilipinas: ang mga government employees. Lubusan akong nagpapasalamat sa kanila, sa mga opisyal at empleyado sa mga opisina ng gobyerno, sa mga guro, sa mga sundalo't pulis (In my 20 months as President, I have witness the sacrifices and dedication of my co-fellow workers in the service of the Republic of the Philippines: the government employees. I fully thank the officials and employees in all the offices of our government, to the teachers, and the soldiers and policemen), the President said.

The President said the government's finances are tight but after consolidating the remaining cash resources of the Government, she is announcing the grant of additional cash gift of P5,000 for all state workers.

“Ang cash gift na ito ay isang munting pasasalamat ko, at ng Republika, sa ating mga government employees (This cash gift is my and the Republic's small token to all government employees). This P5,000.00 cash gift will be given to all government employees, even those who did not get it before, including teachers, soldiers and police officers,” the President said.

The President said the government fully recognizes the contributions of all state workers, irrespective of their ranks or place of assignment, to public service.

“Ang lahat ng nagtrabaho sa gobyerno ay dapat maramdaman na sila ay kabilang sa isang organisasyon at isang pangarap (All state workers should feel that they belong to an organization and a dream)- service to the higher ideals of the public interest and the common good. Paglilingkod sa mataas na mithiing malasakit ng sambayanan at kapakanan ng lahat (Service with the highest ideals of common good and public welfare),” the President said.

GMA to state workers: expect more pay packages and inclusion in govt socio-economic programs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the government would continuously find ways for additional just and fair pay packages based on merit and performance for state workers including their inclusion in all government socio-economic programs.

In her weekly radio address, the President said she understands that government employees are underpaid and sacrifice a lot.

“Kasabay nito, gusto kong gamitin ang pagkakataong ito para tiyakin sa ating government employees na ginagawa natin ang lahat para mapa-sama kayo sa ating socio-economic programs. Tulad ng iba pa nating mga kababayan, ang

inyong mga pangunahing pangangailangan sa kalusugan, edukasyon at lalo na ang pabahay ay aming prayoridad (Also, I wish to use this occasion to assure our government employees that we are doing everything so that they will be included in our socio-economic programs. Like the rest of our countrymen, your needs for health, education and housing will be given priority.),” the President said.

The President stressed that she wanted government employees’ families to be secured and well-provided for. This is important, she said, so that state workers can work more efficiently for the nation.

“Gusto kong malaman ninyo na inatasan ko ang aking gabinete at lahat ng mga pinuno ng ibang government agencies na maghanap at gumawa ng mga programa para sa ikabubuti ng kanilang mga empleyado, para makahanap ng ibang paraan para mapabuti ang kanilang kalagayan (I would like all of you to know that I have directed my Cabinet and all heads of other government agencies to find and establish programs for the benefit of their employees welfare),” the President pointed out.

The President exhorted all government employees to join her in building a strong Republic, one that will truly serve the nation and generations to come.

“Lubusang nagpapasalamat ako sa inyong mga kapwa kong nasa gobyerno. Ipagpatuloy ninyo ang inyong dedikasyon, tulungan ninyo ako para mapatatag natin ang bansa’t gobyerno ng Pilipinas (I am fully thankful to all my co-workers in government. Continue with your dedication, and help me strengthen our country and the Philippine government),” the President said.

No wage increase position of labor groups patriotic — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded anew the decision of the Labor Solidarity Movement (LSM), the umbrella organization of the country’s mainstream labor groups, not to press for wage increase at this time.

The President met with LSM members at the State Dining Room in Malacañang and assured them that in return for their very patriotic decision, her administration is doing all it can to prevent an increase in transportation fares.

“You are very helpful in offering not to demand a wage increase,” the President told the group.

The movement is composed of Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), Federation of Free Workers (FFW), Alliance of Filipino Workers (AFW) and the Trade Union of the Philippines and Allied Services (TUPAS).

The President also told the group that the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) has committed to pay for any increases in workers’ contribution in Social Security System premiums for as long as there are still no wage increases.

The President said that while government works hard at creating new jobs through investment as well as through tourism and the encouragement of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to build up domestic demand, it must also put in place job preservation mechanisms at a time when the world is in economic difficulty.

The President earlier called LSM’s decision as a patriotic act and one such mechanism by which existing jobs can be preserved.

During the luncheon meeting, the President and LSM discussed ways to improve the plight of the workers. Among these are: the need for the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to strictly enforce existing labor standards so workers may get their lawful due, how the National Food Authority (NFA) could assist workers to get cheaper rice and other basic necessities, how the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) could intensify its drive to provide affordable housing to workers through rent-to-own and similar schemes to allow workers decent dwelling places.

Among those who attended the meeting were Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, TUCP representatives Victorino Balais, Avelino Valerio, Zoilo dela Cruz Jr., FFW representative Ramon Jabar, AFW members Gregorio del Prado, Tony Dumpit, Leonardo Desierto, Rafael Quilitan and TUPAS representatives Vladimir Tupaz, Romeo Arica and Vicente Apor.

Statement of Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho proposed changes in Meralco's management structure in order to address concerns over the company's financial stability in case it would have to implement the Supreme Court's decision for a consumer refund.

Camacho made the proposal on the basis of the success of the recent program to turn around the then financially-distressed Philippine National Bank, majority-controlled by the tycoon Lucio Tan. One of the program's most important features, which restored the financial community's confidence in the bank, was the change in its top management and directors of the bank, and not changes in ownership.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has emphasized repeatedly that the greater private capital is the crucial element to develop the power industry so that it would meet the country's requirements, and not a reversion to the government's former domineering presence in and control of the electricity sector.

Secretary Camacho felt that the firms creditors and the financial market in general would find comfort in the entry of new set of professionals, and independent managers and directors.

It was not at all a proposal for a government takeover but simply a plan to upgrade Meralco's corporate standing in the financial market.

Secretary Camacho's "proposal" in fact was preliminary working draft for discussion purposes only and certainly not a demand. It had emerged out of his conversations with Eugenio "Gabby" Lopez III, a member of the family who was his classmate during their Harvard years. Camacho candidly discussed with Gabby Lopez his view of the financial markets' worries and the beneficial impact of a change in Meralco's management structure.

Gabby Lopez gave the Finance Secretary the impression that his family was open for discussions for such changes. Camacho therefore proceeded to write down his view of the changes required, using as a pro-forma template PNB's "memorandum of agreement" with the government, and gave it to Gabby. The Finance secretary repeatedly emphasized to him that the draft was merely a starting point for discussion and that the family could propose changes as they see appropriate.

As a very rough draft, the proposal had not even reached the level of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for evaluation and decision.

It is quite unfortunate that the Lopez family have totally misinterpreted Camacho's proposal. Camacho have never brought up a proposal for a change in ownership, only the entry of new set of professional and independent board of directors and managers. Such changes could also put a stop to perceptions of alleged lapses in corporate governance in the utility firm.

Two companies controlled by or allied with the Lopez family are the registered owners of 28.5% of Meralco, down from the family's nearly 100% ownership before 1972. It's beneficial ownership however – because there are other shareholders in these firms — amounts to 5%. The government and its agencies constitute the biggest single stockholder of Meralco, with its official and beneficial ownership amounting to 25.5% of the company.

The government does not need to "want Meralco". It already has a big stake in Meralco both as shareholder, and as a government duty-bound to ensure the stability of a public utility.

Secretary Camacho's proposal was made in the context of President Macapagal-Arroyo's guidelines to undertake efforts to assure Meralco's financial stability, so it would be able to continue electricity-distribution and implement, when it becomes final, the Supreme Court's decision ordering it to refund its consumers.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 23, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029130454/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov23.htm>

The President's Day: November 25, 2002

25 NOVEMBER 2002

- **GMA lauds Central Bank, Monetary Board for initiatives to promote growth of SMEs**
- **GMA urges Red Cross-Red Crescent campaign vs children in war, for building strong republics**
- **GMA thanks UNIDO for continued support to RP's industrial development**

GMA lauds Central Bank, Monetary Board for initiatives to promote growth of SMEs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the officials of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) and members of the Monetary Board for their initiatives to support and promote the administration's priority programs to develop the small and medium term enterprises (SMEs) in urban and rural areas in the provinces.

In a meeting with banking associations at Malacañang's Heroes Hall this morning, BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes reported to the President that the BSP and the Monetary Board are very supportive of the SMEs and have in fact launched a series of initiatives to promote the SME sector.

Also present in the meeting were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo and Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II.

Reyes told the President that the BSP and the Monetary Board are now conducting continuing dialogues with businessmen in the provinces to inform them about the need to promote the growth of SMEs to reinvigorate the domestic economy and win the war against poverty.

Among the previous initiatives of the central bank is the requirement for all lending institutions to set aside at least 6 percent for small enterprises and 2 percent for medium enterprises for 10 years starting August 1997 to the year 2007.

Under the new initiatives, the BSP has also deferred for one year the implementation of the common rate of 91-day Treasury-bill interest rate (from previous 91-day T-bill minus 1%) to help jump-start SME lending, the BSP Deputy Governor said.

He added that the BSP has also lowered and standardized at 6% the rate of return (RR) on Negotiable Order of Withdrawal (NOW) accounts to restore the substantial differential in favor of Trade Banks and Commercial Banks.

Reyes also said the BSP is now in the process of reviewing the present 35 percent singles borrower limit (SBL) to give wholesale government banks for SME relending more room to lend to conduit banks if this is a binding constraint.

The BSP is also considering more liberal access to branching as an incentive for banks that achieve substantial direct lending to SMEs as a percentage of total loan portfolio (TLP). The study, Reyes said, will be completed at the end of next month.

Among the other initiatives of the BSP are as follows:

- To look into the feasibility of creating a mechanism jointly with banks that will encourage them to discount/factor trade receivables of SMEs to generate reasonably priced working capital for them. One possibility is to create a liquid bankers acceptance market that can be traded among banks as another vehicle to spur further development of the capital market.

- To participate in regional consultation and/or business forums with SME beneficiaries and banking institutions in the locality to address the issues and concerns of SME in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry as lead agency.
- To coordinate with the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) on putting up a regular radio program to be called “Buong Serbisyo at Paglilingkod” (BSP) which will be hosted by top BSP officials for purposes of informing the public on the BSP policies and procedures to implement the mandated credit allocation of the Magna Carta Law (Republic Act 6977) as well as for answering incoming phone queries from the public.
- To strongly support private sector efforts to establish comprehensive credit information bureaus where all banks share credit information and thus credit reduce risk.

GMA urges Red Cross-Red Crescent campaign vs children in war, for building strong republics

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to take a more active campaign against the employment of children and minors in combat and work for the building of strong republics across the Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions.

During a luncheon meeting with the delegates to the Sixth Asia-Pacific-Middle East Regional Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Malacañang, the President also lauded the efforts of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent for alleviating the pain of events around the world that kill, maim and displace people and cause untold sufferings.

The President called on the Red Cross and Red Crescent to elevate other issues related to conflict or terrorism to a higher place in their action and advocacy plan.

“One is an active campaign, I hope, against the employment of children and minors in combat,” the President said, noting that just a week ago, she attended a surrender ceremony of former communist rebels wherein she saw how the youth were recruited at such an early age to wage war against the government.

“I ask for your support and cooperation in facing this serious challenge to the community of civilized nations,” the President said.

The President also called on the two humanitarian organizations to work for the building of strong republics across the regions “so that we can try to endure the collective security against terror and transnational crime and build societies that would help one another defeat poverty.”

“This is my call on the other side of our equally great effort to build the institution of human dignity and institutions – institutions like yours – that make for a just, human and peaceful society. For institutions like yours are indispensable institutions of good governance and strong republics,” she said.

The affair at the Palace was also attended by Princess Margriet of The Netherlands, who is the chairperson of the Standing Commission of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

For Princess Margriet’s attendance, the President said she feels a sense of *déjà vu* because a generation ago, during the time of her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, Queen Beatrix, then the Crown Princess, also visited the Philippines and “my father hosted a party for her in this very same hall.”

“I’m very honored and we are all honored as Filipinos that Princess Margriet is here. Because causes are more successful when there are symbols, and Princess Margriet is a symbol. She epitomizes the woman in humanitarian work around the world. I’m glad, Your Highness, that you’re gracing the conference and providing it with inspiration,” she said.

The President said the work of humanitarian organizations like the Red Cross and Red Crescent alleviates much of the pain of events that kill, maim, displace and cause untold suffering among human beings.

“It’s our challenge to persevere even against seemingly insurmountable odds in a world of conflict,” she said as she noted that the Red Cross has been a partner of the Philippines for a long time.

The conference focuses on three areas: Health, Population Movement and Disasters.

As she continues to work to steer the country back on track, the President said she hopes to expand to tenfold a government program she has started that would cut in half the price of medicines most often purchased by the poor.

She also noted that the government now provides health insurance for millions of poor Filipinos.

The President also said her administration is working on developing the infrastructure and logistics backbone that would hopefully combine to disperse urban development and decongest Metro Manila.

“This would open up new options for the urban sector to improve the quality of life. For example, affordable and dependable mass transport for the surrounding provinces in Metro Manila will make it possible to choose to establish a wholesome family life in the countryside where the cost of living is less while still working in the city,” she said.

The President also thanked the Red Cross for giving assistance to the evacuees of the recent war in Mindanao.

Also in attendance during the testimonial lunch were the Chair of the Asia and Pacific Conference Planning Committee and Member of the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) Board of Governors Mario Nery; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement President Don Manuel Suarez del Toro; and PNRC Board of Governors chairman Brig. Gen. Jaime Canatoy.

GMA thanks UNIDO for continued support to RP’s industrial development

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked officials of the United Nations Industrial Development Organizations (UNIDO) for their continued assistance to the industrial development and the anti-poverty program of the Philippines.

The President also lauded the UNIDO for its plans to launch a separate small and medium enterprise (SME) project in Mindanao in September next year.

“Thank you and we will welcome your support for that. Just to inform you, the SME is my priority program right now,” the President told UNIDO Director General Carlos Alfredo Magarinos during his courtesy call this afternoon at Malacanang’s Music Room.

During their brief conversation, the President assured Magarinos that her administration will try to maximize the UNIDO assistance for industrial development in the Philippines.

“Industrial development is very important to us in order to help the global economy to recover,” the President told Magarinos.

In his remarks, Magarinos informed the President that since 1998 UNIDO has addressed financial administration problems of many countries by providing them with industrial development to generate more employment.

Magarinos also advised the President to continue her strong leadership, maintain her political will to resolve all problems and pursue her strong commitment to fight local and international terrorism.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 25, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029212415/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov25.htm>

The President's Day: November 26, 2002

26 NOVEMBER 2002

- **GMA asks petro-chem industry leaders to remain competitive**
- **GMA witnesses signing of M.O.A. restructuring national steel**
- **Statement of the President**
- **Camacho: gov't has no intention of taking over MERALCO**
- **Camacho orders review of B.I.R. ruling on tax exemptions**

GMA asks petro-chem industry leaders to remain competitive

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the leaders of the country's petrochemical industry that her administration is working to remove tariff distortions to make the sector more competitive.

"We want you to remain competitive in the market," the President told the downstream petrochemical associations, in a meeting in Malacañang.

Those who met with the President were officials of the Philippine Plastic Company Inc., Philippine Electrical, Electronics and Allied Industries Federation, Association of Home Appliance Mfg's, and Consumer Electronic Products Mfg's Association.

The officials informed the President that they oppose the proposed suspension of the reduction of tariff rates for mid-stream petrochem and resins producers under the ASEAN free trade concept.

They said the suspension would only prolong tariff distortion and this would be detrimental to the growth of the industry.

With the President in the meeting were Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Alex Teng of the Philippine Plastic Industry Association Inc., and industrialist Raul Concepcion.

GMA witnesses signing of M.O.A. restructuring national steel

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement on the restructuring of the National Steel Corporation.

The MOA, signed by the various shareholders of the firm as well as the various creditors of the NSC at the Ceremonial Hall this morning, will effect write-downs or write-offs by the Malaysian investments "so that while they now own about 90 percent of the entire firm, it will now be reduced to 20 percent ownership," Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II said.

"So the value of what they've invested, about \$700 million, will now be reduced so that they would now be owning the equivalent of about P2 billion (about \$40 million)," Roxas added.

Meanwhile, the creditors, who have an accumulated outstanding exposure to NSC of about P18 billion, will be left with P2 billion in loans and the balance converted into equity representing 80 percent ownership of the corporation.

The present shareholders of NSC include the Danaharta, the Malaysian government's equivalent of the Asset Privatization Trust (APT). On the Philippine side, the National Development Corp. also holds a minority stake. So does Marubeni Corporation of Japan.

Among the creditors of National Steel are 16 Philippine-based banks, including some foreign banks with Philippine operation. The Philippine-based banks, led by Philippine National Bank, have an exposure of about P18 billion, including accumulated interest and penalties.

The investment by the Malaysians is estimated at about \$700 million.

In 1999, the NSC ceased operations. The plant closed down and shortly thereafter, the firm filed for rehabilitation and subsequently receivership with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The entire process was embroiled in a number of shareholder vs. creditor vs. shareholder acrimony as threats of suits, actual pleadings, and court actions filed back and forth ensued among the various participants until in 2001, the President stepped in and instructed the Department of Trade and Industry to look for a solution.

Roxas said the key event in all of these was the state visit by the President to Malaysia in late 2001, when the National Steel issue was made a part of the bilateral one-on-one conversation between the President and Prime Minister Mahathir.

Before NSC folded up in 1999, it was one of the biggest contributors to the country's economic development.

It was paying every year almost P1 billion in taxes to the national government, P200 million in real estate taxes to the city of Iligan, was employing almost 4,000 people, buying almost 70 percent of the total power output of the National Power Corporation in the region and was providing livelihood to countless people doing downstream business in the area.

Among those who attended the signing are Iligan Mayor Franklin Quijano, SEC Chairman Lilia Bautista, Land Bank of the Philippines president Margarito Teves, PNB president Lorenzo Tan and Iligan Rep. Abdullah Dimaporo.

Statement of the President

I have authorized Justice Secretary Hernando Perez to go on a 30-day leave starting tomorrow in order for him to focus on refuting the accusations made against him by the congressman from Manila.

This is also necessary in order that the functioning of the Justice

Department, one of the most critical agencies of the executive branch, is not in the least affected by the allegations made against its head.

I expect his accuser, Representative Mark Jimenez, to prove to our people within this 30-day period, that his isn't a political game, or a strategy to evade extradition proceedings against him. The congressman must produce within this 30-day period credible indication that the Justice Secretary extorted money, as he alleges, from the congressman.

If he cannot provide credible indications – and I am not demanding evidence that can stand up in court, but merely plausible substantiation – the congressman must apologize directly to the Justice Secretary and to the Congress, which he has used as a forum to hurl his charges. If he is able to do so, let justice take its course wherever the evidence leads to.

As Chief Executive, I am issuing this direct order to the incoming Officer-in-Charge of the Justice Department and the National Bureau of Investigation to organize a special team to acquire and evaluate all the evidence the Manila congressman claims he has or can produce.

Jimenez has also offered publicly to open his foreign bank accounts for scrutiny to prove his accusations. I am directing the Department of Foreign Affairs to assist the National Bureau of Investigation and the Justice Department to undertake talks with foreign governments or their banking regulatory offices to allow the scrutiny of these pertinent foreign bank accounts.

A basic foundation of our Republic is the rule of law. Nobody is above the law. But basic decency requires that one must have proof before he can accuse any man of any wrongdoing.

Camacho: gov't has no intention of taking over Meralco

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho today stressed that it was never the intention of the government to take over the Manila Electric Corporation (MERALCO) when he submitted a draft to the Lopez Group specifying how the government could help in maintaining the financial viability of the firm.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Camacho said what was contemplated in the draft was a "share-taking" situation that was meant to forge a partnership and consolidate the different interests of the various stakeholders in the public utility firm.

"We have one common interest here with everybody, including the Lopez Group, the creditors, the other stakeholders and the public, and that is to know the financial viability of the company. That is the one common interest," Camacho said.

Camacho said the draft he gave to the Lopez Group was just a starting point and strictly for discussion purposes only.

"We would like to invite their reaction, their comment and their proposed changes, anything that they want, anything they don't want out of the draft. That was really the spirit in which it was given," he said. "Because you know, we could have a month of verbal discussions or telephone conversations and lead to nowhere unless you start working on something."

Camacho also said the timing of the draft, which was three days before the Supreme Court decision on the matter, was only incidental. He said the adverse decision of the Supreme Court was clearly something that people were concerned about.

"That's why we were trying to look for solutions regardless of whatever that decision is, of making sure that the financial viability of the company is maintained," he said.

"What is contemplated here is a share-taking situation because anticipating that there would be some financial instability in the company because of those, you know, adverse decisions that they were anticipating, we deemed that there would be a period of concern from the public, from the stakeholders, from creditors, from the shareholders, financial markets, and the public."

"It was important to be able to promote a structure, a situation where really government is working with them in a form of partnership. It could be like a confidence-building measure and that was really what the draft was intended for," Camacho said.

Camacho orders review of B.I.R. ruling on tax exemptions

In an effort to address the country's fiscal deficit and improve revenue collections, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho today ordered the review of all the rulings of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) that provide tax exemptions based on their interpretation of the country's tax laws.

Briefing members of the Malacañang Press Corps this afternoon, Camacho said the review will be undertaken in two months by a three-man team to be headed by Finance Undersecretary Cornelio Hizon together with BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno and Lina Esurena of the National Tax Research Center.

“The objective of this review, which we hope to complete by the end of January, is to harmonize the different tax rulings, because it has been observed that there are tax rulings that contradict each other,” Camacho said.

Camacho also said that the project is designed to tighten up on those BIR rulings, particularly those that involve tax exemptions.

“So that if it is deemed appropriate from the review that certain rulings are contracting, they should be harmonized. And if certain tax rulings have provided loopholes to our tax collection, then they should be revoked or repealed,” he added.

Camacho pointed out that his directive for a review of all BIR rulings “is really part of our efforts to address our fiscal deficit problem and improve our revenue collection.”

“It has been observed that loopholes exist because of varying BIR rulings that have been given, over a period of time, especially after the promulgation of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program. So, this is really part and parcel of our measures to address our fiscal deficit,” he said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: November 26, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030064652/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov26.htm>

The President's Day: November 27, 2002

27 NOVEMBER 2002

- **Kua term as PTA Chief expired on Oct. 2, says Malacañang**
- **GMA gives medals, cash rewards and promotes four army troops wounded in NPA ambush**

Kua term as PTA Chief expired on Oct. 2, says Malacañang

The term of Nixon T. Kua as General Manager of the Philippine Tourism Authority has expired as of October 2, 2002.

This was the assertion of the Office of the Presidential Legal Counsel today as it justified the appointment of Kua's replacement.

Presidential Decree 564, as amended by Presidential Decree 1400, which created the Philippine Tourism Authority, provided:

Section 23-A. General Manager – Appointment and Tenure – The General Manager shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines and **shall serve for a term of six (6) years** unless sooner removed for cause; Provided, That upon the expiration of his term, he shall serve as such until his successor shall have been appointed and qualified.

The Presidential Legal Counsel opined that the reckoning date for the commencement of the term of office of the first PTA General Manager after the issuance of Presidential Decree 1400 shall be the date of effectivity of PD 1400 and not on the date of the first appointment.

In view thereof, the Presidential Legal Counsel explained that the appropriate starting point of the term of office for the PTA General Manager is October 3, 1978 and the terms of the person subsequently appointed to the said position shall be reckoned from said date, as follows:

First Term October 3, 1978 to October 2, 1984

Second Term October 3, 1984 to October 2, 1990

Third Term October 3, 1990 to October 2, 1996

Fourth Term October 3, 1996 to October 2, 2002

Fifth Term October 3, 2002 to October 2, 2008

The Presidential Legal Counsel explained that there is a difference between term and tenure. In a Supreme Court case, Republic vs. Imperial, the **term of office** was distinguished from the **tenure** of the incumbent.

The **term** means the time during which the officer may claim to hold office as of right and fixes the interval after which several incumbents shall succeed one another.

The **tenure**, on the other hand, represents the period during which the incumbent actually holds the office.

The **tenure** may be shorter than the term for reasons within or beyond the power of the incumbent.

The same ruling said that the tenure of the appointee may be shortened but not his term.

Since Kua was appointed on November 7, 2000, his term of office shall be for the fourth term in the table above or from October 3, 1996 to **October 2, 2002**.

Thus Kua may continue to hold office until the expiration of his term or unless otherwise removed for cause or any other legal ground.

GMA gives medals, cash rewards and promotes four army troops wounded in NPA ambush

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today honored four wounded Army soldiers with medals, spot promotion and cash rewards for their bravery and courage in responding to a distress call from their comrades who were ambushed by New People's Army rebels in the vicinity of Barangay Villaflor in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro last Sunday.

The President visited the wounded soldiers – Staff Sgt. Elmer Arimando, Sgts. Romeo Bustarde and John Delizo, and Cpl. Anrico Almoguera – at the Fort Bonifacio Hospital in Taguig where they are recuperating from wounds they sustained in fighting the NPA ambush.

She pinned on each soldier the Wounded Personnel Medal, gave cash assistance of P50,000 to Sergeant Bustarde who sustained a major injury and P20,000 each to the three other troops who sustained minor injuries, and then promoted all four to the next higher rank.

The soldiers, from the 16th Infantry Battalion, Second Division of the Philippine Army, were part of the reinforcement responding to a call for assistance from a group of about 30 soldiers on board two vehicles who were ambushed last Sunday by about 50 NPA rebels in the mountainous area of Puerto Galera.

The distressed soldiers were led by Col. Jovito Palaparan of the 204th Infantry Brigade, who was also himself wounded in the encounter with the rebels.

Sergeant Arimando, the leader of the responding troops, said they were also met with a hail of bullets and explosions when they arrived at the ambush scene.

Arimando said that fortunately, none of them died in the encounter.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 27, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029130746/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov27.htm>

The President's Day: November 28, 2002

28 NOVEMBER 2002

- **Economy maintains growth momentum, expands by 3.8 percent in 3rd quarter**
- **GMA orders deactivation of SPDA**
- **Short stint as AFP chief not sole measure of good leadership, says GMA**
- **GMA presides over AFP change of command from 'Poet General' to 'Chuck Norris' of RP**
- **GMA calls on people to do away with too much politics**
- **GMA to make 4-day state visit to Japan**
- **GMA issues A.O. designating OVP to oversee, supervise, implement development projects**

Economy maintains growth momentum, expands by 3.8 percent in 3rd quarter

The economy maintained its growth momentum in the third quarter of the year, expanding by 3.8 percent from a year earlier as growth in the non-agricultural sector offset the slight decline in agriculture.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante B. Canlas, who is also secretary general of the National Economic and Development Authority, said the real gross domestic product (GDP) in the first three quarters of the year expanded to 4.1 percent, taking into account the adjusted second quarter growth of 4.8 percent from an initial estimate of 4.5 percent. GDP is the value of all goods and services produced domestically.

"We are confident about realizing the government's projections for the Philippine economy in 2002: 4.0-4.5 percent for GDP growth and 4.5 -5.0 percent for GNP," Canlas said.

The National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) said the GDP growth for the first three quarters of 2002 is 1.1 percentage points higher than its 3.0 percent performance in 2001.

With the Net Factor Income from Abroad (NFIA) showing a 6.0% improvement over its level last year, the country's Gross National Product (GNP) increased by 4.2 percent.

The NCSB said per capita GDP rose by 1.9 percent, from 0.8 percent growth registered in the first nine months of last year. Similarly, per capita GNP moved up by 2.1 percent while per capita PCE (personal consumption expenditure) grew by 1.6 percent during the period.

The NCSB, an agency under NEDA, said the services sector maintained its economic strength, contributing 2.3 percentage points to the GDP growth. It posted a 5.1% increase in the first three quarters of the year, higher than its 4.2 percent upswing last year.

All of the services sectors showed improved growth during the period, except for the trade sector which maintained its growth of 5.5 percent, the NCSB added.

The statistical board said the growth rate of finance increased by 0.9 percentage points from 1.7 percent in 2001 to 2.6 percent in 2002 while ownership of dwellings and real state recovered from its negative performance last year, reflecting a positive 1.4 percent growth.

According to the NCSB, the industry sector posted a 3.8 percent increment in the first three quarters of 2002, 2.3 percentage points higher than its 1.5 percent growth recorded a year ago. The growth of the industry sector can be attributed to the recovery of mining and quarrying and construction sectors.

Canlas said the strong growth of industry and services indicates that the policies of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration designed for macroeconomic stability and long term industrial restructuring are working. These policies contribute to the recovery of industry and the self-sustaining growth in services, he added.

Canlas also said the administration's commitment to the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act is transforming agriculture. The growth of poultry and livestock and fishery attests to this, Canlas added.

On the side of aggregate demand, the overall resilience of the economy is due to private consumption, which grew at its fastest rate of 4.1 percent in four and a half years, and robust investments in fixed capital, Canlas said.

"We attribute the healthy growth of private domestic demand to policies that have kept inflation and interest rates on a downtrend in the midst of rising fuel prices: reduced tariff rates, timely management of rice stocks, policies to reduce electricity prices, and sound monetary policy," Canlas said.

Consumption also drew strength from stable income growth of overseas Filipino workers, Canlas said. However, government consumption retreated in line with the government's efforts to curb the deficit, he added.

"We expect the fall in government spending to be temporary in view of the Administration's enhanced tax collection efforts," the socioeconomic planning secretary said.

Moving forward, sustained growth of personal consumption spending, replenishment of reduced inventory levels, and continuing growth of the country's external trade partners will maintain the economic growth momentum, Canlas said.

"The expected recovery of agriculture, specifically crops, in the fourth quarter, along with the continuing strength of the non-agricultural sector will keep production humming in 2002 and beyond," Canlas added.

GMA orders deactivation of SPDA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the immediate deactivation of the Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA) and declared vacant effective immediately all positions in the board of directors, board of advisers and the administrator.

The President, through Executive Order No. 149, created a Task Force to oversee the deactivation process of SPDA. Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza has been designated head of the Task Force with representatives from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process as members.

The Task Force was tasked to recommend to the President not later than March 30, 2003 and, subsequently, implement the dispositive action with reference to the functions, personnel, assets and liabilities of SPDA. It was also asked to safeguard the assets of SPDA pending their final disposition.

The Task Force was also directed by the President to file criminal and administrative charges against any SPDA official or personnel who may be found liable for any wrongdoing in the course of the audit of its operations.

"Deactivation" is a winding up process within presidential prerogative, short of abolition. Only the Congress can abolish SPDA as it was created by legislative fiat, Presidential Decree 690, as amended. SPDA is an agency attached of the Office of the President.

SPDA personnel, except those who shall be needed for the skeletal force, whether permanent, contractual, consultant or job-hired, are deemed separated from the service effective December 30, 2002. SPDA personnel qualified for retirement may elect optional retirement.

All benefits, including payment of leave credits, will be paid within one month from the filing of the necessary clearances and other documents by SPDA personnel.

Displaced SPDA personnel shall be given priority in hiring for existing vacant positions in other government agencies, subject to compliance with established standards set by the receiving agencies. Said transfer or re-employment with other agencies shall be exempt from the prohibition on new hiring.

E.O. 149 said some of the functions of SPDA are also being performed by other existing agencies of the bureaucracy. It further noted that there is a need to constantly monitor the overlapping functions among the agencies of government to avoid duplication of work and in order to streamline the functions of the bureaucracy.

Under Section 74 of Republic Act No. 9162 or FY 2002 General Appropriations Act, the President may direct changes in the organization and key positions in any department, bureau or agency.

Short stint as AFP chief not sole measure of good leadership, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that the length of command in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is not the most relevant trait of a good military leadership.

In her speech during the AFP change of command ceremony in Camp Aguinaldo this morning, the President scored her critics for questioning the short terms of former Chiefs of Staff Generals Roy Cimatu and Benjamin Defensor.

“I am unperturbed by criticisms of the short terms of the last two chiefs of staff. For it is leadership, not time, that is the sole measure of command. And I shall continue to judge the command only by a high standard of merit and professionalism,” the President said.

The President believes that there is no essential relationship between the brief stints of the last two chiefs of staff and the stability of the Armed Forces.

“Our last two chiefs of staff are our best argument that the length of command is not the most relevant trait of good military leadership,” she said.

The President said that under General Defensor, the AFP started to untie the “Gordian knots” of local terrorism, insurgency and poverty through successful military operations against the Abu Sayyaf and the local communist movements.

The President then enjoined General Dionisio Santiago, the new AFP chief, to “continue untying that Gordian knot.”

She assured the military organization that she would continue to judge the command of the AFP only by the high standard of merit and professionalism.

Present during the ceremony were former President Fidel V. Ramos, House Speaker Jose De Venecia, Jr., National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, and Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

GMA presides over AFP change of command from ‘Poet General’ to ‘Chuck Norris’ of RP

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presided over the change of command in the Armed Forces of the Philippines from the “Poet General” to the “Chuck Norris of the Delta Force of the country.”

The President handed over the saber of command of the AFP from outgoing Gen. Benjamin Defensor, whom she called the Poet General, to General Dionisio R. Santiago, whom she described as the Chuck Norris of the Delta Force, during ceremonies held in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, this morning.

In her speech, President said that in her 20 months of leadership, she has presided over the AFP change of command from the “Philosopher General,” now Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, to Gen. Diomedio Villanueva, to the “Thinking General,” Roy Cimatu, to Defensor and Santiago.

The President said all her choices for AFP chief of staff have shown outstanding leadership, loyalty to the Constitution, and faith in the change of command and the Commander in Chief.

The President said General Santiago, who headed the Special Operations Command (Socom), put his career on the line for the people in the events leading to January 2001.

“And that is why I trust him with my life. I trust him, I entrust to him the leadership of the Armed Forces of the Philippines,” the President added.

Two crucial moments stand out in the career of Santiago: January 2001 when he decided to support the people’s clamor for the restoration of moral ascendancy to the tarnished image of the presidency while he was in command of the Army’s Socom and May 1, 2001, his successful defense of Malacañang against groups attempting to wrest control of power while he was overall commander of Joint Task Force Libra.

As Socom chief, he was the overall leader of an elite group of Scout Rangers and Special Forces men.

The President said Santiago conceptualized the formation of Light Reaction Companies in all tactical units of the Philippine Army, which has become one of the most cost-effective strategies of counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism.

She said Santiago is comfortable in the field as in the boardroom, having served as assistant chief of staff for plans of the Philippine Army, director of the National Security Studies, trade attaché at the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, and attaché at the Philippine Consulate in Seattle, Washington.

The President said: “To me, the greatest part of (Santiago’s) preparation for his present work is not really in his biodata. Most of all, to me, from what I have seen of him, I consider (Santiago) as the Socom Commander; that’s why I call him the Delta Force and the Chuck Norris.”

General Santiago is a seasoned combat officer whose expertise was molded by the divergent threat environments in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao. He has also had diverse postings in government agencies and diplomatic missions.

Santiago belongs to Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class ’70. He is married to Hermogena M. Santiago and is blessed with three children – Mylene Marie, Marco Jonet and Melon Carlo.

GMA calls on people to do away with too much politics

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the Filipino people to do away with too much politics as she said that our political system, which is based on patronage, is largely to be blamed for the country’s economic woes.

In her policy speech at the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) change of command ceremony held this morning at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, the President said that too much politics that has contributed to a weak state is a collective blame “that we must all share in,” admitting that she herself is a politician.

“What is important is the willingness to change. And over time, this can happen,” the President said.

The President cited three symptoms of a weak state that her administration, as well as the administrations before hers, have tried to correct.

First, she said, is the large gap between the rich and the poor, a gap that has been exploited for political ends.

The second is that the country's political system is based on patronage and ultimately corruption to support patronage, the President said.

She also said that in recent years, destabilization, black propaganda and character assassination have been used as political tools by some unscrupulous individuals or groups.

"The common word in this is politics, too much politics, and that's why I am glad we have an Armed Forces that is above politics," the President said.

The President recalled that in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA), she said that the ultimate goal of great revolutions from Bonifacio to EDSA was to transfer power from the traditional economic and political bosses to the people.

"Our task is to complete this revolution. The enemy to beat is ourselves, when we spread division rather than unity, when we put ourselves above country, and profit above fairness, when we make politics replace patriotism in our country's hour of need," the President said.

GMA to make 4-day state visit to Japan

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is making a four-day state visit to Japan, the biggest official development assistance (ODA) provider to the Philippines, from December 2 to 5.

In a briefing during the 63rd Cabinet Meeting in Malacañang, Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon, Jr. said the theme of the forthcoming state visit of the President is "Philippines-Japan Partnership for Peace and Prosperity."

Ambassador Siazon underscored the significance of the visit in terms of strengthening the bilateral relations between the Philippines and Japan and also in terms of the personal relations of the President with the present Emperor and Empress of Japan.

"This will be the first state visit by a Philippine President to Japan in the 21st century, the last being that of President Fidel V. Ramos in 1993," Siazon said.

According to Siazon, Japan only accommodates four to five state visits a year.

The present Emperor and Empress visited the Philippines in 1962, when Diosdado Macapagal the President's father, was President. At that time, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was a teenager.

The visit of then Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko was a very difficult chapter in the Philippine-Japan relations, Siazon said.

He pointed out that the visit of the Crown Prince and Princess of Japan started a new phase of relations. "It was economic development, and Japan from that time on, assisted the Philippines' various programs on economic development," he said.

This visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo also completes the cycle of relationship she has established with the Emperor and the Empress.

“Because now, she is going in her own right as head of state of the Philippines. It also marks the beginning of a new phase of relations between Japan and the Philippines wherein before we used to be recipient of mainly technical assistance from Japan,” Siazon said.

Siazon said that during the President’s visit, not only economic cooperation will be discussed. “We are also talking about peace, meaning security in the region, and prosperity, meaning not only our own economic development but contributing to the economic development in the region,” he said.

Aside from the traditional state call on the Emperor and the Empress, the President will also give a speech before the Diet or Parliament where she will underscore the importance of Japanese relations with the Philippines.

Siazon said only selected world leaders are invited to address the Japanese parliament.

Previous speakers included President Carlos P. Garcia, Helmut Kohl of Germany, President Nelson Mandela and US President Bill Clinton. United State President George Bush also spoke before the Diet in February this year.

GMA issues A.O. designating OVP to oversee, supervise, implement development projects

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has issued Administrative Order No. 45 designating the Office of the Vice President (OVP) to oversee, supervise and implement agreed development programs.

In signing A.O No. 45, the Chief Executive said there exists a vital need to promote, accelerate and implement various socio-economic programs.

A joint statement issued by the President and Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr., on July 2, 2002 identified as vital programs the Overseas Filipino Investment Bond, the housing program for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and the establishment of an integrated steel plant in Mindanao.

The President said the establishment of a seafarer’s welfare program is another vital program, adding that there are other socio-economic programs, particularly those involving the development of Mindanao, that may hereafter be agreed to be covered within this A.O.

“The OVP shall oversee, supervise and implement all the aforementioned programs. The OVP shall be the representative of the government in the oversight and supervision of such programs until their completion,” she said.

She added that the concerned government agencies institutionally in charge of the relevant projects under these programs shall be placed under the oversight and supervision of the OVP with respect to the relevant projects to ensure smooth, timely, effective implementation under the agreed programs.

Pursuant to its mandate, the President said, the OVP shall exercise the following powers and functions:

- Advise the President in matters concerning the aforementioned programs, and provide analysis and recommendations on policies and operational issues, particularly those relative to Mindanao development;
- Review all aspects related to the aforementioned programs, recommend short and long term measures and appropriate actions to address policy, institutional implementation, and operational issues and concerns, particularly those relative to Mindanao development. The OVP shall therefore oversee and supervise the implementation and completion of all relevant projects under these programs;
- Call upon any agency of the government for such assistance as may be necessary to address problems affecting the relevant projects;
- Promote foreign and local investment opportunities related to these programs, and as necessary, prioritize relevant projects in cooperation with national government agencies, local government units, and other stakeholders;

- Call for assistance of all presidential appointees, on areas that may be appropriate, to promote and accelerate the socio-economic development of the people in Mindanao;
- Enjoin all elected officials in areas affected by these programs to continue to perform their functions relative to the socio-economic projects covering their respective areas of responsibility as provided by law; and
- Perform all other functions that the President may direct.

Under A.O. No. 45, the OVP is authorized to formulate the organizational structure of its secretariat and engage the services of consultants, as may be approved by the President.

The President also said that funding shall be taken from such available resources as may be determined by the Department of Budget and Management. She added that appropriations for the succeeding years shall be incorporated in the budget proposal for the OVP.

She noted that all executive issuances, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with Administrative Order No. 45 are hereby revoked, amended, or modified accordingly.

The President said A.O. No. 45 shall take effect immediately.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 28, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029214123/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov28.htm>

The President's Day: November 29, 2002

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- **Statement of Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA orders DOJ, PAGC to probe, prosecute all those involved in PIATCO contracts**
- **GMA dares Perez accusers to go to Ombudsman**
- **GMA declares 8,100 hectares of Compostela Valley as mineral reservation**
- **GMA names Coronel Anti-Smuggling Center head**
- **GMA lauds accomplishments of exporters**

Statement of Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

The use of the term "Mindanao Czar" is not accurate.

Administrative Order 45 covers very specific programs some of which have no reference to Mindanao, such as the overseas Filipino workers bond, housing for overseas Filipino workers, and establishment of a seafarers welfare program.

These are the specific programs which VP Teofisto Guingona Jr. agreed to oversee.

The term "Czar" does not appear anywhere in the administrative order and its use is entirely my own interpretation.

The clarification is being made to forestall any possible misinterpretation of the scope of new responsibilities being attached to the Office of the Vice President.

Vice President Guingona also said he is willing to be active in those programs mentioned in the Administrative Order, particularly those involving the OFWs and seafarers, and perform the functions stated in the AO, but will not do so in a Cabinet official's capacity because of his stand on certain policy issues which may not be consistent with those of the administration.

GMA orders DOJ, PAGC to probe, prosecute all those involved in PIATCO contracts

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) to investigate and prosecute all those found to be culpable in the five contracts of the Philippine International Air Terminals Corporation (PIATCO) on the construction of the Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), which the Executive Department's legal offices have found to be null and void.

The President, who issued this statement during the 2002 Golden Shell Awards in Malacañang, said the Office of the Solicitor General and the DOJ have determined that all five agreements covering the NAIA Terminal 3, most of which are contracted in previous administrations, are null and void.

"I cannot honor contracts which the Executive Branch's legal offices have concluded are null and void. I, therefore, order the Department of Justice and the PAGC to investigation any anomalies and prosecute all those found culpable in connection with the NAIA contract," the President said.

The President, however, said that despite all of the problems involving the PIATCO contracts, she guarantees that the new airport will be opened.

"I'm assuring our people, our travelers, our exporters (that) my administration will open the terminal even if it requires invoking the whole powers of the presidency under the Constitution," she said.

She added that the new airport would be safe, secure and smoothly functioning, a world-class airport.

She said the PIATCO issue is not just a simple problem but a test-case of the integrity and efficiency of the Republic in building the infrastructure the nation requires.

“An international airport is any nation’s gateway to the world, the first contact of foreigners to the Philippine Republic, especially those foreigners who have not been in contact with the wonderful exports of the Philippine economy, those foreigners who have not had the benefit of enjoying Philippine export products,” the President said.

The President further noted that it is not only a matter of opening the new airport but making sure that it is a world-class airport that operates without any hitches at all and without a slightest risk to travelers.

“It’s also emerging as a test-case of my administration’s commitment to fight corruption, to free our state from the hold of any vested interest,” she said.

GMA dares Perez accusers to go to Ombudsman

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today challenged the critics of Justice Secretary Hernando Perez to bring up their charges against the Cabinet member to the Office of the Ombudsman, the proper office that would address their evidence, if there were any.

The President made this statement during the 2002 Golden Shell Awards at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang.

“I appeal to his accuser, rather than filing your charges in the media, file it with the Office of the Ombudsman. Submit your documents and speed up the investigation,” the President said.

She noted that the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission is also doing its own investigation.

The President earlier authorized Secretary Perez to go on a 30-day leave in order for him to focus on refuting the accusations made against him in the House of Representatives by the congressman from Manila.

She earlier said that she expects Perez’s accuser, Rep. Mark Jimenez, to prove to the people within this 30-day period that his action isn’t just a political game or a strategy to evade extradition proceedings against him.

“If he cannot provide credible indications – and I am not demanding evidence that can stand up in court, but merely plausible substantiation – the congressman must apologize directly to the Justice Secretary and to the Congress, which he has used as a forum to hurl his charges. If he is able to do so, let justice take its course wherever the evidence leads to,” she said.

GMA declares 8,100 hectares of Compostela Valley as mineral reservation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has designated 8,100 hectares in Monkayo, Compostela Valley as mineral reservation, being an environmentally critical area thereby not eligible for direct mining operations by private individuals or entities.

Under Proclamation No. 297, the President also declared that mining operations in the mineral reservation can only be undertaken by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) directly, subject to payment of just compensation that may be due to the legitimate and existing claimants, or through a qualified contractor, subject to existing rights.

The President also directed the DENR to formulate and issue the appropriate guidelines, including the establishment of an environmental and social fund, to implement the conversion of the 8,100 hectares into a mineral reservation.

The proclamation is pursuant to the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 which states that the Chief Executive may, upon recommendation of the Director of Mines and Geosciences, through the DENR Secretary, and when the national interest so requires, establish mineral reservations where mining operations shall be undertaken directly by the DENR or through a contractor.

The proclamation is aimed at maintaining a rational and orderly balance between socio-economic growth and environmental protection, the President said.

The 8,100 hectares are part of an area excluded in Proclamation No. 369, series of 1931, which declared that certain tracts of public land situated in the then provinces of Davao, Agusan and Surigao, with an area of approximately 1,927,400 hectares, are not for settlement and disposition.

The President said that since 1983 when gold deposits were found within the said 8,100 hectares located in Monkayo, Compostela Valley, unregulated small-to-medium scale mining operations have been undertaken causing serious environmental, health, and peace and order problems.

The declaration of the 8,100 hectares of land as mineral reservation, according to the President, is in the national interest to prevent the further degradation of the environment and to resolve the health and peace and order problems spawned by the unregulated mining operations in the area.

Furthermore, the President said, before the declaration of the 8,100 hectares as mineral reservation, the Director of Mines and Geosciences has conducted public hearings on September 6, 9, and 11, 2002, to allow concerned sectors and communities to air their views on the issue.

GMA names Coronel Anti-Smuggling Center head

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today designated former Police General Miguel Coronel as head of the Anti-Smuggling Intelligence and Investigation Center that is tasked to handle the smuggling that takes place outside of the Bureau of Customs area.

The Chief Executive made the announcement during her speech at the 10th Golden Shell Awards and Top Export Performers Award held this morning at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall.

The President described Coronel as a "very reputable man with that sterling reputation for integrity."

"He (Coronel) will be the head of the new Anti-Smuggling Intelligence and Investigation Center, and with their combined efforts, the goal is to increase tax and customs revenues to reduce the deficit and reduce the interest rates that you, the exporters, have to pay," she told the awardees.

Prior to his appointment, Coronel was Executive Director of the Dangerous Drugs Board and the National Drug Law Enforcement and Prevention Coordinating Center (DEP Center), which was created through Executive Order No. 61 issued on January 15, 1999.

DEP Center was specifically tasked to orchestrate and consolidate the drug law enforcement and prevention efforts of the national government agencies, local government units and non-government organizations for a more effective anti-drug campaign.

A native of Pampanga, Coronel earned his Bachelor of Science degree at the Philippine Military Academy and graduated No. 5 out of 65 graduates in 1970. He took up his Master of Arts in Economics at the University of the Philippines School of Economics in 1975 and Master of Arts in Political Science in 1972 also at the UP College of Arts and Sciences.

Among the awards he received include The Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) 1986 Award from Jaycees International and Gerry Roxas Foundation, PMA Cavalier Award for 1992 as an Outstanding Alumnus (Staff Function), Anvil Award from the Public Relations Society of the Philippines, and Kalayaan Award 1987.

Coronel is married to the former Winniefreda Robillos with whom he has two children.

GMA lauds accomplishments of exporters

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the accomplishments of Philippine exporters, saying they contribute immensely to the growth of the economy as well as project the good image of the Filipino workers to the world.

In her keynote speech at the 10th Golden Shell Awards and Top Export Performers Award at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang, the President said the Filipino and Philippine-resident exporters deserve credit for an 8.8 percent growth in exports despite a fairly flat overall growth in exporters worldwide.

“Your accomplishment, I would say, is the triumph of Filipino expertise in management, design and production. Your expertise is the reason why our designs and products are in such demand abroad,” the President said.

The President noted that the 10th Golden Shell awardees were able to achieve their outstanding accomplishments despite of the long-drawn challenges the world is confronting.

“Their success in the face of adversity may be attributed not only to their resilience and versatility, but to their individual competence,” she said, adding that the market-friendly policies the national government is putting in place to cushion the impact of the current crisis also helped.

The President said these market friendly policies of the government include tariff and incentives rationalization, lowering of interest rates, relaxation of stringent requirements to access financing programs and loan restructuring.

She said the government would continue relaxing access to financing programs for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

“We have given banks incentives and policy signals to fund the SMEs,” she said.

The President also said the government is committed to long-term structural reforms to ensure continued strength in domestic demand, bolstering the diversification of the Gross Domestic Product and enlivening the climate for investment – both for the investment for the domestic market and for exports.

The Chief Executive also said the passage of the Special Asset Management Company bill, now in the bicameral committee in Congress, will free up more bank resources for exports and other projects that the government is not in a fiscal position to fund.

“This bill is not meant to just bail out banks. It is meant, first and foremost, to liquefy their assets to ease up credit and help borrowers get back into business,” she said.

The President also noted another new bill, which would make agricultural land acceptable as bank collateral and remove the rigidity of the second round land transfers under the Agrarian Reform program.

She also assured that the government is committed to sustain economic and political measures to counter the effects of global recession and terrorism.

She noted that government continues to protect national interest by making common causes with foreign countries where those interests materially overlap.

“We don’t know when or where in the whole world terror will strike again but we are doing everything to thwart its attempts or mitigate its effects,” she said.

“These measures — economic, political, security — are all designed to make the Philippines a safe and desirable place for business, a safe and desirable place for exports. Let’s not forget that sound macroeconomic management go side by side with good governance practices including leadership by example, transparency and the integrity of transactions,” the President added.

This year’s Golden Shell awardees are: (Manufacturing Excellence) Arden Classic Inc., Calburn Manufacturing Philippines, Las Palmas Furniture, Inc., L & T International, Remcor Industrial Manufacturing Inc., (Countryside Development Citation) Calburn Manufacturing Philippines, (Rising Star Citation) ABS Gen. International Corp., Jupiter Systems Inc. (Special Citation for Ecologically-Sound Production System) Mt. Kitanglad Agri-Ventures Inc., (Special Recognition for International Designers) Ann T. Pamintuan, president of The Gilded Expressions and Kenneth Cobonpue, president of Interior Crafts of the Islands Inc.

Meanwhile, the top sectoral performers for exports are (Microelectronics) Intel Technology Philippines Inc., (Motor Vehicle parts and components) Yazaki-Torres Manufacturing Inc., (Wearables excluding garments) S.S. Ventures International Inc., (Home Furnishings) Florentino III International Inc., (Holiday Decors and Giftware) Neoart Corp. (Food Products) Dole Philippines Inc., (Marine Products) HJR International Corp., (Construction Materials) Apo Cement Corp. (Garments) Leader Garments Corp.

Bagging the Gold Award for Exports is Intel Technology Philippines Inc. while Fujitsu Computer Products Corp. of the Philippines took the Silver Award and Philips Semiconductors Phils. Inc. got the Bronze Award.

The breakthrough performers are Amertron Inc., Lufthansa Teknik Inc. and Granexport Manufacturing Corp.

*Source: **Office of the Press Secretary***

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: November 29, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213942/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov29.htm>

The President's Day: November 30, 2002

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- **Strong Republic is only weapon against foreign control, poverty, says GMA**
- **GMA names Lorenzo, Gozon to DA, DENR**
- **GMA abolishes PEA**
- **GMA to form body to intensify tax collection**
- **GMA assures PIATCO stockholder: gov't will honor legitimate claims**
- **GMA assures MERALCO customers: you will get refund if SC orders it with finality**
- **GMA sees improved urban, rural development in next 6 months**

Strong Republic is only weapon against foreign control, poverty, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today declared that our only weapon against the nation's overdue struggle against foreign control and poverty is a strong Republic, one which can shield the country and set the Filipinos free from the shackles of over a hundred years of want.

In a policy speech delivered before the newly-installed officials of the National Youth Commission in Malacañang and coinciding with today's celebration of the birth of Andres Bonifacio, the President stressed "a state is weak if dominant classes or sectors control it or shape its policies, especially those dealing with the economy."

"This is our decades-old fundamental weakness. From Bonifacio at Balintawak to Cory Aquino at EDSA, we have struggled to correct this weakness by bringing power to the people," the President said

Saying she does not and will not make policy on the basis of baseless fears, the President announced the following:

- **Cabinet changes:** Agri-businessman and Presidential Adviser on Jobs Creation in Agriculture Luis "Cito" Lorenzo replaces Department of Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Heherson Alvarez is replaced by noted environment expert Elisea Gozun;
- **PEA issue:** "On the PEA issue, arising from another of its controversial projects began in the previous administration, let me make myself very clear: I'm abolishing the Public Estates Authority," the President said.
- **PIATCO issue:** "The Solicitor General has submitted to the Supreme Court the government position that all five agreements covering NAIA Terminal 3 are null and void."
- **MERALCO refund:** "If the Supreme Court orders with finality that the refund be implemented, I will make sure that you, the consumers, get your refund."
- **Budget deficit:** The President said the Bureau of Customs, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, and the new Anti-Smuggling Intelligence and Investigation Commission, are tasked to work harder and bring to court tax cheats. On tax cheats, the President said: "...whether you are big business or small, forget the accounting tricks, just pay your taxes and duties-or see you in court."
- **\$2 Million Man:** The President said if the charges are true everyone involved is going to jail at least for tax evasion, in addition to bribery. She advised Rep. Mark Jimenez to "show the evidence and file the case in court" and hurry up before he is extradited;
- **Economic growth:** The President said in the next six months, the following will become imminent:
 1. A group of government officials will be formed to spruce up tax collection;
 2. Banks will be tapped to finance housing, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and agriculture;
 3. Substantive improvements to improve the quality of government workforce which will include affordable housing and establishments of new government centers;
 4. For the urban dwellers, a modern transport system connecting the metropolis with its suburbs and new government centers outside Metro Manila;

5. For the rural dwellers, the new transport system will greatly reduced transportation cost of their products from their farms to urban centers;

“Other initiatives, including a program for youth empowerment, will soon reveal themselves in their implementation. I know that people have become cynical and will believe only what they see,” the President said.

She said, “trust me, you will see what serious government can do as opposed to what a merely popular government just promises.”

GMA names Lorenzo, Gozon to DA, DENR

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the appointment of Presidential Adviser for Jobs Creation Luis Lorenzo, Jr. as the new Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

The President likewise named noted environmentalist expert Elisea Gozon as Environment and Natural Resources Secretary in place of Heherson Alvarez.

The President said Alvarez, will be moving on and turning over the DENR to his successor in the next two weeks after firming up initiatives on environment, especially toxic and hazardous waste, watershed, and the social justice program of the Macapagal-Arroyo government to build a new Diwalwal.

The President thanked Secretary Leonardo Montemayor, who came from the ranks of non-governmental organizations, for having successfully raised the voices of the small farmers.

“Now, the new law on agricultural land as collateral will open up vast opportunities for the farmers to graduate from subsistence living advocates to modernizing business practitioners.

To initiate this transformation, the President said he is appointing agri-businessman Luis Lorenzo as the new Secretary of Agriculture.

As Presidential Adviser for Jobs Creation in Agriculture for the past 14 months, Lorenzo has brought government and the private sector movers together in viable agricultural activities throughout the country.

On the initiative of the President, Lorenzo spearheaded the one-million jobs program and wielded it under a two-pronged strategy on import substitution and export development.

Through collaboration with local government executives, farmer associations and industry leaders in the rural areas, thousands of additional jobs have been created especially in the major commodities of rice, corn and coffee. Most of the beneficiaries are marginal farmers who have experienced doubling their income after joining the hybrid rice program.

Lorenzo is also the chairman of the Philippine Rice Research Institute and Cabinet Officer for Regional Development (CORD) for Region X and Caraga.

GMA abolishes PEA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced today the permanent abolition of the controversial Public Estates Authority (PEA).

The President made the announcement in her keynote address during the 139th birth anniversary celebration of country’s Great Plebeian Andres Bonifacio, at Malacañang’s Ceremonial Hall this morning.

“Let me make myself very clear: I am abolishing the Public Estates Authority. I’m abolishing it through a bill I will submit to Congress next week,” President said.

She said all assets, mostly public lands, owned by PEA shall be transferred to the appropriate agencies, which hold strictly to account the officials concerned.

The President noted that she already accepted the resignation papers of all the current members of the PEA Board, including the general manager.

“(And) now I’m dismissing the deputy general managers, the assistant general manager, and the senior corporate attorneys,” President added referring to the PEA.

With regard to the latest controversy of the agency, President also said that the issue is now in the hands of the office of the Ombudsman “for filing of the appropriate charges against all officials involved, including the old PEA Board members.”

GMA to form body to intensify tax collection

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said she would form a group of government officials who will be tasked to increase the tariff and revenue collection of the government.

In a policy speech she delivered on the occasion of the celebration of the birth anniversary of Andres Bonifacio, the President said this is intended to increase government funds for her administration’s programs on housing, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and agriculture.

“In this country, people don’t pay the right taxes, especially those who can afford it. The Customs, the BIR, and the new Anti-Smuggling Intelligence and Investigation Commission, now led by new commissioners, must work harder so that, whether you are big business or small, forget the accounting tricks. Just pay your taxes and duties — or see you in court,” the President stressed.

Explaining the budget deficit, the President said in her first year in office, her administration was able to arrest the decline in government revenues, sustaining the ratio of 15% in 2001. “However, the decline has resumed this year as terrorism added its toll to the global recession.”

Furthermore, the President noted that following the 1997 Asian currency crisis, public revenues steadily declined – from 19% in 1997 to 17% in 1998, to 16% in 1999 to 15% in 2000.

“This trend has robbed us of the resources to spend on important initiatives,” the President said.

GMA assures PIATCO stockholder: gov’t will honor legitimate claims

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assures the stakeholders in the Philippine International Air Terminals Company (PIATCO) that all their legitimate claims would be honored and will not be affected by the ongoing inquiry to remove the objectionable, illegal and onerous provisions in the construction and operation of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (NAIA 3).

“Let me, however, assure the stakeholders in PIATCO: your legitimate claims will be honored to the last peso and the terminal will open early next year,” President said in her keynote speech during the 139th birth anniversary of Andres Bonifacio at Malacañang this morning.

In her remarks, President admitted that she already received the preliminary reports indicating a significant chunk of the airport cost of the \$657-million NAIA 3 didn’t go to actual construction costs as the access tunnel that would connect to Terminal 3 and 2 is still missing.

“There’s not even a road,” President said, which convinced her to defer the soft opening of the airport on December 15 and order the full-blast investigation and review of the contract of PIATCO.

She said that as Chief Executive, her duty is to uphold the law and not to violate and counter it.

“I am sworn to uphold the law. How then can I honor contracts contrary to law? What I can do is to order a criminal investigation into the PIATCO project with a view to the prosecution of the parties responsible for the gross irregularities,” President said.

On Friday, President declared as null and void the five concession agreements with PIATCO and ordered the Department of Justice and the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission to prosecute those found culpable in giving the contracts to PIATCO.

The President said the PIATCO issue is not just a simple problem but a test-case of the integrity and efficiency of the Republic in building the infrastructure the nation requires.

She further noted that it is not only a matter of opening the new airport but making sure that it is a world-class airport that operates without any hitches at all and without the slightest risk to travelers.

GMA assures MERALCO customers: you will get refund if SC orders it with finality

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reiterated her assurance that the more than three-million customers of the Manila Electric Company (MERALCO) will get their refund if the Supreme Court orders it with finality.

In a speech at a program commemorating the birth anniversary of Andres Bonifacio at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang, the President said her concern will be exclusively “justice through full restitution for MERALCO’s consumers as the Supreme Court rules.”

“But without undermining the stability of the nation’s leading energy company,” she added.

The President earlier ordered Energy Secretary Vicente S. Perez to immediately review the country’s power policies and programs, as well as the changing of legal frameworks to ensure that the energy sector would continue to attract private investments.

The order to Perez was aimed at ensuring that the energy requirements of the people would be served.

The President’s order to Perez came on the heels of the Supreme Court decision ordering MERALCO to refund its customers for overbilling dating back to 1994.

In her speech, the President said the passage of the Special Asset Management Company Bill, now in bicameral conference committee in Congress, should free up more bank resources for housing and other developmental projects that the government is not in a fiscal position to fund.

She also underscored the need to privatize TRANSCO, the operation of the National Power Corporation in the distribution of electricity, to use the money spent for the losses.

The President said government will be earning no less than \$3 billion for the privatization of TRANSCO, and more than P100 billion for the effective electricity service.

The President expressed the hope that the Senate will pass the bill as expeditiously as the House did.

GMA sees improved urban, rural development in next 6 months

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the next six months would show an improved rural and urban development particularly in the housing, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and agriculture sector.

In a policy speech she delivered in Malacañang on the occasion of Gat Andres Bonifacio's birthday, the President said the passage of the Special Asset Management Company Bill, or SMAC, now in bicameral conference committee in Congress, should free up more bank resources for housing and other developmental projects that the government is not in a fiscal position to fund.

“At kailangan nating ipagbili and Transco, ang operayon ng NAPOCOR sa distribusyon ng kuryente, upang magamit ang salaping ginugugol ngayon sa pagkalugi nito. Kikita rin ang gobyerno ng hindi bababa sa tatlong bilyong dolyar sa pagbebenta ng TRANSCO, at mahigit sandaang bilyong piso sa paghusay ng serbisyo sa elektrisidad (We need to sell TRANSCO, NAPOCOR's power distribution company, so we could use the funds properly. Government can realize at least P3-billion in the sale of Transco and more than P100 billion in improved electric services),” the President said.

The President said an integrated modern transport system and newly-established government centers will bring progress to areas outside Metro Manila.

Affordable mass transport, according to the President, will be put in place. “Extensions of the North and South Expressways and the rail link to the North will be under way. And my dreams of a roll-on, roll-off port-linked archipelago has broken ground with funding from the Development Bank of the Philippines.”

“Para sa dagliang ikabubuti ng tagabukid, babawasan ng mga modernong system ng transportasyon ang gastos sa pagdadala ng mga produkto mula sa lalawigan patungo sa industriya at kalunsuran. Samantala, salamat sa batas tungkol sa pagsasangla ng lupang sinasaka, na pinasa sa Kamara noong Huwebes, maaalis ang isang malaking balakid sa pagpasok ng puhunan sa agrikultura (For the benefit of rural residents, this modern transport system will decrease transport cost of products which are brought to the industrial and urban centers. Meanwhile, thanks to Congress for passing this law last Thursday allowing agricultural lands to be used as loan collaterals because this will increase capitalization for agriculture),” the President said.

For government workers, the President said, “we shall have time for substantive improvements, first in affordable housing where the needs of teachers, soldiers, policemen and other government employees will be addressed in a specially packaged project.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: November 30, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071030150340/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/nov30.htm>

The President's Day: December 1, 2002

01 DECEMBER 2002

- **GMA leaves for state visit to Japan tomorrow**

GMA leaves for state visit to Japan tomorrow

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will leave tomorrow for Tokyo for a four-day state visit that will usher in a new era in Philippine-Japanese partnership focused on peace and prosperity.

It will be the first state visit by a Philippine President to Japan in the 21st century, the last being that of President Fidel V. Ramos in 1993.

One of the highlights of the President's visit to Japan will be her address before the Japanese Diet or Parliament on December 3, an event that signifies the importance the Japanese government and people attach to relations with the Philippines and its present leadership.

Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo L. Siazon pointed out that only selected world leaders have been invited to address the Diet. Previous speakers included United States Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nelson Mandela of South Africa, and our own President Carlos P. Garcia.

Siazon also said Japan only accommodates four to five state visits a year.

The Philippine envoy said Philippine-Japanese relations are entering a new phase where "we are also talking about peace, meaning security in the region, and prosperity, meaning not only our own economic development but contributing to the economic development in the region."

During her visit, the President will make a traditional call on the Emperor and Empress at the Imperial Palace. The Royal Couple will also host a state dinner in her honor.

The present Emperor and Empress visited the Philippines in 1962, when Diosdado Macapagal, the President's father, was president. At that time, President Macapagal-Arroyo was a teenager.

The visit of then Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko was a very difficult chapter in the Philippine-Japan relations, Siazon said.

He pointed out that the visit of the Crown Prince and Princess started a new phase of relations. "It was economic development, and Japan, from that time on, assisted the Philippines' various programs on economic development," he said.

This week's visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo also completes the cycle of relationship she has established with the present Emperor and the Empress

Also during her visit to Tokyo, the President will meet with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest.

Their discussions are expected to include the development of the consultations between Philippines and Japan on the establishment of an Economic Partnership Agreement, the commemoration of the centennial anniversary of Japanese migration to the Philippines, the two countries' partnership for Third Country Training Program for East Timor, and cross-border issues such as terrorism and piracy.

The bilateral talks are also expected to dwell on Japan's continued support and contribution of Japan Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Philippine Development, particularly to Mindanao. Japan is the biggest provider of ODA, averaging \$800 million per year since 1992, to the Philippines.

The President will likewise deliver a speech before heads of the Keidanren or Japan Federation of Economic Organizations.

She will also hold a press conference with the prestigious Japan National Press Club and grant interviews to the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, NHK, Nikkei and Kyodo News.

While batting for Philippines' interest in Japan, the President will also check on the conditions of overseas Filipino workers when she meets with the Filipino community at the Hotel Mariners Court in Tokyo.

The community is composed of OFWs, students, professionals and spouses of Japanese nationals. There are 39 Filipino community organizations registered with the Philippine Embassy and 53 groups are registered with the Philippine Consulate in Osaka.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: December 1, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029042611/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec01.htm>

The President's Day: December 2, 2002

02 DECEMBER 2002

- **GMA off to Japan on 4-day state visit**
- **RP, Japan determined to combat terrorism**
- **From enemies in WW2 to economic allies, RP and Japan further strengthen ties**
- **GMA arrives in Tokyo for four-day state visit**
- **GMA to call tomorrow on Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko**
- **GMA declares December 6 a special non-working day to commemorate Eid-ul-Fitre**

GMA off to Japan on 4-day state visit

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo departed shortly before 10 this morning for a four-day state visit to Japan upon the invitation of Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko to further strengthen the ties that bind the Philippines and Japan.

In her departure statement distributed to the media before she boarded a chartered Philippine Airlines flight to Tokyo, the President said: "As I embark on this journey, I am happy to note that this will be the first state visit by a Philippine President to Japan in this century. The last visit of a Philippine President was a decade ago."

She was accompanied on the trip by First Gentleman Attorney Jose Miguel Arroyo and a small group of Cabinet members, including Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople and Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye.

Among those who saw her off at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport were Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr., Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, newly-appointed Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez, Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Dionisio Santiago, Philippine National Police Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo and NAIA General Manager Edgar Manda.

The President said her visit "will be a good vehicle for me to invite investors that can help boost our economy."

The President said that during her scheduled meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, she will discuss "matters on economic partnership as well as development cooperation to further enhance the Philippines and Japan conspicuous bilateral relations."

"I am optimistic that our two countries will arrive at measures, which will be beneficial to both our nations and pull in ways and mechanisms which will produce satisfactory results for our people," she said.

The President noted that the Philippines and Japan have had outstanding cordial ties since the establishment of bilateral relations in 1956. Japan has been the biggest Official Development Assistance (ODA) provider to the Philippines and is the second largest trading partner, second largest source of investment and second largest source of tourists, the President said.

One of the first activities of the President on her first day in Tokyo today is a meeting with the Filipino community in Japan.

"I will be meeting the Filipino community and other Filipino organizations to be able to know their needs," she said.

During her state visit, the President will also be renewing ties with the Emperor and Empress, who will receive her at the Imperial Palace tomorrow and then host a State Dinner for her in the evening.

She will also address the Japanese Diet or Parliament, a rare privilege accorded to a select group of world leaders.

RP, Japan determined to combat terrorism

TOKYO (Via PLDT) – Japan and the Philippines are determined to face the terrorist menace head on by focusing bilateral talks scheduled between President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on security issues.

This was learned in an interview with Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon, Jr., who discussed the agenda for President Macapagal-Arroyo's state visit here.

Siazon said both leaders appeared determined "to do together" whatever security measures were necessary to combat international terrorism that threatens their respective nationals and territories.

"It has become quite clear that Japan and the Philippines must cooperate more closely in combating global terrorism, so in the meeting between the President and the Prime Minister, there will be talks about cross-border problems," Siazon said.

Mrs. Arroyo and Mr. Koizumi are scheduled to meet Wednesday. The Philippine President will arrive here for a four-day state visit at around 2 p.m., Manila time.

Siazon said the two leaders will also tackle other security issues including piracy, the need for cooperation in the Coast Guard sector and Japan's possible assistance to the Philippine National Police.

Siazon said the bilateral talks would also likely take up regional security issues as the Korean Peninsula.

But Siazon said the talks would also have to include the two countries' close economic ties, considering the fact that Japan is the biggest provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the Philippines.

He likewise noted that Japan is the Philippines' second largest trading partner, second largest source of investment and the second largest source of tourists.

From enemies in WW2 to economic allies, RP and Japan further strengthen ties

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — From enemies in World War II to an economic allies from 1962 onwards, the relations between the Philippines and Japan strengthened over decades, as indicated in their balance of trade and their level of security cooperation.

The diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines officially began in July 1956 when the Treaty of Peace and the Reparations Agreement between the two countries were signed.

Two years later, Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon, Jr. noted that Philippine President Carlos P. Garcia visited Japan and in 1962, then Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko, who are now the Emperor and Empress of Japan, visited the Philippines.

"That visit of the Prince and the Princess at that time closed a very difficult period in our history with Japan," Siazon said.

Japan had invaded the Philippines from 1941 to 1943 until the United States retook control over the territory.

After being an aid receiver from Japan, Siazon said the Philippines has become an aid provider, not to its old ally, but to a new state, East Timor.

“We are now a partner of Japan, not a recipient, but also an ODA (official development assistance) provider to East Timor,” Siazon said.

“We will have the first mission to East Timor in 2003,” he said.

Japan has consistently been the biggest ODA provider for the Philippines, accounting for 61 percent of ODA granted since 1992.

Apart from their joint efforts to help boost the economic growth of East Timor, Siazon said Japan and the Philippines have also committed to jointly set up a network center that will accept and treat tuberculosis patients.

He said the two countries shall invite medical workers from member-countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) “to train in this center and the cost will be co-financed by Japan and the Philippines.”

“In that sense, we are no longer just a recipient but a partner for prosperity,” Siazon said.

Alongside economic initiatives, Siazon said the two countries shall also pursue joint efforts in the area of regional security and transnational crimes, including the problem of global terrorism.

He said the commitment of the two countries to jointly undertake programs to address security concerns is expected to be formalized during President Macapagal-Arroyo’s state visit to Japan from December 2 to 5.

GMA arrives in Tokyo for four-day state visit

TOKYO (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived here today for a four-day state visit aimed at forging a new partnership for peace and prosperity with Japan.

The President arrived on board a chartered Philippine Airlines flight at the Tokyo International (Haneda) Airport at around three (2 pm in Manila) in the afternoon.

Accompanied by First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo, the President was given a 21-gun salute as soon as she stepped down from of the plane.

Afterwards, the President was presented the Japan suite of honor during arrival ceremonies at the airport.

Among the members of the Philippine delegation are Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon, Jr., Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., Foreign Secretary Blas F. Ople, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, and Presidential Management Staff head Silvestre Afable, Jr.

In an interview here, Siazon said the President’s visit to Japan marks the beginning of a new phase of the two countries’ relationship.

Siazon also said this visit will also mark the very good relationship she has established with the Japan Imperial Couple.

“The President has personal linkages with the Emperor (Akihito) and the Empress (Michiko),” Siazon noted, adding that the Emperor visited the Philippines when he was still the Crown Prince during the time of President Diosdado Macapagal, when the President was 13 years old.

Siazon added that the visit will also highlight the 21st century cooperation between the two countries in security and economics.

He said the President will seek to intensify security measures against piracy, global terrorism and strengthen cooperation in anti-crime efforts.

“We are also talking about peace, meaning security in the region and prosperity, meaning not only our own economic development but contributing to the economic development in the region,” Siazon said.

During the visit, the President will pay the Imperial Couple the traditional state call at the Akasaka Palace.

The President will have a meeting with Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi where she will push for closer cooperation between the two countries.

She will also speak before the Diet where she will underscore the importance of Japanese relations with the Philippines.

Only selected world leaders are invited to address the Diet. Previous speakers include President Carlos P. Garcia, Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany, South African President Nelson Mandela and United States Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

The President will also speak before the “E-Services Philippines,” at the Information Technology Exhibition and Interactive Business Investment Seminar at the Jetro Business Support Center.

Siazon said the President will promote during the seminar the competitiveness of the Filipino IT professional in graphic design, animation and related computer skills.

The Chief Executive will also deliver addresses before the Nippon Keidanren, the Japan National Press Club and would conduct interviews with Japan media such as NHK, Nikkei, Kyodo News and Yomiuri Shimbun.

She will also take the opportunity to meet with Japanese businessmen such as Matsushita Corp. vice chairman Masayuki Matshushita, and officials of Friends of the Philippines, and Manila Club Ambassadors.

The President will also have a separate meeting with Japan Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Takeo Hiranuma and parliamentarian Hidenao Nakagawa.

And like her previous foreign visits, the President will also meet with the local Filipino community here, which is mostly composed of overseas Filipino workers, students, professionals and spouses of Japanese nationals.

Japan is the biggest overseas development assistance (ODA) provider to the Philippines, covering at most 61 percent of the total aid to the country every year.

Japan is the Philippines’ second largest trading partner, second largest source of investments and second largest source of tourists.

GMA to call tomorrow on Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko

TOKYO (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will renew her close ties with the Japan Imperial Couple when she meets with them tomorrow at the traditional state call at the Akasaka Palace.

The President, on a four-day state visit to Japan starting today, first met then Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko, during the time of President Diosdado Macapagal when the royals visited the Philippines in 1962.

The President, accompanied by First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo, will meet the Imperial Couple initially at the Akasaka Palace, the state guesthouse of Japan.

There, the Emperor will introduce the Imperial family and the Japan Prime Minister to the President and other Japanese officials.

She will also be presented for inspection the Japan Guard of Honor.

Afterward, the President and the First Gentleman, accompanied by the Royal Couple, will proceed to the Imperial Palace for the traditional exchange of decorations, gifts and signed photographs.

Aside from members of the Cabinet, the President and the First Gentleman will be accompanied by daughter Evangeline Lourdes "Luli" Arroyo.

In the evening, the Imperial Couple will host a state dinner in honor of the President and Atty. Arroyo.

From the time of the Emperor's visit to the Philippines in 1962, the President has remained in close contact with the Royal Couple as she constantly meets with them during her visits to Japan both on official and unofficial visits.

The President has related that during a trip arranged by Assumption School, where she was a student, the Royal Couple gave them the honor of their presence in a meeting that included her classmates and the Assumption nuns.

She has also noted that the Royal Couple also met her and her mother, the late Evangelina Macaraeg Macapagal, when they visited Japan shortly after her father passed away.

Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon, Jr. earlier noted that the President's visit "completes the cycle of relationship she has established with the Imperial Couple.

"Now, she is going on in her own right as head of state of the Philippines. It also marks the beginning of a new phase of relations between Japan and the Philippines wherein before we used to be recipient of mainly technical assistance from Japan."

The President's visit will be the first state visit by a Philippine President to Japan in the 21st century. Japan only accommodates four to five state visits a year. The President is making her state visit in just her second year in office.

Siazon also noted that the 1962 visit of the Imperial Couple to the Philippines closed a very difficult chapter in the Philippine-Japan relations and started a new phase of relations between the two countries.

"It was economic development and Japan from that time on, assisted the Philippines' various programs on economic development," Siazon said.

"Now, we are also talking about peace, meaning security in the region and prosperity, meaning not only our own economic development but contributing to the economic development in the region," he added.

GMA declares December 6 a special non-working day to commemorate Eid-ul-Fitre

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today issued Proclamation No. 298 declaring Friday, December 6, as a special non-working day throughout the country to commemorate Eid-ul-Fitre (Feast of Ramadan).

The Chief Executive, who signed Proclamation No.298, shortly before she left for a four-day state visit to Japan, said that Republic Act No. 9177 declared Eid-ul-Fitre as a regular holiday.

She said the date on which the Eid-ul-Fitre (Feast of Ramadan) falls varies from year to year, depending on the sighting of the new moon.

For the year 2002, the Eid-ul-Fitre has been determined to fall on Friday, December 6, 2002, the President said.

“To promote cultural understanding and integration, the entire Filipino nation should have the full opportunity to join our Muslim brothers and sisters in observing and celebrating this important day,” the President said in Proclamation No. 298.

The President said that it is necessary to declare Friday, December 6, as a special non-working day throughout the country without prejudice to public interest “in order to bring the religious and cultural significance of the Eid-ul-Fitre to the fore of national consciousness and upon the recommendation of the Office of Muslim Affairs.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: December 2, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029212806/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec02.htm>

The President's Day: December 3, 2002

03 DECEMBER 2002

- **First Gentleman accepts appointment as OFW envoy**
- **OFWs to get easy access to integrated gov't services**
- **GMA saddened by journalist Jose L. Guevarra's demise**
- **GMA announces gov't program on OFW concerns**
- **No better person to help OFWs than First Gentleman, says Bunye**
- **GMA treats OFWs in Japan to early Christmas party**
- **GMA renews ties with Japanese emperor, empress**
- **GMA: RP, Japan must act as one force for regional security**
- **Leaders of Japan's Parliament cite GMA's efforts in fighting terrorism, poverty**
- **Ople slams Howard on sending Aussie troops**
- **GMA urges Japanese ICT companies to set up businesses in RP**
- **GMA cites need for support of Japan, other groups for RP economy to grow**

First Gentleman accepts appointment as OFW envoy

TOKYO (via PLDT). — First Gentleman lawyer Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo has wholeheartedly accepted the appointment of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as her special representative to the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

In an interview right after the announcement of the President during her meeting with the Filipino community, Arroyo said he is accepting the assignment.

“Siempre, tinatanggap natin dahil sa pagmamahal (Of course, I am accepting it because of love),” Arroyo said.

He said he would start working right away. In fact, he said he already met with Foreign Secretary Blas Ople and is set to start a series of meetings with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on the details of the work.

In January, Arroyo said he would proceed to Rome, Italy to meet with the local OFWs there. The Italian capital is host to a large number of OFWs.

“Bibigyan natin ng benefits at iba-iba pa (We will give them benefits and other things),” he said.

These benefits include medicare insurance, as well as reintegration and retraining of OFWs.

Pampanga Vice-Governor Juan Miguel “Mikey” Arroyo, who is here with his wife Angela said he knew his father could very well handle his new assignment.

“Meron naman siyang touch sa mga kababayan natin sa labas ng bansa. Talagang mahilig naman siyang makipag-ugnayan sa ating mga kababayan outside the country (My father has a special touch in relating with our fellow Filipinos abroad),” the vice governor said.

“Hindi pa man VIP ang nanay ko, ginagawa na niya itong sakripisyo ng walang sweldo (He is used to doing this even when my mother was not yet a very important person),” he added.

Meanwhile, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, said the First Gentleman will surely do his best to help our countrymen abroad.

“Tayo’y naniniwala na pag siya ang nangako (We believe that once he makes a commitment), he will really do his best to fulfill it,” Bunye said.

Bunye added that there was no better person to represent the President to the OFWs than the First Gentleman.

Overseas Workers Welfare Administrator Virgilio Angelo also said Arroyo is fit to represent the President.

“He can go around and he can inform the President on how to improve programs for the OFWs,” Angelo said.

Angelo pointed out that Arroyo cannot impose on other government agencies as his job is mostly assistance work.

According to the President, her husband will be assisted by an inter-agency team led by the DFA, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) and the Social Security System (SSS) that would bring the OFWs closer to the new government program called “KABAYANIHAN.”

OFWs to get easy access to integrated gov’t services

TOKYO (via PLDT). — Overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) will now have an ultimate identification card to enable them to avail themselves of integrated government services.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today that beginning January 2003, she would be launching the website of “Kabayanihan,” whereby OFWs could apprise her on how to improve government services to them.

In her speech before the Filipino community at the Mariners Court Hotel here, the President said the E-Card could be used as credit card, an automated teller machine (ATM) card for Philippine commercial banks and even for duty-free shop discounts

“The E-card is the ultimate ID card of OFWs. With the E-Card, it will no longer be necessary for an OFW to fall in line at the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) to obtain an overseas employment certificate for the purpose of exemption from the travel tax and the airport terminal fee,” the President said.

Mrs. Arroyo said by that simply presenting the E-Card, the OFW can have immediate access to welfare services of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), POEA, processing requirements and even duty-free shop discounts.

“It can also be used as a credit card and as an ATM card for Philippine commercial banks,” the President said.

The E-Card service is among the integrated basic services offered by the new government program called “Kabayanihan,” which the President launched during her meeting with the Filipino community.

GMA saddened by journalist Jose L. Guevarra’s demise

TOKYO (via PLDT).— President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on Monday expressed her personal grief over the death of journalist Jose L. Guevara.

She learned of Guevara’s death as she arrived in Tokyo for her state visit to Japan.

The President extolled Guevara’s distinguished career in journalism that extended for over half a century.

She said he was a close friend and supporter of her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal.

“He was a writer of wit and good humor, but also wrote very serious columns about vital foreign policy and economic development issues,” she added.

The President said Guevara’s death left a void in Philippine journalism that would not be easy to fill.

GMA announces gov’t program on OFW concerns

TOKYO (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced a new government program that would address the concerns of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

Dubbed “Kabayanihan,” the President explained that the new program would seek to install an integrated delivery of basic services to OFWs at worksites abroad and at home in the Philippines.

The President made the announcement during her meeting with the Filipino community in Japan Monday night at the Mariners Court Hotel.

Mrs. Arroyo also announced her appointment of First Gentleman lawyer Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo as her special representative to the OFWs.

According to the President, her husband would be assisted by an inter-agency team that would be headed by the Department of Foreign Employment (DFA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) and Social Security System (SSS).

Under Kabayanihan, the OFWs will be able to avail themselves of the following services:

— Overseas Workers Welfare Administration On-Site Welfare Services that would include expanded/voluntary membership.

— DOLE/OWWA/Philippine Overseas Employment Administration Electronic Identification Card (E-Card) services.

— Health maintenance services through the OWWA Medicare program wherein the OFW and members of the family will be entitled to benefits over and above those granted by PhilHealth.

— Pag-IBIG Fund’s Housing services wherein the DOLE and the Pag-IBIG fund have already signed a memorandum of agreement for the joint implementation of the Pag-IBIG Overseas Housing Program (POP).

— The POP aims to expand Pag-IBIG membership among OFWs and provide them the opportunity to acquire their own homes at affordable means.

—SSS Provident Fund (Flexi-Fund) services, which will be solely for OFWs, is designed to enable workers to save hard-earned money while working abroad. By investing in the Flexi-Fund at a very affordable cost, workers are guaranteed continued earnings after retirement.

No better person to help OFWs than First Gentleman, says Bunye

TOKYO (via PLDT). — Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said there could not be a better person to represent President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to the Filipino Overseas Workers than First Gentleman lawyer Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo.

In an interview with Filipino reporters last night right after the President announced that she has appointed her husband as special representative to the OFWs before the local Filipino community gathering, Bunye said the First Gentleman would surely do his best to help our countrymen abroad.

“Tayo’y naniniwala na pag siya ang nangako (We believe that once he makes a commitment), he will really do his best to fulfill it,” Bunye said.

Bunye noted that under the set-up, the First Gentleman would not be using government funds or impose on other government agencies.

“In fact, Atty. Arroyo would not be getting a salary for the task,” he pointed out.

Meanwhile, Overseas Workers Welfare Administrator Virgilio Angelo said that with the new assignment, Arroyo “can go around and he can inform the President on how to improve programs for the OFWs.”

Angelo emphasized that Arroyo could not impose on other government agencies as his job is mostly assistance work.

The President announced the appointment of her husband as her OFW special envoy during her meeting with the local Filipino community.

According to the President, the First Gentleman would be assisted in his new assignment by an inter-agency team led by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) and Social Security System (SSS) that would bring the OFWs closer to the new government program called “KABAYANIHAN.”

GMA treats OFWs in Japan to early Christmas party

TOKYO (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Monday made a lot of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) here happy when she treated them to a night of an early Christmas party.

The Filipino community, which represents the 39 organizations duly registered with the Philippine Embassy, sang Filipino Christmas carols and swayed to traditional Filipino dances before the President and the presidential delegation.

In her remarks, the President thanked the OFWs for remitting the much-needed American dollars to the country.

“Last year, the OFWs remitted \$6 billion. Thank you so much for your support,” the President said.

The President noted that the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 4.1 percent in the first three quarters of this year and the Gross National Product (GNP) improved by five percent, powered by the recovery of industry and continued strengthening of services.

“The difference between our GDP and GNP is the contribution of our OFWs like you. Your increasing remittances have boosted consumption growth in the Philippines,” she said.

The President noted that despite the global slowdown, the Philippine economy has delivered one of the highest growth rates in Asia.

The industry sector grew by 3.8 percent because exports grew by 5.9 percent and private construction is on the rebound, growing by 25 percent. Services grew by 5.1 percent because of the expansion of telecommunications,

trade and private services, including tourism, whose October figures show a growth rate of 40 percent despite the bombing in Bali, Indonesia.

The President noted that the country's economic growth is surpassed only by the industrial giants China and Korea, and by Vietnam, which started from a much lower base.

"Our inflation is low at 2.7 percent. Rice for the masses is priced at P14 or P16 per kilo. Our interest rates are low, with the 91-day treasury bill steady at around five percent. These rates are at their lowest in 15 years," she said.

The President noted that her administration is taking steps to further strengthen macroeconomic fundamentals, saying the government could continue to be more vigilant in its efforts to reduce the budget deficit.

She said the Bureau of Customs (BOC), the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the new Anti-Smuggling Intelligence and Investigation Commission (ASIIC) would work to deliver on commitments.

"My message to tax cheats is clear. Whether you are big business or small, forget the accounting tricks. Just pay your taxes and duties, or see you in court," she said.

Noting that the OFWs are tax exempt, she enjoined them to urge their countrymen back home to pay the right taxes.

She also noted that her administration was sustaining a no-nonsense drive against corruption, insulating its procedures better from graft and putting graft busters in sensitive agencies.

She further noted that the peace and order situation has improved, with the latest police reports showing that kidnapping cases decreased by 35 percent.

"No President can build a strong republic single-handedly. I can do this well only if I can count on the support of the more than seven million Filipino overseas workers," Mrs. Arroyo said.

"You, the Filipinos in Japan, are part of the wellspring of support, the network of Filipinos all over the world that I am counting on," she said.

Among those who attended the gathering were Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon, Jr., Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, Presidential Management Staff Chief Silvestre Afable, Jr., Presidential Adviser Marita Magpili-Jimenez, OWWA Administrator Virgilio Angelo, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., Reps. Josephine Sato, Jacinto Paras, and Antonino Roman, Governors Tomas Josen, Jose Caballero and Adolph Edward Plaza, Vice-Governor Juan Miguel Arroyo, and Mayor Marino Morales.

The Filipino community in and around the Tokyo area is composed of OFWs, students, professionals, religious and lay missionaries, spouses of Japanese nationals and other foreign nationals, and employees of international and non-governmental organizations.

GMA renews ties with Japanese emperor, empress

TOKYO (Via PLDT) – It may be wintry here in Tokyo, but it was a very warm meeting that ensued today between President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko.

Amidst pomp and pageantry, the Emperor and Empress received the President this morning, renewing the close ties they established 40 years ago.

The Imperial Couple marched through the gilded doors of Akasaka Palace, the state guesthouse, at around 9:20 in the morning and were met by the President and the First Gentleman, Atty. Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo, at the Palace vestibule, exchanging pleasantries before proceeding to the terrace fronting the Palace’s front court.

After the dignitaries had taken position at the court, the Philippine National Anthem was played, followed by the National Anthem of Japan.

Thereafter the President, wearing a camel overcoat, and Attorney Arroyo, in a dark suit, accompanied by their Majesties, walked down the steps to the terrace where the Imperial Couple introduced Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako, Princess Sayako and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to the President.

The Emperor and the Empress were in their formal morning attire – he in a dark pinstripe suit and she in a green and black dress.

After the presentation, the President was led to the dais by Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon, Jr.

At the dais, the President received the salute by the Honor Guard. Afterwards, she inspected the troops and saluted with a slight bow to the Philippine and Japanese flags.

The other Japanese dignitaries present during the formal ceremony were then introduced to the President by the Japanese protocol officers while their Majesties walked alongside.

The President boarded the imperial car with the Emperor while Attorney Arroyo rode with Empress Michiko in the secondary imperial car.

The convoy proceeded to the Imperial Palace for the traditional state call on the Emperor and Empress.

In yet another formal ceremony, the Empress and Emperor viewed the decorations: the Philippine Legion of Honor, degree of Chief Commander, for the Emperor; the Order of Gabriela Silang for the Empress; the Order of Sikatuna with the rank of Rajah for Prince Naruhito; the Grand Cordon of the Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum for the President; and the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun, Paulownia Flowers, for the First Gentleman.

An exchange of gifts and signed photographs followed.

The President, who is on a four-day state visit to Japan that started Monday, first met Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko during the time of President Diosdado Macapagal when the royals visited the Philippines in 1962 as Crown Prince and Princess.

Aside from members of the Cabinet, daughter Evangeline Lourdes “Luli” Arroyo were with the President and Attorney Arroyo during the traditional call on the Imperial Couple.

In the evening, the Imperial Couple will host a state dinner in honor of the President and First Gentleman.

From the time of the then Crown Prince’s visit to the Philippines in 1962, the President has remained in close contact with the Royal Couple as she constantly met with them during her visits to Japan both on official and unofficial occasions.

The President related that during a trip arranged by Assumption School where she was a student, the Royal Couple honored her and her classmates and the Assumption nuns with their presence in a meeting.

She also recalled that the Royal Couple also met her and her mother, the late Evangelina Macaraeg Macapagal, when they visited Japan shortly after her father passed away.

Siazon earlier said that the President's visit completes the cycle of relationship she has established with the Imperial Couple.

GMA: RP, Japan must act as one force for regional security

TOKYO (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the need for the Philippines and Japan to act as “one force for regional security” to combat terrorism and other transnational threats to peace.

Addressing the joint session of the Japanese Diet House of Councilors, the President said the long history of cooperation between the two countries “is solid basis for further and more intense collaboration.”

“We both must be ready to act and operate, where needed and when necessary, as one force for regional security,” the President said.

“Apart from international terrorism, new transnational threats to peace, freedom and progress require our joint attention and action,” the President said.

The President outlined the “fields for urgent cooperation” that Japan and the Philippines must immediately attend to, as part of joint efforts in addressing the “new transnational threats to freedom and progress.”

Among them, the President said, are “the illicit trade in narcotics and weapons, trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, money laundering, and piracy in the high seas, as well as trans-boundary environmental threats.”

The President recognized that “all countries in our region, especially those for whom freedom is a matter of national honor, are without a doubt determined to do more to cooperate to the stability, security and peace in East Asia.”

But she admitted that “acting singly greatly limits their options for positive action.”

For so long, the President said, Japan has been able to contribute so much to the restoration of peace and development in the region, stressing its pivotal role in the stabilization in Cambodia, in the transition to nationhood of East Timor, in promoting peaceful dialogue as the medium for settling the thorny issues in Korean Peninsula, and in many more arenas.

“The long history of cooperation between our two countries – as partners, as friends, as allies – is solid basis for further and more intense collaboration,” she said.

The President also cited the common stand of Japan and the Philippines on the North Korea issue.

“The revelations about nuclear weapons development in the Korean Peninsula is a big issue to us. We oppose nuclear weapons proliferation and we will resist a nuclear arms race in East Asia,” she said.

While she stated that “there is no immediate danger of hostilities in East Asia,” the President said the September 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States and the bombings in Bali, Indonesia in October this year, “have taught us... we sometimes do not know where the enemy lurks, much less where or when it will next strike.”

“When or how any of these fault lines will snap, no can tell for certain. All we can do is prepare and we can provide the safety vents to relieve the buildup of pressure and avoid sudden, massive explosion,” she said.

This reality, the President said, necessitates that “we in East Asia reinforce all elements of predictability, stability and balance in the security field.”

Leaders of Japan's Parliament cite GMA's efforts in fighting terrorism, poverty

TOKYO (via PLDT) – Leaders of Japan's Parliament today cited President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's effort in curbing poverty and in fighting international terrorism in her country, stressing that such moves contribute to regional security.

Kurata Hiroyuki, president of the Chamber of Councilors, and Watanuki Tamisuke, speaker of the Chamber of Representatives, took turns in paying tribute to the President, as the latter addressed the joint session of the Diet.

Hiroyuki said it was "profoundly meaningful" for Japan and its Parliament to have interacted with President Macapagal-Arroyo, saying her address before the joint session would help further strengthen the diplomatic ties between their two countries.

He noted "deep admiration" to President Macapagal-Arroyo for her anti-terrorism measures and policies in ensuring the national security of the Philippines.

Tamisuke, for his part, cited the progress made by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration in its fight against terrorism, noting that this "contributes to regional stability."

He supported President Macapagal-Arroyo's call for a strong partnership between Japan and the Philippines in the fight against terrorism and other threats to regional peace.

In her address during the joint session, the President stressed the need for the Philippines and Japan to act as "one force for regional security," and heighten their cooperation in combating international terrorism and other transnational threats to peace.

She cited the long history of cooperation between the two countries as the "solid basis for further and more intense collaboration."

"We both must be ready to act and operate, where needed and when necessary, as one force for regional security," the President said.

Ople slams Howard on sending Aussie troops

TOKYO – Secretary of Foreign Affairs Blas F. Ople today dubbed the proposal of Australian Prime Minister John Howard on UN charter change to allow Australian troops to hunt terrorists in Southeast Asia as "hasty, exuberant and almost bizarre."

Ople said Howard's idea would overturn the founding principle of the United Nations itself which is based on the equal sovereignty of all nations big or small.

"This proposal has no ghost of a chance to be supported in the UN General Assembly," the foreign secretary said.

Ople added, however, that the Philippines is open to a bilateral agreement with Australia which will stress cooperation in the fight against international terrorism. This agreement can consider joint training but not joint operations of security personnel.

Secretary Ople said he was assured by Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer that the Australian Embassy in Makati would continue to render essential services from the ambassador's residence and from a hotel room in Makati. The embassy will resume full operation in a few days.

Ople called on the Australian government to stop exacerbating the issue over its embassy in the Philippines with “more provocative statements at highest levels.”

He said that in threatening to send Australian troops to Southeast Asia without being asked, the Australian government may also be opening itself to the charge of harboring hegemonic ambitions in the region.

“This is not helpful in terms of promoting understanding and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region,” Ople said.

GMA urges Japanese ICT companies to set up businesses in RP

TOKYO (via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged Japanese companies engaged in information and communications technology (ICT) to set up businesses in the Philippines as she formally opened the ICT seminar at the Akasaka twin towers here.

In her speech at the “e-Services Philippines: IT Exhibition and Interactive Business Investment Seminar,” the President said Japan and the Philippines should jointly develop their prospects in the ICT sector.

“Our economies’ respective strength complement each other very well. Japan’s leadership in various technological fields can be adequately supported by the Philippines’ large pool of quality human resources with high IT literacy rate,” the President said.

She noted that technology of Japan, backed up by the high IT literacy rate of Filipinos, could “boost our joint prospects and take them to uncharted heights.”

“In this regard, we wish to further intensify our mutual initiatives in e-services,” she said, as she outlined possible areas for cooperation between the Philippines and Japan.

Among them, she said, is the “acceleration of the promotion of Japanese investments and outsourcing projects involving IT and IT-enabled services.

She also said the two countries could work together for the “intensification of the conduct of training programs related to ICT innovation and technology advancement, workers skill upgrading and product management.”

At the same time, the President stressed the need for the two countries to continue and expand “the existing certification program” to allow Filipino workers to meet Japanese standards.

Another area for cooperation, the President said, is the “fast-tracking of information exchange between our two countries to further develop our respective ICT industries and market.”

GMA cites need for support of Japan, other groups for RP economy to grow

TOKYO—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the need for the support of Japan and other economic groupings in the region for the Philippine economy to grow.

In her speech before the joint session of the Japanese Diet, the President said that development is an enormous task and that in this globalized world, it is practically impossible to go it alone.

“Fortress economies wither, closed economies die. That is the reason why, since the EDSA Revolution that reinstalled democracy in my country in 1986, successive administrations have pursued a continuous path of engaging with the world,” the President said.

The President said that aside from Japan, the Philippines also needs the support of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and East Asia to sustain its economic growth.

According to the President, the continuing challenge in the region is to build, through joint efforts, the capacity to prevent the recurrence of economic shocks like the one that hit the region in 1997.

In Southeast Asia, the President said, the countries are girding for the full implementation of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA).

She said that barely a month ago, ASEAN and China signed a framework for the establishment of the ASEAN-China free trade area while ASEAN and Japan agreed on the framework for the establishment of a comprehensive economic partnership.

The President said that the emergence of China as a market economy is integral to the further growth and development of East Asia, adding that the Philippines regards it as a catalyst for more rapid expansion and greater stability in Asia.

But for now and in the foreseeable future, the President said, ASEAN's need for Japan and its continued cooperation "is far more essential."

The President said that the revival of the Japanese economy and the resumption of its traditional role as a growth engine are of utmost importance to the Philippines, to East Asia, and to the world.

She cited the need for a Philippines-Japan comprehensive partnership agreement that would maximize the many areas of complementarity between the economies of the two countries.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: December 3, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029130520/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec03.htm>

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RP supports Japan advocacy of dialogues on vital issues, GMA says

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Tuesday night said the Philippines supports Japan's unflinching advocacy of dialogue on important initiatives, such as on issues of immediate concern in Northeast Asia.

In her remarks during the state dinner at the Imperial Palace here, the President noted that East Asia is the Philippines' and Japan's common home.

"In this house, dialogue provides the best avenue for resolving differences. It can be the only means to bring closure to a difficult past," she said.

"We saw this in 1999, when, in the course of the ASEAN Plus Three meetings, Manila hosted the first summit in half-a-century between the leaders of Japan, China and South Korea," the President said.

The Chief Executive noted that the Philippines and Japan are vital allies in building and maintaining peace and stability in the whole region and that this alliance can be further strengthened and expanded to reinforce the inexorable march towards regional integration.

"Japan's crucial contributions to greater East Asian integration is exemplified in its active support for the ASEAN Plus Three and the ASEAN Regional Forum processes, its comprehensive economic partnership initiatives with ASEAN and other East Asian countries, and its role in building the foundations for lasting peace, stability and progress in countries like Cambodia and East Timor," she said.

Emperor lauds GMA on war against poverty

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — Emperor Akihito of Japan Tuesday night expressed deep admiration for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for emerging to become the Philippines' leader.

"I would like to express my deep respect to you for the way you have earnestly taken to tackling many issues related to the lives of the people, including measures to reduce poverty," he said.

In his address at the state dinner in honor of the President and First Gentleman, Atty. Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, the Emperor noted that during his visit to the Philippines 40 years ago during the time of President Diosdado Macapagal, the President was just in her teens and he and Empress Michiko (who were then the Crown Prince and Princess) were in their twenties.

“Now, 40 years later, I am deeply moved as we welcome Your Excellency to Japan on this state visit,” he said.

He said that exactly 40 years ago, he and the Empress visited the Philippines representing Emperor Showa. According to him, the visit was in return for the state visit made to Japan by former President Carlos P. Garcia.

“Although it was a time when feelings towards Japan were still severe, I vividly remember that your father, President Diosdado Macapagal, and your mother, Mrs. Macapagal, welcomed us with smiles at the airport as they stood close by the plane,” he said.

He noted that he also remembers with feeling that in addition to the banquet her parents hosted on the day of their arrival, the President and Mrs. Macapagal invited them for breakfast on the morning of their departure, where Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo was also present.

The Emperor further noted that he has many other good memories of that trip, including the visit they made to General and Mrs. Emilio Aguinaldo at their residence, where the Declaration of Independence of the Philippine Republic was proclaimed and the visit they made to Baguio City, which is located in a mountainous area lush with pine trees.

“But above all, what I cannot forget is the warm-heartedness shown to us by the people of your country. At the time, you were in your teens and we were in our twenties. Now, 40 years later, I am deeply moved as we welcome Your Excellency to Japan on this State Visit,” he said.

The Emperor further noted that it has been nearly two years since the President has assumed the presidency and that he can well imagine that she has spent very busy days since then.

The Emperor noted that Filipinos have been receptive to various cultures in the past and have striven to uphold democracy and freedom of speech.

He made special mention of the 38th meeting of the World Association of Newspapers held in Tokyo in 1985 where journalist Joaquin P. Roces received the “Golden Pen of Freedom Award,” for his noteworthy contributions to freedom of the press, “which left a lasting impression on the Empress and me who were in attendance at the meeting.”

“I am very pleased that the relations between our two nations which share the same values, have grown even closer together through active exchanges that have continued across a broad spectrum of areas spanning economic activities, cultures and exchange of people,” he said.

He added that the President has paid particular attention to strengthening friendly relations between the two nations and have visited Japan on many occasions.

“It is my heartfelt wish that this visit will be very fruitful and will contribute to further advancing mutual understanding and friendly relations between the two countries,” he added.

A night of elegance, culture

TOKYO (via PLDT) — It was a night of quiet elegance and Japanese culture at the state dinner hosted by His Majesty Emperor Akihito in honor of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo.

The state dinner, strictly a black tie and formal gown affair, took place Tuesday night at the spacious Banquet Hall of the Imperial Palace, the official residence of His Majesty and Empress Michiko.

The President, accompanied by First Gentleman Atty. Arroyo, arrived at the Palace and were met by the Imperial Couple at the entrance hall at 8 in the evening.

The President was wearing a white gown with white shawl while the Empress was wearing a black and white gown. The Emperor and Atty. Arroyo were in black tie.

In receiving the President and Atty. Arroyo, the Emperor was heard to have asked if she had a busy day.

The President remarked that she indeed had a very busy day, noting that she spoke before the Diet.

On the other hand, the Empress asked Atty. Arroyo how was his day to which the First Gentleman replied that he had a very nice day.

The Empress then endearingly kissed the President.

The four proceeded to the Banquet Hall as the band played "Leron, Leron, Sinta." They were followed by select Philippine government officials such as Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon, Jr., Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, Bangko Sentral Gov. Rafael Buenaventura, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, Representatives Josephine Sato, Jacinto Paras and Antonino Roman.

They were joined by Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako, who was wearing a white formal gown, and Princess Sayako, who was in a royal blue gown.

They were also joined by Prince and Princess Akishino for the first time.

Meanwhile, the Banquet Hall was slowly being filled by Japanese government officials and VIPs.

The First Couple was also accompanied by their daughter, Evangeline Lourdes "Luli" Arroyo, who was in a Filipiniana dress.

Red and white roses formed part of the elaborate dinner setting. Ushers in coattails were also on hand to assist the dignitaries.

After the President, Atty. Arroyo and Their Majesties were guided to their designated seats, the Emperor rose and delivered his welcome address in Japanese.

He subsequently proposed a toast. Afterwards, an orchestra at the side of the hall played an exquisite rendition of the Philippine National Anthem.

"I wish to extend a heartfelt welcome to Your Excellency Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines and Atty. Arroyo. I am indeed happy to be able to spend this evening here together with you both," the Emperor said in Japanese.

The President, meanwhile, said it is a great honor and privilege to be in Japan upon His Majesty's kind invitation.

She said the friendly relations between the Philippines and Japan are blessed with a long history.

She noted that these friendly ties could be traced as far back as the exile of Lord Ukon Takayama, a great Christian samurai, and his family to Manila in 1614.

Three centuries after that, the Philippines began benefiting immensely from the important contributions of Japanese immigrants to the Philippines. Road construction in the Philippine summer capital of Baguio received a great boost from the first large wave of Japanese migration to the Philippines in 1903.

She noted that subsequent waves of sizable community of Japanese descent followed in Davao in the island of Mindanao, eventually becoming the catalyst for agricultural development in southern Philippines, which supplies as much as 90 percent of the bananas and the great bulk of pineapples enjoyed in Japan today.

The President noted that Their Majesties' visit to the Philippines in 1962 closed a difficult chapter in our common history and signaled the start of a new one – of true partnership, of close alliance and of genuine friendship.

The state dinner menu consisted of Consome a la Royal, "Amadai" au vin Blanc, Filet de Boeuf a la Mode en Gelee, Gigot d'Agneau Roti, Salade de Saison, Glace Mont Fuji while the wines served were Puligny Montrachet 1993, Chateau Margaux 1982 and Moet et Chandon, Dom Perignon 1992.

Nation marks Human Rights Week

Malacañang today issued Memorandum Circular No. 31 enjoining all government offices to undertake appropriate activities in the observance of "National Human Rights Week."

The "National Human Rights Week" celebration is being observed on December 3 to 10 every year in accordance with Proclamation No. 177, dated October 30, 1987.

By authority of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo signed M.C. No. 31.

"Pursuant to Proclamation No. 177 dated October 30, 1987 which declared the period December 3 to 10, 1987, and the same period of every year thereafter as "National Human Rights Week," all heads of departments, bureaus and agencies of the national government, including government-owned and/or controlled corporations, government financial institutions as well as state colleges and universities, are hereby enjoined to undertake appropriate activities during the week-long celebration," Romulo said.

He said that these activities should be aimed towards the promotion and enhancement of public awareness and understanding of human rights, in accordance with this year's theme "Karapatang Pantao: Likas sa Atin, Tungkulin Natin."

Exports up 2.6 percent in October

Merchandise export receipts rose 2.6 percent in October to \$3.016 billion from \$2.941 billion a year earlier, bringing the 10-month figure 8.1 percent up on the comparable period in 2001, the National Statistics Office (NSO) said today.

The NSO said exports in the first 10 months of the year climbed to \$29.049 billion from \$26.875 billion a year earlier.

The NSO said receipts from Electronic Components, accounting for 54.9 percent of the aggregate export revenue for the month, went up by 8.5 percent to \$1.656 billion from \$1.526 billion last year.

Articles of Apparel and Clothing Accessories remained as the country's second top earner with a combined share of 6.6 percent and an aggregate receipt of \$198.17 million or 0.6 percent higher than \$197 million a year earlier.

Petroleum Products, ranked third with a total revenue of \$46.66 million, reflecting a 377.2 percent increase from \$9.78 million last year.

The NSO also said Manufactured Goods, accounting for 88.8 percent of the total receipts, gained by 2.3 percent as sales reached \$2.679 billion, from \$2.618 billion during the same period in 2001.

Income from Agro-Based Products combined for \$139.95 million or 4.6 percent of the total export revenue. Compared to last year, aggregate revenue for this commodity group grew by 10.5 percent from \$126.64 million.

Accounting for 22.5 percent of the country's aggregate receipts for the month, exports to the United States, valued at \$678.81 million, declined by 15.1 percent from last year's reported figure of \$799.59 million.

Japan followed with a 14.3 percent share. Valued at \$430.44 million, exports to Japan grew by 2.2 percent from \$420.99 million.

First Gentleman's office swamped with calls for help from OFWs

A day after his appointment as special envoy to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), the Office of the First Gentleman (OFG), Atty. Jose Miguel T. Arroyo, in Malacañang was swamped with calls asking for assistance.

Carmen Banzagales, a staff of the OFG, said she has received an avalanche of calls asking for Mr. Arroyo's help, particularly for their relatives abroad encountering problems.

One caller said that her sister working in Saudi Arabia has not received her salary and would like the First Gentleman to intervene. All the callers have similar problems about relatives working in the Middle East.

However, Banzagales told the callers that Arroyo is still in Japan with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Prior to his appointment, Arroyo has been assisting OFWs who are having problems without fanfare.

One of those previously assisted by the First Gentleman was 20-year-old Mary Jane Ramos who needed P700,000 blood money after he was convicted of stabbing to death her employer who attempted to rape her in Dubai on Jan. 21, 1999.

The First Gentleman initiated the fund drive for the blood money. He personally donated from his own pocket P100,000 for Ms. Ramos' freedom.

Ramos was jailed for two years even after she paid DHs 150,000 or US\$41,000 blood money.

Atty. Arroyo also assisted leukemia patient Eva Israel Crisostomo by facilitating her return trip to Manila after she was hospitalized at St. Mary's Church in Dubai last June 1 this year.

The First Gentleman also facilitated Delia Marquilencia's chartered domestic flight from Manila to Iloilo after her arrival from Cyprus where she suffered a brain damage as well as fractured ribs when she figured in a vehicular accident in Miniotis, Cyprus on January 20, 2000.

Arroyo also assisted Marcel Santos for her prolonged confinement and medical assistance at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH). Santos was confined in Hanyu General Hospital in Saitma, Japan for lupus erythematosus.

Several other OFWs were also extended help by Arroyo.

In his free legal assistance project, Atty. Arroyo has provided legal help for OFWs, particularly victims of illegal recruitment.

The other humanitarian projects of the First Gentleman are medical mission, cataract operation, Dialysis Center, Paluwal Pangkabuhayan ni President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo or livelihood assistance.

Atty. Arroyo's medical mission project has already benefited 21,439 patients from the various parts of the country.

For the past 10 months of 2002, a total of 1,449 kidney patients underwent free hemodialysis treatment in 2,320 sessions and 135 patients were provided with ambulatory peritoneal dialysis at the Dialysis Center in Malacañang Clinic.

More than 200 cataract patients underwent free operations at the Presidential Security Group (PSG) Hospital in Malacañang Park also under Arroyo's cataract mission. Aside from free surgery, patients were also provided free intra-ocular lenses, medicines and pre- and post-operative medical follow-up.

According to Atty. Arroyo, he has been doing these humanitarian activities for love of country and the Filipino people.

Fight against terrorism is responsibility of all nations, says GMA

TOKYO (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the fight against terrorism is the responsibility of all nations and not just any one country or region alone.

The President made this statement when asked to comment during a press conference at the Japan National Press Club on the remarks of Australian Prime Minister John Howard that his country has the right to defend itself from any attack, even if that meant taking pre-emptive military action overseas.

The President said such preemptive attack is hypothetical. "I don't think that is the time now to give a reaction one way or another to a hypothetical declaration," she said.

The Chief Executive, however, noted that what is important is that everyone should realize that terrorism is not the responsibility of one country or one region alone.

"It is a global threat and it is a global responsibility, and all countries in the world who value peace and freedom must help one another," she said.

The President added that "we must share intelligence, break the terrorist cells where we find them and break the terrorist network, and we must stop the flow of funds."

She noted that the Philippines has taken an aggressive position in the fight against terrorism.

"Rather than sit and wait for terrorism to hit us. what we should do is seek out the terrorist cells in the country where we might find them. It is important that we fight terrorism, that we be proactive before it destroys our way of life. . we must share intelligence with one another."

"That, in a war against terrorism as compared to conventional warfare, is what makes it different, the importance of intelligence," she added.

Make Philippines your regional hub in East Asia, GMA tells Japanese businessmen

TOKYO—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the Japanese business leaders to make the Philippines the hub of their operations in East Asia since the country is located in the center of the Asia Pacific region.

In her policy speech at a luncheon meeting at the Keidanren, the Japanese economic organization, the President said that the Philippines could be reached by major cities of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in just three to four hours.

The President said the Philippines could become a regional hub not only by virtue of its proximity to most countries in the region but also because it can provide various services, particularly in information and communications technology (ICT) and the electronics sector.

As an English literate country, the President said, the Philippines could absorb high technology easily. “That is why world-class firms such as Intel, Texas Instruments and Amkor have a strong presence in the country,” she added.

According to the President, as regional hub, the Philippines is also best positioned to take advantage of the rapidly expanding market of China, adding that with its ascension to the World Trade Organization (WTO), China could be a lucrative market for the logistic services, manufacturing and commodity firms in the Philippines.

The President said that as the Philippines positions itself as a regional hub, her administration is also taking care of ensuring the proper macro-economic environment for foreign business firms to thrive in the country.

She said that her administration is putting together a “good new team” to increase tax collections, citing as member of this team Bureau of Internal Revenue Guillermo Parayno, who, she said, could meet the revenue target set for the rest of the medium-term plan period.

The President said her administration is committed to institute not only short-term but also long-term structural reforms, adding that the Special Asset Management Company bill, which has now passed both houses of Congress, would free more bank resources for export and other projects that would help speed up economic recovery in the Philippines.

Japan, the President said, will always be an important partner of the Philippines in its economic development and that the Japanese business community has a large role to play in realizing her administration’s vision of providing economic and human security to the Filipino people.

“So, I ask you, leaders of the Japanese business community, let us move forward together. Let us make AsEAN prosperous. Let us make the Philippines prosperous because that is what will make Japan prosperous, and, therefore, the rest of the region prosperous,” the President said.

GMA showcases RP economy’s strengths before Japanese businessmen

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today showcased the strengths of the Philippine economy as she invited Japanese businessmen to invest in the Philippines.

Speaking at the luncheon hosted by heads of Japanese economic organizations in Tokyo Kaikan, the President cited the steps taken by her administration in pushing for economic growth and the positive results registered since she assumed office.

“As we position ourselves to be a regional hub, we also take care of ensuring the proper macroeconomic environment for business firms to thrive,” the President said.

She stressed the growth of the Philippines’ gross domestic product in the first three quarters of the year, which averaged 4.1 percent, and the continued implementation of monetary, fiscal and supply-side policies that resulted in the lowest inflation and interest rates registered in more than a decade.

She also assured that “in seeking sustainable growth, my administration continues to focus unwaveringly on building a strong Philippine nation, similar to the strong Japanese nation.”

The President likewise noted that her administration continued to “focus on the essential services that concern firms that would invest in the Philippines.”

These involve the power sector, the workforce, stability of government and issues on peace and order, she said.

“The Philippines is positioning itself within East Asia—the region of highest growth in this century – as a regional hub,” the President said, citing the country’s ideal location, being at the center of the Asia-Pacific, making it accessible to all major Asian cities.

“But we intend to become a regional hub not only by virtue of proximity, but also by providing services,” she said.

She highlighted the attractiveness of the Philippines as an investment destination, given its international reputation for its edge in education, English proficiency, adaptability and expertise in e-commerce.

GMA says yen is mightier than sword

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — The yen is mightier than the sword.

So said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as she highlighted the role Japan has to play in helping economies of Asia fight poverty and, ultimately, terrorism.

“Japan’s aid is important as vital weapon for insuring regional stability and security,” the President said in a meeting with the members of the Japan National Press Club.

“Make no mistake: the yen is mightier than the sword,” the President said, pointing out that the yen loan packages extended by Japan to the Philippines and other developing economies in Asia help them fight poverty that breeds terrorism.

“Economic security is the greatest defense against political instability, poverty and terrorism,” said the President.

“Japanese leadership to sustain aid to the Philippine government in my efforts to reduce poverty and sustain economic recovery is every bit as important as military cooperation in insuring regional security,” she said.

She recognized that “the economic role Japan has to play in the region cannot be overstated,” as she noted that Tokyo is “an important development partner and donor for the Philippines and ASEAN.”

“We commend Japan’s efforts to further deepen its ties in the region through economic partnership agreements,” she said.

“It is only through economic partnership that as a region, we will chart the security of Asia and the prosperity of our people. With Japan leading the way,” the President said, “the region will flourish.”

Philippines to participate in peace process between Indonesia, rebels in Aceh

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the decision of the Philippines to participate in the peace process between Indonesia and the rebel group Free Aceh Movement or FAM.

The President made the announcement in a press conference with members of the Japan National Press Club.

“It’s an honor for the Philippines to participate in the peace process in Aceh. Indonesia asked us to participate,” the President said.

Playing a role in the peace process in Indonesia, Mrs. Arroyo said, is Manila's "way of reciprocating Indonesia, for Indonesia's support for the Philippines in our own peace process in the Southern Philippines."

Indonesia played a role in the forging of the peace agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The President also noted that providing assistance in the forging of peace agreements has become a tradition among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

"It is one of the accomplishments in ASEAN, that we, as neighbors in ASEAN, help one another," she said.

She stressed that ASEAN "has been developing not only as a region for free trade, but also a region for settling disputes among neighbors and for neighbors helping one another in settling disputes within their own nation."

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: December 4, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213304/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec04.htm>

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Review of Cabinet performance continuing, says GMA

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said she is continuously reviewing the performance of government officials to find out if they are up to their jobs or need to be replaced.

During a late coffee chat with media representatives at the Akasaka Palace, the state guesthouse, the President said she couldn't say if there's no revamp per se in the future.

"I won't say no, there wouldn't be no revamp. I won't say there would be. I will keep reviewing to see if a particular individual is still the appropriate person for the work," she said.

The Chief Executive said she is continuously reviewing the work of the Cabinet to see "if that specific person is still relevant to the needs of the time or with the program in which I'm in. I choose whom to change when I want."

GMA not inclined to declare Xmas truce

TOKYO (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said she is not inclined to declare a ceasefire this Yuletide season with the New People's Army.

Nevertheless, she said she would await the recommendation of the her security officers on what would be the most appropriate response on the issue.

"I will still wait for the recommendations of my security officers but I am not inclined," she said.

When asked why, the President said:

"Because I want to sustain the momentum in the campaign and momentum in fighting poverty and where poverty encourages people to be recruited, I would like to maintain this momentum," she added.

GMA, Koizumi witness signing of 2 agreements for Mindanao, Metro Manila

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi witnessed the signing of two major agreements, worth at least Y6.7 billion that would provide for socio-economic development and peace building in Mindanao and for the improvement of firefighting efforts in Metro Manila.

The signing ceremony yesterday, held at the Prime Ministers' Residence, was led by Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon and Japan's Ambassador to Manila Kojiro Takano.

The ceremony followed a bilateral meeting between the two leaders Wednesday evening.

The first agreement, worth Y1.5 billion, is a counter-value fund of Japan's non-project grant assistance.

This is set to be used for economic and social development for peace-building in Mindanao.

Japan has strongly supported the policy of the Arroyo administration to simultaneously promote both the fight against poverty and the fight against terrorism.

According to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the project is aimed at demonstrating Japan's active support for the Mindanao region and to contribute toward the escape from extreme poverty and the consolidation for peace in the region, which are among the most important policy objectives of the Arroyo administration.

The second agreement is the Metro Manila Fire Protection Enhancement Project which is worth at least 5.2 billion yen.

This project aims to develop and enhance the network of the fire protection system in Metro Manila through the construction of 30 new fire stations, and repair and renovation of 124 fire stations and 22 central fire stations.

Under this project, approximately P2.3 billion would be financed under Japan's special yen loan package.

The project will also provide for the acquisition of firefighting and communications equipment, including the provision of 81 firetrucks, 855 sets of radios and accessories to ensure the sustainable operation and service of the firefighting equipment.

Elective officials in GMA's trips not just her personal choice

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — If it were just up to her, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would take all the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, both from the opposition and the administration, in all her foreign trips.

But the President said the choice is made by the leaders of both chambers of Congress, dismissing speculations she could be playing favorites among senators and congressmen.

In a late night meeting with members of the Philippine media covering her state visit here, the President explained Wednesday the process of selecting the members of the official delegation to her foreign visits, particularly those from elective posts.

"The delegation from the legislative is really something agreed upon by themselves," the President said, explaining that those included in the list of senators and congressmen joining her delegation are nominated.

"So the Senate President sends me the nominees of the Senate, the Speaker sends me the nominees of the House. The president of the mayor's league sends me the nominees of the mayors; the president of the governors' league sends me the nominees of the governors," she said.

In her state visit to Japan, the President was joined by opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, Jr. from the Senate and by Reps. Jacinto Paras, Josephine Sato and Antonio Roman from the House of Representatives.

From the ranks of the governors, the President's official delegation includes Nueva Ecija Governor Eduardo Joson III, Compostela Valley Governor Jose Caballero, Agusan del Sur Governor Adolf Edward Plaza and Pampanga Vice-Governor Juan Miguel Arroyo, the President's son.

The mayors are represented by Mabalacat Mayor Marino Morales in the official delegation.

"So it's a process that they do among themselves. Well, I'd like all of them to come if I had my choice," the President said.

GMA stands firm in her decision to appoint First Gentleman as special envoy to OFWs

TOKYO (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo feels her critics will always criticize her anyway, so she's standing pat on her decision to appoint First Gentleman Miguel "Mike" T. Arroyo as special envoy to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

In a late Wednesday night coffee with members of the Philippine media covering her state visit to Japan, President Macapagal-Arroyo hinted that her critics will always find fault in all her actions, so she might as well just go ahead with her decisions.

"Some of my critics always find something to criticize," she said.

The President defended her husband from her critics, stressing that his appointment to a non-paying job was a clear indication of her administration's determination to address the concerns of OFWs.

"Our OFWs do need attention from our government because they're sending us \$6 billion to \$8 billion a year," she said.

She urged that her decision to ask "my husband to represent me in explaining to them our programs shows my personal concern for their welfare."

Concrete alliances required in fighting terrorism, says GMA

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — A concrete alliance among countries in Asia, not divisions and tensions between states, is what is required in addressing international terrorism.

This was stressed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in a late night coffee chat Wednesday with the members of Philippine media covering her state visit here.

There are "so many uncertainties, economic and security. It's very important that we cement alliances," the President said in the wake of the tension between Australia and countries in Southeast Asia triggered by the statement of the Australian Prime Minister John Howard that his country is prepared to take preemptive attacks overseas where there are terrorists believed to be targeting his country's interests.

Given the threat of international terrorism and the economic slowdown in many parts of the world, President Macapagal-Arroyo said, the presence of uncertainties require that each state solidify its alliance with its neighbors.

A stronger alliance with Japan, she said, is what she sought out to do in her state visit here, and this, she stressed, she accomplished.

The President said her main agenda is to remind Japan of its role, being the biggest economy in Asia, to lead the region in the fight against terrorism by helping its neighbors address the very root of the problem which is poverty.

“The important thing is that the Philippines and Japan have a good partnership at this time when the partnership is very, very much needed,” she said.

While she did not criticize any particular state in Asia, the President reiterated that the fight against terrorism cannot be won by any state acting alone, but through a collective effort of all countries in the region.

“In any case, I think the most important thing with regard to the terrorist threat is to remember that terrorism knows no boundaries. You don’t know when or where it will strike next in the whole world and we have to recognize that this is the fight not of one country,” she said.

“It is very important that we all cooperate and work together,” the President said, as she stressed that the work of gathering intelligence information on the movement of terrorist groups, as well as the flow of funds that support their illegal activities, requires the participation of other states.

“The most important thing is cutting the network, cutting the flow of funds, searching for the cells where we can find them,” she said.

The President said this is the reason she initiated the forging of the treaty among Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines on the exchange of intelligence information on terrorists, to which Thailand and Cambodia later acceded.

“This is the way to go,” she said, explaining that Japan has a very great influence on the fight against poverty in this region and its support for the fight against terrorism.”

Marubeni to bring in \$100-M new investment to RP

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — Japanese conglomerate Marubeni Philippines has committed to bring in \$100 million in fresh investment to the Philippines for the establishment of geothermal plants in Mindanao.

Marubeni president and chief executive officer Tohru Tusji informed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo about his company’s signing of a memorandum of understanding for the new energy project with the Philippine National Oil Co.-Energy Development Corp. (PNOC-EDC) during a call on the visiting Chief Executive at the Asahi Room of the Akasaka Palace late yesterday.

The MOU was for the establishment of a joint ownership of the 100-megawatt (MW) Mindanao Geothermal Power Plants, which will include the development of an additional capacity of up to 40-MW geothermal power at the Mt. Apo facilities.

The President expressed appreciation for Marubeni’s contributions to the Philippine economy and its continuing involvement in the development of the country’s power resources.

She also thanked the Japanese firm for its confidence in her administration by further expanding its projects in the Philippines.

Marubeni has built majority of the power plants owned by the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR).

Just recently, Marubeni completed the \$1.4-billion San Roque Multi-Purpose Dam which was designed not only to provide electricity but also irrigation, flood control and water quality improvement for the northern provinces of Pangasinan, Tarlac and Nueva Ecija.

The President encouraged Marubeni to pour more investments into the Philippine market as she assured the Japanese conglomerate of the government’s commitment to extend necessary assistance and support to investments in the Philippines.

Also present during the call of the Marubeni CEO were Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon, Jr., Trade Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II, PNOCC chairman Sergio Apostol and Presidential Assistant for Northern Luzon Renato Diaz.

Tohru was accompanied by Marubeni Philippines Corp. president and CEO Ryukiohi Kawaguchi and Marubeni corporate vice-president and chief operating officer for utility and infrastructure Mamoro Sekiyama.

First Gentleman starts work as special envoy, helps distressed OFW in Tokyo

TOKYO (Via PLDT) — First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel “Mike” has barely warmed his seat as special envoy of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) but he is now busy attending to his first case.

The case involves Ma. Cristina Salvador, 33, a Filipino “overstayer” here who has been detained since April, at the Tokyo Immigration Bureau.

Cristina was discovered by the Japanese authorities as an “overstayer” following a complaint she filed at the Chichibu police station against her former boyfriend, a Thai, for taking away her three-year-old daughter Alliyah Salvador.

Apparently because of her complaint, her boyfriend Khajornsak Thawornpraset was detained for 10 days at the police station. Later, an arrangement was made where the child would stay with Cristina and her father alternately (one week each).

Hence, the child first stayed with Cristina for one week, and afterwards was taken by the mother of Cristina’s former boyfriend since he was still in detention.

A few days after the above arrangement was made, Cristina was arrested and detained by the police for “overstaying.” She was then transferred to the Tokyo Immigration Bureau last April 25 for immediate deportation, embassy officials said.

Cristina, fully aware of her options and their consequences, appealed to Philippine authorities for assistance in getting back her child.

She expressed her request not to be deported and to stay longer in the detention center so she could claim back her child. The request was approved by the Tokyo Immigration Bureau.

But she has to pay a considerable amount of fine to bring the case to the court. And this is where the First Gentleman’s assistance comes with an initial \$2,000.

The amount, which comes from his own pocket, was handed over today to Cristina’s Japanese lawyer, Mikiko Otani, at Otani Hotel this morning.

“Hindi aalis si Cristina hanggat hindi niya makuha yung anak niya. Ganyan ang Filipina mother, talagang mahal na mahal nila ang mga anak nila (Cristina will not leave until she gets her daughter. That is how a Filipina mother is. They care deeply for their children),” Atty. Arroyo said.

The First Gentleman said the President recognizes the need to help our OFWs, especially in their personal problems.

The President has announced the appointment of the First Gentleman as special envoy to the OFWs during a meeting with the Filipino community here.

Atty. Arroyo is set to go to Hong Kong on December 12 to address the needs and provide assistance to Filipinos there. In January, he will visit Italy.

He said he already met with Foreign Secretary Blas Ople and is set to start a series of meetings with the DFA on the details of the work.

GMA ends highly successful four-day state visit to Japan

TOKYO (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo brought to a close today a very successful four-day state visit to Japan.

The President, First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo and the rest of the official Philippine delegation boarded the presidential plane at the Narita International Airport shortly before 3 this afternoon (2 p.m. in Manila).

Before she left the Akasaka Palace, where she stayed during the four-day visit, the Imperial Couple, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, made a farewell call on her.

The President’s state visit is marked by the reinvigoration of the ties formed forty years ago between the President and the Imperial Couple.

It is also marked by the high esteem accorded by the Japanese government as the President spoke before House of Councilors, the National Diet of Japan, which is the Japanese parliament.

Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon, Jr., during a late coffee with Philippine media, said that based on the records which he was given, the President emerges to be the only woman speaker before the Diet.

“Historically, invitation to speak before the Parliament for the joint session is a very rare invitation,” he said.

The first Philippine president and the last one known to have addressed the Diet was President Carlos P. Garcia in 1958 and based on the records given, President Macapagal-Arroyo is the only lone woman speaker.

Siazon also noted that the standing ovation, like the one accorded to the President, is very rare.

Siazon also noted that it was rare that Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi was present during an address.

“And this time, you didn’t only have the incumbent Prime Minister, you had Hashimoto Morihata. So at least, I saw three previous Prime Ministers and an opposition leader, who was having problems, who were there during the whole speech,” he added.

During the same late coffee with Philippine media delegation, the President said she came to Japan to emphasize that notwithstanding new players in the world economy or global cyclical conditions or recessions, Japan is still the most dominant economic and security influence in the region.

While China is an exciting new player in the world economy, Japan still commands more than one-half of the Gross Domestic Product of the region.

“This is the message that I’m giving in this state visit — to emphasize to Japan not to be discouraged by recession that they are undergoing, to remember that they are still the biggest economy by far in this region and to have confidence in that role, confidence that the rest of us continue to look to Japan for leadership in this region,” the President added.

In her bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister, two major agreements, worth at least Y6.7 billion, have been inked, providing for the socio-economic and peace building in Mindanao and for the improvement of firefighting efforts in Metro Manila.

The President and Koizumi also discussed the importance of ongoing efforts for the establishment of a Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership, ordering their concerned officials to work more closely in advancing the establishment of the JPEP.

At the e-Services Philippines: Information Technology Exhibition and Interactive Business Investment Seminar, sponsored by the Japan External Trade Organization, the President urged Japanese companies engaged in IT to set up businesses in the Philippines as she formally opened the seminar.

“Our economies’ respective strengths complement each other very well. Japan’s leadership in various technological fields can be adequately supported by the Philippines’ large pool of quality human resources with high IT literacy rate,” she said.

During the visit, the President also formally announced that she was designating the First Gentleman to be her special representative to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

She also announced the launching of “Kabayanihan,” a new government program for OFWs that would provide an integrated delivery of basic services to them at worksites abroad and at home in the Philippines.

Under Kabayanihan, the OFWs will be able to avail themselves of the following services:

— Overseas Workers Welfare Administration On-Site Welfare Services that would include expanded/voluntary membership.

— DOLE/OWWA/Philippine Overseas Employment Administration Electronic Identification Card (e-Card) services.

— Health Maintenance services through the OWWA Medicare program wherein the OFW and members of the family will be entitled to benefits over and above those granted by PhilHealth.

— Pag-IBIG Fund’s Housing services wherein DOLE and the Pag-IBIG fund have already signed a memorandum of agreement for the joint implementation of the Pag-IBIG Overseas Housing Program (POP).

The POP aims to expand Pag-IBIG membership among OFWs and provide them the opportunity to acquire their own homes at affordable means.

— SSS Provident Fund (Flexi-Fund) services, which will be solely for OFWs, is designed to enable workers to save hard-earned money while working abroad. By investing in the Flexi-Fund at a very affordable cost, workers are guaranteed continued earnings after retirement.

Malacañang describes killing of Campos as ‘height of brutality’

Malacañang today described the well-planned and well-executed killing of Police Superintendent John Campos as the height of brutality as it expressed condolences to the families of the police officer and the cashier of an eatery where they were killed in the pre-dawn shooting in Parañaque, Metro Manila.

“It is really the height of brutality to have this kind of killings, particularly that kind of killing where it seemed to be well-planned and well-executed,” Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao said in a press briefing.

Tiglaio assured the public that police authorities are doing their work to solve the killing as soon as possible.

“They are finishing their sketches from the account of witnesses,” Tiglaio said, adding that even before the day is over, the police will be able to come out with a good description of the perpetrators.

Tiglaio said the Palace does not have a reason to conclude at this time that a senator was behind the brutal killing of Campos, a former anti-narcotics officer of the Philippine National Police.

Also killed in the Parañaque shooting was Emily Dumlao, cashier of the eatery, who had a gunshot wound in the stomach.

Palace reacts to Pulse Asia survey, says gov't must have to work harder

Presidential Spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglaio today said that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration will just have to work harder so that the people can feel the efforts of the government to really help the poor.

“It is good there are such polls to remind us on what aspects we are weak,” Tiglaio said of the latest Pulse Asia.

Tiglaio, however, said that the Pulse Asia report released today indicated there were areas where the President has very high rating, citing the human rights and environmental issues. “She rates high on certain things, and peace and order has been improving a lot,” Tiglaio said.

“Essentially certain projects have to be accelerated. The conclusion here is that even if projects are being implemented continuously, they seemed not to be felt by the masses,” Tiglaio said.

“Secondly, of course, there is a need to communicate her decision as what happened during her November 30; her decisions were clear and it was well articulated, well expressed,” Tiglaio said.

Tiglaio said that all the internal surveys that the government has commissioned demonstrated a major rebound after the President clarified her decisions on certain critical issues and programs for next year.

The recent Pulse Asia survey showed that the President has slightly lagged behind other perceived candidates for the 2004 presidential election. The President has consistently said that she is focused on her job and is not thinking of 2004.

Tiglaio also said that it is too early to measure who would be winning or would be presidentiables at this point in time.

He said that even surveys conducted three months before the elections change, depending on circumstances.

GMA back, cites concrete gains in four-day state visit to Japan

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived tonight from a highly-successful four-day state visit to Japan bringing with her, in concrete terms, 5.2 billion yen (P2.2 billion) special loan for a Metro Manila fire protection enhancement project and a grant of 1.5 billion yen (P645 million) for economic and social development projects in Southern and Western Mindanao.

Her plane, Philippine Airlines Flight PR 433, touched down at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport at about 6:30 p.m.

Among those who welcomed her back from her successful state visit to Japan were Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr., Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Interior and Local

Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Dionisio Santiago and Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo.

In an arrival statement, the President pointed out that the 5.2 billion yen loan will be used to build 30 substations and upgrade 124 substations and 22 central fire stations in Metro Manila.

The President said the 1.5 billion yen grant will be on top of the official development assistance (ODA) that the Philippines receives from Japan each year, stressing that Japan ODA accounts for 60 per cent of the total financial assistance that the country receives from abroad.

The President, however, said that more than the immediate financial results of her state visit is the bright outlook for the Philippines enhanced economic cooperation with Japan.

She emphasized that her talks with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Nippon Keidanren, the Japanese organization of enterprises, allowed her to apprise them of the continuing great opportunities for investments in the Philippines.

“The Japanese businessmen were impressed by our continued growth despite a worldwide slowdown,” the President said.

The President said that her state visit to Japan gave her an opportunity to address the concerns of the Japanese businessmen already doing business in the Philippines.

“I apprised them of the efforts and facilities we have already put in place to ensure much better business climate,” she said.

The President told Japanese businessmen that the Philippines is working closely with international efforts in the fight against terrorism, at the same time eradicating kidnap gangs to ensure the security of investors.

“Our investment incentives are already well known, but we assured them that we are working towards even making our country the best target of opportunity for foreign equity and portfolio investment,” the President said, citing as the best encouragement the continuing improvement of the economy, particularly low inflation and rising growth.

The President also addressed the members of the Japanese Diet, the legislature of Japan, which met in a joint session.

President Macapagal-Arroyo was the first woman head of state to ever address the Diet. “An honor which I will always cherish,” the President said as she recounted her meeting with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi as well as three former Japanese prime ministers.

Emphasizing the need for unity in ASEAN and in East Asia, and the Philippines’ unity with Japan, the President also detailed to the Diet her economic programs which she believed will make the country more competitive in the globalized market.

“I stressed to them the need to maximize more fully the many areas of complementarity between our two economies, one of them being in the area of human resource development,” the President said.

In a bilateral meeting, the President discussed with Koizumi the importance of ongoing efforts for the establishment of a Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership.

In this meeting, the two leaders underscored once again the need to strengthen the complementarities as well as the competitiveness of the two economies.

“We recognized that trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, along with enhanced cooperation in other related areas, would accelerate cross-border flow of resources and provide greater opportunities and larger economies of scale for Japanese and Philippine business,” the President said.

The President said that during her state visit, she was warmly welcomed by the Japanese people and by Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the symbols of the Japanese nation.

“The hospitality and sincerity with which they received us leave nothing to be desired,” the President said.

According to the President, she is looking forward to the first visit in the 21st century to the Philippines of the Emperor and Empress of Japan where the Philippines may return the warm hospitality and also further cement the two countries’ strengthening ties.

The President also met with the Filipino community wherein an early Christmas party was held for them.

“I assured them that we will do all we can to help them,” the President said, maintaining that the Great Filipino Workers continue to be a source of pride for the way they present a good image of the Filipino people abroad.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: December 5, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029130601/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec05.htm>

The President's Day: December 6, 2002

06 DECEMBER 2002

- **Complementary is way to go in foreign trade, GMA tells Filipino businessmen**
- **GMA lauds Philippine Quality Awards for vow to make RP products competitive**

Complementary is way to go in foreign trade, GMA tells Filipino businessmen

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo told businessmen attending the Philippine Quality Awards this morning in Malacañang that in today's foreign trade, the best way to achieve competitiveness in the world market is through economic complementarities with trading partners.

Speaking at the 2002 Philippine Quality Awards at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang, the President stressed that it is most fitting that upon her arrival from a successful state visit to Japan, a technologically advanced neighbor, she will be meeting with the country's businessmen who are involved in raising the quality of Philippine products.

The President said she is optimistic that her state visit to Japan will open more avenues for quality Filipino products, especially in the advent of a Philippine-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement.

"An ideal economic partnership agreement must take into consideration maximized complementarities between the two countries forging such agreement," the President said.

The President explained the essence of complementarity by showcasing how Japan, with its advance technology, and the Philippines, with its quality human resources, can work together to achieve greater heights of economic partnership.

She said Japan would provide the technology and extensive capital while the Philippines would provide the much-needed skilled and knowledgeable human resources which Filipinos are known for in many parts of the globe.

Complementarity, the President said, must also look into democratic realities like Japan's aging population and the Philippines' young and highly-skilled population, particularly in the field of health care. She said the Philippines could be a source for Japan's health caregivers.

Be assured that economic partnerships like the one the Philippines and Japan are working out will always be consistent with the welfare of our people, the President said.

The President exhorted the Filipino businessmen to help shape better economic ties with the country's trading partners, particularly in strengthening complementarities by providing quality products and services.

GMA lauds Philippine Quality Awards for vow to make RP products competitive

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today gave Filipino businessmen a pat on the back for their unrelenting efforts to make Philippine products competitive in the world market and giving due recognition to companies that excel in quality performance.

In ceremonies held at Malacañang this morning, the President congratulated PSI Technologies and ON Semiconductor for winning this year's Philippine Quality Awards (PQA).

The PQA is the country's counterpart to the prestigious Baldrige Award in the United States. Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II is this year's Award Manager.

The President, assisted by Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin and Acting Trade and Industry Secretary Adrian Cristobal, Jr., handed out trophies and medals to officials of the two firms.

The award for PSI Technologies was received by its chief executive officer, Arthur J. Young, while the award for ON Semiconductor was received by Ronnie Manubay.

During her keynote address, the President cited the success of the “e-Services Philippines: Information Technology Exhibition and Interactive Business Investment Seminar,” sponsored by the Japan External Trade Organization during her state visit to Japan from December 2-5.

The President said the country’s dedication to quality is paying off as shown by the overflowing crowd that attended the exhibit. She said at least 200 Japanese companies joined the exhibit.

To show you how overwhelming is the Japanese businessmen’s interest in the exhibit, Filipino participants had to vacate their seats and offer them to the Japanese, the President said.

The President, at the same time, thanked the Senate, particularly Senator Juan Flavier, for enhancing the Nursing Board and increasing its membership.

She said this is government’s part in seeing to it that the country produces quality health workers, especially caregivers.

The President noted that 40 new nursing schools have opened in response to the overwhelming need for health caregivers abroad.

She said government would see to it that these schools continue to give quality education and trainings for the Filipinos so the country could maintain its globally-recognized quality health caregivers.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: December 6, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213529/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec06.htm>

The President's Day: December 7, 2002

07 DECEMBER 2002

- **GMA belies opposition claims that she okayed NAPOCOR-IMPISA contract early in her presidency**
- **President's radio address to the nation**
- **GMA warns squatting syndicates, says they destroy gov't housing program**
- **Palace ready to certify as urgent the bill creating Department of Information and Communication Technology**

GMA belies opposition claims that she okayed NAPOCOR-IMPISA contract early in her presidency

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today belied claims by the opposition that she approved the contract for the rehabilitation of the Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan hydroelectric plant just four days after she assumed the presidency in January 2001.

"It is not true," the President said, as she vehemently denied insinuations by the political opposition that a huge payoff was made in exchange for the approval of the contract.

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye said that it was most unfair for the political opposition to continue peddling this black propaganda and insinuating that administration officials benefited from the so-called anomalous transaction.

The fact is the Estrada administration had already signed the contract before President Arroyo assumed office, Bunye said.

Former President Estrada himself signed as a witness in that power agreement, something that no President, before or after him, has ever done.

All these loose talks about the alleged bribe are just aimed at eroding public confidence in the Arroyo administration, Bunye said.

The contract was signed by the state-owned National Power Corporation (Napocor) and the Argentina firm, Industrias Metalurgicas Pescarmona Sociedad Anonima (IMPISA).

Opposition senators have charged that the NAPOCOR-IMPISA contract was first offered but turned down by deposed President Joseph Estrada. It was reportedly approved by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration after an alleged payoff of \$14 million.

The opposition said that it was Justice Secretary Hernando Perez who was the administration pointman in the alleged payola.

President's radio address to the nation

MAGANDANG ARAW PO MGA MAHAL KONG KABABAYAN.

Malugod kong ibinabalita sa inyo ang mga naging bunga ng katatapos kong *State Visit* sa Japan.

Walang duda na mahalaga ang kontribusyong pang-ekonomiya ng bansang Hapon para sa katatagan at katiwasayan ng Silangang Asya. Napatingkad pa ito ng mga bagong banta sa seguridad ng ating rehiyon. Ito ay sa dahilang ang paglaban sa terorismo ay pandaigdigang hindi pang-iisang bansa lamang. *Japan as an important development partner for the Philippines and ASEAN is crucial in the regional fight against poverty, which is the recruiting ground for terrorism.*

Ang pagkakaroon ng malakas na ekonomiya at masiglang demokrasya ang pinakamabisang pangontra sa kahirapan at terorismo. Malaki ang maitutulong sa hangaring ito ng kooperasyon sa pagitan ng Pilipinas at Hapon. *Japan is our country's biggest provider of official development assistance and the second largest trading partner and source of investments.* Kaya naman hinikayat natin ang Hapon na dagdagan pa ang kanilang tulong na pinansyal, gayundin ang puhunan o kapital, sa ating bansa.

Hindi naman tayo nabigo sapagka't tiniyak ng *Japanese Government* na bagama't nagbawas sila ng tulong sa ibang bansa sa ating rehiyon, tuloy pa rin ang ibinibigay nilang *official development assistance* sa Pilipinas.

Patunay nito ang dalawang *aid packages* na kanilang inaprubahan sa panahon ng aking pagdalaw.

Una rito ay ang *Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao* na nagkakahalaga ng apat na bilyong yen o halos *1.72 billion pesos*. Bukod sa pagpapakita ng aktibong pagtulong ng Hapon sa Mindanao, ito ay naghahangad rin na i-ahon sa matinding kahirapan at patibayin ang kapayapaan sa katimugan, lalung-lalo na sa *Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao*, o ARMM, na lubhang naapektuhan ng kaguluhan kung kaya't naging mabagal ang pag-unlad. Ang nasabing tulong ay gagamitin sa tatlong *priority areas*: pagbuo at pagpapatupad ng mga angkop na palakad; pagpapahusay ng mga serbisyo publiko, agrikultura at imprastruktura; at, suporta sa direktang pagtulong sa pagkakaroon ng kapayapaan at paglaban sa terorismo.

Ang pangalawang *aid package* ay ang *Special Loan for the Enhancement of Firefighting Capabilities* in Metro Manila na nagkakahalaga ng *5.2 billion yen* o *2.2 billion pesos*. Ito ay gagamitin para sa pagpapatayo ng tatlung (30) bagong *substations* at *upgrading* ng *124 substations* at *22 fire stations* sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay sa kanila ng mga makabagong kagamitang pamatay-sunog.

Hindi matatawaran ang kahalagahan ng tulong na ito upang mabawasan ang pangambang masunugan ng mga naninirahan sa Kamaynilaan.

Bukod sa mga ito, hiniling ko rin sa pamahalaang Hapon na tanggalin na ang pagbabawal sa pagpasok ng mga *Filipino health workers* sa Japan, lalo na ang *caregivers* na mahigpit nilang kinakailangan. Nais ng ating pamahalaan na makilahok sa *human resource market for caregivers* sa Japan, kung saan inaasahang mabilis na darami ang mga matatandang nangangailangan ng pagkalinga. Sa isang banda, ang Pilipinas naman ay may nakababatang populasyon na nakahandang maghandog ng mahuhusay na tagapangalaga sa ibang dako ng mundo.

Sa isang pagtitipon naman, matindi kong hinimok ang mga *Japanese businessmen* na maglagak ng puhunan sa Pilipinas. Tiniyak ko sa kanila na magandang lugar pa rin ang ating bansa para sa kanilang negosyo.

Pinakamababa na rin ngayon ang bilang ng *strikes* ng manggagawang Pilipino sa loob ng dalawampung taon. At matatag at *transparent* din ang Pilipinas kung pagpapatupad ng batas ang pag-uusapan. Bumaba na rin ang ating presyo ng koryente nang mapagtibay ang *Electric Power Industry Reform Act*.

Sa ulat kong ito, sana ay maunawaan ng ating mga kababayan ang kahalagahan ng aking *State Visits* sa Japan. Patuloy nating kinikilala na isang mahalagang bahagi ng ating *political security* ay nakasalalay sa *economic contribution* ng bansang Hapon bilang isang matibay at malakas na pinang-gagalingan ng *aid, trade and investment*.

Maraming salamat at magandang araw po sa inyong lahat.

GMA warns squatting syndicates, says they destroy gov't housing program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Michael Defensor and the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) to strengthen the campaign against squatting syndicates.

In a speech at a program commemorating the 16th anniversary of the Urban Poor Solidarity Week at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City, the President ordered the HUDCC to help the urban poor, with the help of the PAO to toughen the fight against those who are destroying the housing program of the government for the urban poor. “Iyong mga nagaangkin ng lupang hindi naman nila pag-aari tapos kumukubra sa inyo ng paupa at iyong nagnanakaw sa maliit na kinikita at pinagpawisang naipon ng mga maralita (Those who usurp others’ land and subsequently lease this and rob the urban poor of their hard earned meager income),” the President said.

The President informed Chief Public Attorney Persida Rueda-Acosta that there are volunteer lawyers such as the CLASP, founded by former Vice President Salvador Laurel and Iloilo Congressman Raul Gonzales, who are willing to help the Public Attorney’s Office in defending the rights of the urban poor.

The President likewise disclosed that she has asked the help of former Commission on Elections Chairman Harriet Demetriou to uphold the rights of the “maralitang taga lungsod (urban poor).”

On the problem of demolition, the President said that there is now an improved and effective process, more than one year after she said that “there should be a moratorium in demolition in government projects.”

“That’s a big work that should be brought to an end soon by Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor (PCUP) Chair Percival Chavez, with your help,” the President said to her audience composed mostly of urban poor from Quezon City and neighboring Marikina and Pateros.

“I said then, we should not treat the urban poor as a mere problem but part of the solution,” the President said.

“Bagama’t nagkakaisa tayo sa pagdiriwang na ito, hindi pa rin lubusan ang aking kasiyahan, Ito ay dahil sa kahirapang mangolekta ng buwis. At dahil sa kahirapan ng economiya sa buong mundo, humahabol pa rin tayo sa inyong pangangailangan (Though we are one in celebrating this occasion. I am unhappy because due to difficulties in tax collection and the global economic hardships, we could not satisfy all your needs),” the President said.

The President cited the many critics who, instead of helping the government, continue to criticize the government in its effort to fight poverty.

“But in spite of all of these, my determination is not diminished to do all I can to lighten the burden of the poor in the cities,” she said.

The President asked them to help her find the solution to the long and thunderous cry of the “masa” – house and lot, social services and protection of the rights of the small citizens.

“We are continuously lending an ear to your concerns,” the President said, stressing that if they are not being felt now, it is because the resources is not enough or the government is still finding the appropriate and effective solution.

“We are trying to find the solution to your problems for a better future, despite the difficulty being experienced not only in the Philippines but in the whole world,” the President said.

The President, assisted by PCUP Chair Chavez, and National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Lead Convenor Teresita “Ging” Deles, awarded various checks from the different government agencies of government in charge of implementing programs and projects for the urban poor.

From Quedancor, the President, together with Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, and Quedancor President Nelson Buenaflor, awarded checks for livelihood projects.

She also presented certificates of purchase commitment lines under the Community Mortgage Program to Ang Aguardiente Christ Faith Homeowners Association of Novaliches, Quezon City (beneficiaries, 53 families) and the Ang Maliliit na Samahang Pagkakaisa Homeowners Association sa Tagpos, Binagonan, Rizal (48 families).

She also gave checks for payments to the owners of lands under the Community Mortgage Programs.

The Urban Poor Solidarity Week is a yearly activity observed nationwide every December 2-8 by virtue of Presidential Proclamation 367.

Capping the 16th Urban Poor Week are various activities lined up in an activity dubbed as “Pabahay at Hanapbuhay para sa Maralitan Taga-Lungsod.

These activities include Livelihood Trainings and Job Fair, free medical mission and distribution of low-cost medicines, and a free legal clinic on land and housing concerns through the Public Attorney’s Office.

Palace ready to certify as urgent the bill creating Department of Information and Communication Technology

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assures the information and communication technology investors that her administration is now ready to certify the bill creating the Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT) as urgent in order to promote and implement the information technology services (ITS) and information technology enable services (ITES) in the country.

In her remarks to the business communication leaders during the 14th Information Technology and E-Commerce Council (ITECC) meeting in Malacañang, the President said that she would issue an administrative order to strengthen the information and communication technology (ICT) group within the Department of Communication and Transportation (DOTC).

The President admitted that the House of Representatives have already fulfilled most of its obligations under her legislative agenda except the Special Purpose Asset Vehicle (SPAV) and for the amendment of the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA), which are now in the bicameral conference committee.

“In the meantime because really I don’t want the SPAV and the AMLA bill to be delayed, we will issue administrative issuances to strengthen the ICT group within the DOTC because that’s the one which we envision to become the ICT Department”, the President said.

The President noted that the SPAV and AMLA should be prioritized by both House of Representatives and the Senate because these two bills are also very important to the business community.

And once these two bills are passed, the DICT bill is the next important assignment of the lawmakers that they need to attend to, she said.

The Chief Executive also announced that she’d like to draft an executive order transferring the National Computer Center (NCC) to DOTC under the undersecretary for communication.

The President explained that her move to transfer the NCC to DOTC is the best way for Congress to understand the monetary importance of having an ICT Department in the country.

She also informed the ICT investors about the good news on E-Procurement bill, saying the bill is now moving in Congress and has a better chance of getting pass into law even ahead of the DICT bill.

Aside from Roxas, the other officials who are present in the meeting were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Secretary Estrella Alabastro of the Department of Science and Technology,

Secretary Edilberto de Jesus of the Department of Education, Chairperson Ester Garcia of the Commission on Higher Education, Undersecretary Gregory Domingo of the DTI and Undersecretary Manuel A. J. Teehankee of the Department of Justice.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President's Day: December 7, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029213748/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec07.htm>

The President's Day: December 9, 2002

09 DECEMBER 2002

- **Leading RP firms still see positive prospects in 4th Quarter, says BSP**
- **AFP, PNP making headway in campaign vs communist terrorists – Palace**
- **Palace to respect Sandiganbayan ruling on Estrada house arrest issue**
- **GMA has sole say on any Cabinet change – Palace**
- **Statement of Office of the First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo**

Leading RP firms still see positive prospects in 4th Quarter, says BSP

Majority of the country's leading business firms continue to expect positive prospects in the fourth quarter, according to the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP)*.

The BSP said that the Business Expectations Survey (BES) it conducted in October showed that the Business Outlook Index settled at 16.2 percent. However, business sentiment turned more cautious during the first quarter of next year, as the index declined to 6.3 percent, the BSP said.

The BSP said that anticipating increased consumer demand during the Christmas holidays, majority of the respondents projected higher volume of business activity for the fourth quarter.

According to the BSP, despite the generally cautious business outlook for the first quarter of 2003, the economy is still expected to grow during the period.

For instance, the BSP said, the financial conditions index had been showing a trend improvement over the past four quarters, and 18.7 percent of respondent firms plan to expand their businesses in the first quarter, from 10.7 percent in the previous quarter.

Confidence indicators of business performance showed mixed trends. Although the confidence index for some sectors have declined, the construction confidence index turned to positive 3.3 percent from negative 3.3 percent in the previous quarter, reflecting the upturn in the construction industry.

Starting the second quarter of 2001, the BSP has conducted the BES using the harmonized set of core questions for Asian countries suggested by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The survey covers 12 major industry groups (grouped into four major economic sectors), with firms drawn from the top 3,000 corporations in Metro Manila as listed by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The fourth quarter survey, which was conducted in October with 271 respondent firms, had a 45.2 percent response rate.

AFP, PNP making headway in campaign vs communist terrorists – Palace

The military and the police are making headway in the campaign against communist terrorists (CTs), Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said today.

In his regular press briefing, Bunye said this is the general conclusion in today's 4th joint command conference in Malacañang of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

"There is a preponderance of AFP or PNP-initiated operations versus the CT-initiated operations. In other words there were more pro-active campaigns conducted by the government forces," Bunye said.

Bunye noted that based on the analysis of the kill-ratio, there were 4.5 CTs killed or wounded versus one AFP-PNP killed or wounded for the month of November.

He noted that indicators showed the government is succeeding in the campaign against the communist insurgents than the other way around. This is shown by the increase in the number of surrenderees and CTs captured and the number of firearms confiscated as a result of special operations conducted by government forces.

On the issue of Christmas truce with the New People's Army (NPA), Bunye said the general consensus is that this will still have to be studied carefully. "The government is looking for positive visible signs from the other side that a ceasefire would be respected," he said.

The joint command conference was attended, among others, by AFP chief Gen. Dionisio Santiago, PNP Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo and National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez.

Palace to respect Sandiganbayan ruling on Estrada house arrest issue

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye today said Malacañang will honor the decision of the Sandiganbayan on the matter of whether former President Joseph Estrada could be put on house arrest this Christmas.

"The stand of Malacañang so far is that we have to respect the rule of law...we will follow whatever the decision of the Sandiganbayan," Bunye said in his regular press briefing this afternoon.

"Any house arrest or Christmas furlough will have to be approved by the Sandiganbayan," Bunye added.

Meanwhile, Chairman Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) said today his visit to former President Estrada at the Veterans Memorial Hospital was personal and not an official one.

In a radio interview, Defensor said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had nothing to do with his private visit.

"*Personal ho...wala hong kinalaman ang Presidente* (This was a personal visit...the President has nothing to do with it)," Defensor said.

Defensor said he has visited the former President at the same hospital several times before and these were all on personal basis. He said they were able to discuss, among other topics, the former Chief Executive's request to be put on house arrest during the Christmas season.

"*Ang madalas hong binabanggit ng dating Pangulong Estrada, unang-una sa lahat yun nga hong tuhod niya at binabanggit niya ho na talagang hindi ho siya nagloloko tungkol dito* (What the former President is grumbling is his knee. He says that he is not kidding on this)," Defensor said.

GMA has sole say on any Cabinet change – Palace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will conduct a revamp in her Cabinet whenever she sees it fit, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye today said.

"*Ang sinasabi ng ating Pangulo ay itong pagbalasa kapalit ng Cabinet officials ay gagawin kung kinakailangan pero wala siyang tinutukoy na panahon, wala siyang tinutukoy na official at itong pagbabalasa ay pinauubaya namin sa kanya* (What the President is saying is that she will effect changes in her Cabinet if it is necessary but she is not saying when nor who are the officials to be affected)," Bunye said.

Bunye said a Cabinet revamp “is a complete prerogative” of the President.

The President has said during her state visit in Tokyo, Japan last week that she is continuously reviewing the performance of government officials to find out if they are up to their jobs or need to be replaced.

“I won’t say no, there wouldn’t be no revamp. I won’t say there would be. I will keep reviewing to see if a particular individual is still the appropriate person for the work,” the President said.

Statement of Office of the First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo

It was President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s concern for our fellow Filipinos working abroad that prodded her in good faith to ask me to be her special representative to overseas workers.

In good faith, I felt that being the President’s special representative, I can make a significant contribution to address a specific need of our people.

However, what was requested and accepted in good faith has been misunderstood, so that we are being distracted from the task of trying to improve the lives of the Filipino people in the midst of difficult times. I accepted the offer, the assignment out of love, out of concern for our countrymen working abroad.

I now withdraw from it out of prudence. But this should not be interpreted as giving up my desire to help our overseas countrymen in their problems in whatever way I can. I shall continue to be available to them whenever they need me.

Perhaps the silver lining here is that national attention has been drawn to the need to continuously find ways and means in helping Filipinos abroad. They have left their loved ones and friends to work in unfamiliar environments, which for some have been even proved to jeopardize their lives and liberty. They deserve all our help and support.

Finally, I would like to thank Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Cong. Prospero Pichay and the other people who went out of their way to defend my appointment without being asked.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: December 9, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029042719/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec09.htm>

The President's Day: December 10, 2002

10 DECEMBER 2002

- **Gov't to pursue probe of Southern Tagalog 10 human rights victims, says GMA**
- **GMA okays modified tariffs on some 2,016 products**
- **Gov't to project RP as 'shopping capital' of Asia**
- **No water service interruption, Palace assures Metro Manila residents**
- **GMA orders Cabinet officials to include economic inputs from Speaker de Venecia in gov't program**
- **GMA won't interfere in Estrada's house arrest issue, Palace insists**

Gov't to pursue probe of Southern Tagalog 10 human rights victims, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the relatives and families of the human rights victims of Southern Tagalog that the government would investigate the alleged military abuses even against them as she vowed that human rights violations during martial law would never happen again.

The President made the remarks during her one and a half hour breakfast dialogue with the relatives and families of the "Southern Tagalog 10," a group of activists representing the victims who were either salvaged or who disappeared mysteriously 25 years ago.

The meeting, held at Malacañang's State Dining Room, coincided with the culmination of the International Human Rights Week.

It was the President herself who initiated the unprecedented meeting with the families and relatives of the human rights victims to assure them that her administration has taken up the challenge to find ways and give justice to the victims of the martial law regime under the late strongman, President Ferdinand Marcos.

According to the victims' families, during the last week of July and the first half of August in 1977, 10 young men and women – all honor students, outstanding teachers and professionals – disappeared. They were never heard of ever since.

The 10, whom relatives and families call the Southern Tagalog 10, belong to a network of activists in Southern Tagalog who fought against Proclamation No. 1081.

The President told them that in response to their recommendation, she is now certifying as urgent a bill pertaining to salvaging and forced disappearances that the government will soon file in the House of Representatives.

She said that this would be in addition to the pending bill on the compensation of human rights victims.

The President said that the bill would define involuntary disappearance as a crime and those found responsible would be penalized.

She informed the group that the investigation of Southern Tagalog 10 human rights cases will be handled by the Presidential Committee on Human Rights (PCHR).

The President also ordered Secretary Angelo Reyes of the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to provide the PCHR all the necessary information and documents regarding the case of Southern Tagalog 10 human rights victims.

She said that in honor of the bravery of the activists who fought and died during martial law regime, the government, through the National Historical Institute (NHI), will be setting up a commemorative marker in Lucena City, adding that the target date for the inauguration is on February 22, 2003.

Aside from Reyes, those present during the dialogue were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, and Acting Justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez.

GMA okays modified tariffs on some 2,016 products

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today approved the proposal of the Committee on Tariff and Related Matters (CTRM) to modify the 2003 most favored nation (MFN) tariffs on an estimated 2,016 product lines.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, who presented to the Cabinet and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) the proposed changes, responded to the requests of domestic producers for more time to become competitive, to lower the cost of imported raw materials and capital equipment and, in the case of agricultural and fishery products, allow for negotiating flexibility in the ongoing negotiations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement on agriculture.

The changes which will be contained in a draft executive order, will implement the grant of zero duty on 41 information and communications technology (ICT) products beginning January 1, 2003.

“These products make up the first of the three tranches that will fulfill the Philippines commitment under the e-ASEAN framework agreement,” Roxas explained.

Roxas also said that this will provide support to the ICT sector by facilitating the entry to the country of ICT parts and components.

The zero duty on all 41 ICT products is expected to result in a foregone annual revenue of P39.5 million, Roxas said.

The draft EO will also implement the grant of zero duty on 79 products offerable under the ASEAN Integration System of Preferences (AISP), which requires that the 40 percent local content requirement comes solely from the preference-receiving country. The AISP rate shall apply only to imports from the preference receiving country.

The issuance of the EO will fulfill the Philippines commitment under the AISP to unilaterally extend tariff preferences to countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) on a voluntary and bilateral basis.

This will reduce the development gap between the ASEAN-6 and CLMV countries and at the same time allow local manufacturers to source raw materials from the latter at a lower cost, Roxas said.

Gov't to project RP as 'shopping capital' of Asia

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today approved the proposal of the Department of Tourism (DOT) projecting the Philippines as the shopping capital of Asia with Makati City as the shopping showcase.

The Chief Executive approved the proposal following the program presentation by Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon during the Cabinet Meeting this morning at the Social Hall of the Department of National Defense in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

The President said she approved Makati as the country's shopping showcase because “it is easy to secure the place from terrorists.”

In his presentation, Gordon said the program is designed to let the whole world know that the Philippines is the new shopping capital of Asia with its great malls that offer goods and services at competitive prices.

He said Hong Kong and Singapore used to be the bargain centers of Asia, but have now become too expensive.

Gordon also said the program is likewise aimed at attracting tour groups whose main interest is in shopping and to spur entrepreneurial and business activity where Filipinos can now sell their products to foreign visitors.

He told the President and members of the Cabinet that Makati was chosen as the shopping showcase from among other cities in the metropolis because “it is the Philippines’ premier business and financial center with state-of-the-art telecommunications facilities, high-rise buildings, modern road network, world-class malls and hotels, residential condominiums, restaurants and services.”

Gordon stressed that Makati is a well-planned urban center and relatively “blight-free” and will give a very good image of the Philippines.

He also cited other interesting amenities Makati can offer to both the Manila residents and tourists such as golf courses, museums, spas, entertainment centers, and its proximity to the airport as well as its accessibility to and from any point within the Metro Manila area.

According to Gordon, Makati is a “hub” and ideal jump-off point for leisure activities available in nearby areas such as Boracay, Subic, Tagaytay, Corregidor, Palawan, Cebu, Baguio and Banaue and Davao.

It can be recalled that the DOT and the city government of Makati under the leadership of Mayor Jejomar Binay, acting under the instructions of President Macapagal-Arroyo, organized the Makati Tourism Related Industries Congress (TRICON) on November 27, 2002 with 200 participants from the various sectors.

These sectors include the embassies and consulates, hotels/accommodation facilities, travel agencies/tour operators, Makati Tourism Foundation (Rustans, Rockwell, Shoe Mart, etc), Makati Jaycees, Ayala Land, media, other government agencies (Department of Trade and Industry, Department of the Interior and Local Government, and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority), business sector, the city government of Makati, and the DOT.

No water service interruption, Palace assures Metro Manila residents

Malacañang today assured residents of Metro Manila that despite the decision of the Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad) to return its concession to the government, there will be no disruption in the supply of water to Maynilad’s thousands of customers.

In a press briefing at Camp Aguinaldo this afternoon after the Cabinet Meeting, Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao said that under the contract the Maynilad signed with the government, the notice of termination will have to be decided by the International Appeals Committee within 60 to 90 days.

“So, we would like to assure everybody that there would certainly be no disruption at all in water services. Even the Maynilad people have assured that there would be no disruption until the contract is settled,” Tiglao said.

In a separate press briefing, Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon Datumanong also said that Metro Manilans being served by Maynilad have nothing to worry about. “Water services to them would continue as usual,” he said.

Datumanong said there is still the possibility that the kinks in the contract between the MWSI and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) could be resolved within the 90-day period.

Datumanong, who is also chairman of the MWSS board, said the MWSS has 30 days to respond to the notice of early termination filed by Maynilad.

He said that if there will be no compromise settlement with Maynila, water distribution will revert to MWSS. "The MWSS would continue operating without prejudice to the delivery of the service to the people," Datumanong said.

Datumanong admitted that the government was "quite surprised" when it received the notice of early termination from Maynilad "because the MWSS has always been working with Maynilad to promote the partnership, the privatization of the operations of the water system."

In fact, according to Datumanong, the MWSS has been quite patient with Maynilad by allowing the firm to continue not paying yet the concession fees now totaling to almost P5 billion because, he said, the MWSS wants the privatization of the water service to be successful.

GMA orders Cabinet officials to include economic inputs from Speaker de Venecia in gov't program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed some members of her Cabinet to hold a workshop on the microeconomic measures proposed by House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. aimed at strengthening the Philippine economy.

The President directed concerned Cabinet secretaries to conduct the workshop before the end of this year, so that the programs that would be incorporated in the current economic program of the government could be implemented.

According to Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao, the economic program that was presented by the resident economist in the House, Romy Neri, was quite similar to the program of the President.

"Essentially it entails really working on some of the details, some of the red tape, some of the very small but not exciting reforms," Tiglao said, citing as example the reduction of steps in securing permits or clearances from the Philippine Ports Authority, among others.

"Very routine things that are not quite big, but these will, little by little, develop the economy of the nation," Tiglao added.

Makati City as the center or the focus of tourism was also presented by Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, who said that the city could be the shopping capital of Asia for its cheap prices compared to those in other capitals of the world.

The President and the Cabinet also approved Secretary Gordon's "Visit Philippines 2003" program.

During a press briefing, Tiglao said the World Trade Organization (WTO) has tapped the Philippines as the visit country of the year, and Intramuros will be developed as a "history town."

"We will be developing a historical site where our history would be presented," Gordon said, adding that cultural presentations by the different regions will be offered both to domestic and foreign tourists.

The Cabinet meeting today was held at the Department of National Defense Social Hall in Camp Aguinaldo, the first ever to be held after the SONA of the President last July.

According to Tiglao, this will be the beginning of the holding of Cabinet meetings in different departments, "a chance for the President and her Cabinet to see the different offices of the line departments which are nerve centers of our government."

Tiglao said it will also be an opportunity for other government officials and employees to have a chance to see the President and the Cabinet as a team working together.

GMA won't interfere in Estrada's house arrest issue, Palace insists

Malacañang today clarified that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would not want to interfere in the reported snowballing move to allow a house arrest for her predecessor, former President Joseph Estrada, saying that this is a purely judicial matter.

“The matter Mr. Estrada’s house arrest or even a Christmas furlough cannot be discussed by the President’s executive branch in recognition of the separation of powers,” Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao said today in a press briefing at Camp Aguinaldo after the Cabinet Meeting.

Tiglao said that the Sandiganbayan is the only entity that could decide on whether to allow a house arrest for Estrada instead of being held at the Veterans Medical Center (VMC) in Quezon City.

“There is a law. If you are following the law, you cannot just change it by consensus. It is the Sandiganbayan which would have to rule that the former President could be moved to a house arrest,” Tiglao said.

He said that even if the President would want it, she could not meddle in the judicial branch since she represents the executive department.

Tiglao pointed out that Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Michael Defensor visited Estrada at the VMC on his own personal capacity, apparently because former San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada is a friend.

He said the visit was purely done on the initiative of Secretary Defensor and did not reflect the official stand of the President on the issue of house arrest.

“But you must remember that Mike Defensor was one of the firsts who filed the impeachment proceedings against Estrada,” Tiglao said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: December 10, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029042230/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec10.htm>

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GMA expresses admiration for expansion of call center, skills of Filipino staff

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday expressed admiration over the new 300-seater call center facility of the Ambergris Solutions Inc. at the Ortigas Center, visibly pleased with the skills of the customer information representatives in speaking several accents of the English language fluently.

The President, who attended Tuesday night the expansion ceremonies at the Ambergris office, particularly took interest on the skills of Sugar Castence, a new college graduate who took on the job of customer information representative and has become very good in articulating the different accents of American English.

"You have a very good Texan accent," the President told her after listening to a demonstration.

Ambergris Solutions chairman and chief executive officer John Suits, who led the President on a short tour of the facility, explained that the firm has made it a point that its customer service representatives are very skilled in English-speaking as their "clients feel more at ease when they hear familiar accents."

Suits noted that Ambergris has grown from 25 to 300 employees in its first year of operations.

A provider of offshore customer care solutions to United States-based clients in the utilities, information technology, travel and hospitality, telecommunications and financial service industries, Ambergris is expected to boost the Philippines' drive to become the world's premier call center location.

Call centers, most of whose clients are American and British companies, are becoming one of the country's fastest-growing industries.

The Philippines' abundant supply of American-accented English-speaking college graduates, who are among the world's most highly-trained, articulate and customer-oriented, is attracting heads of overseas companies aiming to cut costs and improve service.

According to the company background distributed to the media, Ambergris has invested heavily on a reliable and flexible technology platform, featuring the latest in customer relationship management technology. It has partnered with marketing services giant Harte Hanks Inc. to offer a full range of customer care solutions.

"Through our expertise and our facilities, we want to provide the market with the high-tech backbone and full service focus needed to effectively compete on a global scale," Ambergris director Javier Infante said.

The Philippines ranks second, next to India, among Asian countries in making a bid for the global call center market. Despite the economic slowdown, the call center sector has proven to be a success in the country, generating thousands of jobs as well as foreign currency revenue.

The Contact Center Association of the Philippines projects revenue from this sector to increase from \$173 million in 2002 to a whopping \$864 million in 2004.

At present, the Philippines has a capacity of less than 15,000 call center seats, but the number grows daily. With rapid investment growth in the sector and the entry of new players such as Ambergris, India's call center with over 300,000 seats could be equaled or even surpassed by the Philippines.

Singapore Defense chief assures GMA of support for regional coalition against terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Tony Tan Keng Yam of the Republic of Singapore today agreed that the Philippines and Singapore should widen and strengthen their intelligence cooperation to combat the terrorist menace strategically and globally.

"If we can move together, we can strengthen both our security and economic cooperation because the war against terrorism is another kind of war," the President told Tan during their 30-minute conversation held in Malacañang's Music Room this morning.

During the call, President informed Tan that the network of the international terrorists is now moving internationally and may be targeting Asia, particularly Singapore, as the next possible victim.

"The network is moving toward Southeast Asia so that's why we need to work together to prevent their possible attack," the President told Tan.

In response, Tan informed the President that Singapore is extending its support to the regional agreement initiated by the Philippines for unified efforts with Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Cambodia in the fight against terrorism.

"We believe this is a long and difficult war. We believe that no country today is immune to the threat of terrorism," Tan said.

Tan pledged to the President that the Singaporean government would provide more information to the Philippines with regards to the Jemayah Islamiyah.

He also inform the President that Singapore has intensified measures to prevent a terrorist attack in the country because the Singapore government strongly believes that the September 11, 2001 terror attack in the United States "is an attack on the whole civilized world."

"It's a serious and present danger to all of us. During my fruitful meeting with President Macapagal-Arroyo, we agreed to intensify our efforts in the area of information and intelligence," Tan said during an interview by members of the Foreign Correspondent Association of the Philippines and Malacañang reporters after the meeting.

Tan met earlier with Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes on anti-terrorism and security cooperation and offered intelligence-gathering help, including information on terror suspects arrested in Singapore.

He also revealed that the Singaporean government had agreed to the proposal of Secretary Reyes that the defense departments of the Philippines and Singapore conduct defense studies, particularly in the National Safety College in the Philippines and the Defense School in Singapore.

Tan arrived in the country last Monday (December 2) for a three-day visit.

GMA to spend Christmas in Baguio, focus on housing, jobs in 2003

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she will spend Christmas in Baguio City together with members of her family.

“Well, even before I was President, we used to spend a lot of time in Baguio. So I think we will do that again,” the President told members of the Malacañang Press Corps during a luncheon meeting at the Palace’s State Dining Room.

She also said she will concentrate her efforts in the New Year to providing housing and jobs to the people, particularly the poor.

The President recalled that when her three children were still babies, they used to go to Baguio and then go down to the beach. “So, probably, we’ll do the same,” she added.

Last year, the President and her family also celebrated Christmas in the City of Pines.

According to the President, when her parents, former President Diosdado Macapagal and former First Lady Evangelina Macapagal, were alive, they spent the Christmas holidays in nearby places like Taiwan and Hong Kong.

However, since her parents died, “we have not done that anymore,” she added.

The President also said that she is trying to work out some Christmas and New Year messages for the Filipino people.

“I don’t want them to think of next year as a year of sitting and waiting,” she said.

The President said she wants to take the opportunity of spending her efforts and time in the year 2003 by providing housing and jobs to the Filipino people.

“If you remember, I said that my number one priority for the next six months is small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and then the second one is that I want to attend to is housing,” she said.

The President also said that she was gratified that about 500,000 housing units will be built over the next year and a half.

On the administration’s job generation efforts, the President said SMEs are very labor intensive and they are very useful users of capital.

In this connection, the President said her government “ may expand the SME program (and) we will put in more job-generating programs.”

GMA announces gov’t internship program for the youth

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced a government internship program for the youth so that they can inculcate from their own experience, such things as family values, rule of law, peace, moral standards and governance.

The Chief Executive made this announcement during a luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps this afternoon at Malacañang’s State Dining Room.

“Since I am going to speak before the business sector on Friday (December 13), we will ask the business community if they could help to create jobs through internship,” she said.

The President said the internship program may be held for a minimum of three months and will start in the Office of the President.

She said that in 2001 she also announced an internship program for the youth but added that she wants “to make it bigger this time.”

The President said she is allocating P5 million for this year’s internship program for the youth under the Office of the President alone. “That should be OP. But it is a program where I am encouraging other departments as well to have,” she said.

According to the President, an executive order will be issued soon to make the program operational.

The President stressed that the EO is simple and it will be called the Youth’s Program. It will be composed of the internship program (government wide) to start in the Office of the President and other programs for the youth as maybe recommended by the National Youth Commission or the Office of the President.

The Youth’s Program will have Presidential Management Staff (PMS) Head Silvestre Afafe, Jr. as adviser.

The President said there is going to be a secretariat within the PMS that will implement the internship program, adding that the PMS will draft the implementing rules.

“In the OP, there are already so many agencies, so they can really spread out to the extent that the others will also participate. Some may be there as media aides to help you make your job easier,” the President told Malacañang reporters.

GMA presents awards to 12 Child-Friendly Towns, Cities

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presented awards to six towns and six cities for being child-friendly, protecting the children’s right to survival, development, protection and participation.

Alicia town in Isabela, which won for the third consecutive year this year, was also presented the Hall of Fame award during ceremonies held at Malacañang this afternoon for the Fourth Search for Child-Friendly Municipalities and Cities in the country.

The President presented a presidential citation and trophy to Alicia Mayor Napoleon S. Dy for being a Hall of Fame awardee and national winner for the First to Third-Class Municipalities category.

The President was assisted by Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina, Jr. and Executive Director Lina B. Laigo of the Council for the Welfare of Children in presenting the trophies, plaques of recognition and cash awards to the winners.

In the Highly-Urbanized Cities category, the national winner was Olongapo City. The first runner-up award went to Butuan City and the second runner-up winner was Baguio City.

Tuguegarao City was cited as national winner in the Component Cities category while Surigao City and Naga City were adjudged as first and second runners-up.

For the First to Third-Class Municipalities category, the national winner was Alicia. First runner-up was to Jordan in Guimaras and the second runner-up was Balagtas, Bulacan.

The national winner in the Fourth to Sixth-Class Municipalities category was Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur while the first runner-up was Calape, Bohol and the second runner-up Anao, Tarlac.

The child-friendly movement is a growing worldwide effort to operationalize the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It involves children themselves, families, communities, church groups and the government.

Launched in November 1998, the general objective of the search is to institutionalize a child-friendly environment in the promotion of the right of children to survival, development, protection and participation.

Specifically, it aims to:

- Give national recognition to municipalities and cities that are considered child-friendly;
- Encourage local government units (LGUs) to prioritize and address issues/concerns affecting the full realization of the rights of children;
- Heighten the awareness of LGUs on the rights of children; and,
- Monitor and evaluate the implementation of programs and services for children.

SC ruling on PIATCO case not a rebuff on GMA, says Palace

Malacañang today said the ruling by the Supreme Court calling for a cooling-off period of 30 days between the government and the Philippine International Air Terminals Co., Inc. (PIATCO) for them to resolve the PIATCO contracts was not a rebuff on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as projected by some sectors.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz said that all that the high court asked was for both parties to submit their respective legal positions within 30 days.

Cruz said that in response to a query from the lawyers of PIATCO, the Supreme Court said that within this 30-day period, the parties could talk to each other. "Like in all cases, while the case is being tried or heard by the court, the parties are free to talk to each other," he said.

According to Cruz, the high court will definitely decide on the merits of the case after the opposing parties file their respective memoranda within 30 days.

Cruz, however, insisted that the government has already taken the position that the five contracts on the construction of Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) involving PIATCO are null and void.

This was the position taken by the Office of the Solicitor General during the hearing at the Supreme Court last Tuesday, Cruz said.

Although the final say on the matter would still come from the Supreme Court, the executive branch is not going to implement the "illegal contracts" with PIATCO, Cruz said.

Cruz also brushed aside reports that it was the intervention of business tycoon Lucio Tan that prompted the government to declare the contracts with PIATCO as null and void, saying that Tan has no claim to the terminal project anymore.

He explained that the Asia's Emerging Dragons Corp. (AEDC), with Tan as a major incorporator, has already withdrawn its petition in court. "That means the claim of the AEDC is already foreclosed," Cruz said.

Secondly, according to Cruz, Tan, being the owner of the Philippine Airlines, cannot run an airport terminal because there will be a conflict of interest.

In a related development, Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao today confirmed that Secretary Gloria Tan-Climaco, who headed a task force that reviewed the contracts with PIATCO, has asked to be relieved of her full-time job as presidential adviser, which is a Cabinet post.

Tiglao said that the President has agreed to Tan-Climaco's request to be just named as presidential senior consultant, so that she can still be involved in the private sector.

Let's leave Erap house arrest issue to the Sandiganbayan, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the issue on the call for the house arrest of former President Joseph Ejercito Estrada should be left to the courts because "that's the rule of law."

"Well, I leave it up to the courts," the Chief Executive said in response to a question raised by a journalist during her regular luncheon meeting with the members of the Malacañang Press Corps at the Palace's State Dining room.

The President said that since the plunder cases of Estrada are now with the Sandiganbayan, it is this court that should decide on whether to grant house arrest to Estrada.

She also defended Chairman Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) on his recent visit to the Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMMC) where Estrada and his son, former San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada, are in detention.

"I don't think you can attribute ill motives to Mike. Because if you remember, Mike is the very, very first congressman to move for (Estrada's) impeachment," the President said.

The President recalled that when the "Spice Boys" were having lunch with her while she was still vice president, Defensor was already raising the impeachment issue against the former president.

"So Mike was the very first one. So I think therefore, whether or not we agree with what he does, I think we should respect that it is coming from somebody, who, in fact, has taken a moral stand very, very early in the previous administration," she said.

GMA welcomes charter change debates but says issue should not be tied with postponing polls

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today Congress' action on proposals to amend the Constitution should be allowed to take its course, reiterating her position that she is not against any debate on the issue.

She stressed, however, that the issue of charter change should not be tied with the issue of postponing the elections in 2004.

"I respect the sense of Congress," she told members of the Malacañang Press Corps during their regular luncheon meeting.

She recalled that during a meeting with various political parties recently, she made known her position that as far as constitutional change is concerned, "I am not against any discussion, I am not against a debate."

She said she even gave her contributions to the debate.

She said that for the parliamentary system to succeed, "we will need a law to strengthen political parties, we will need a law to strengthen mass movements."

On the other hand, she also said, for a federal system of government to succeed, there are prerequisites that must be in place. "A federal form of government is made up of entities that are economically and politically autonomous," she said.

She then said the worthiness of the various sides of the debate on proposals to amend the charter should not be distracted by tying it up with the 2004 elections.

In a press briefing later, Secretary Rigoberto Tiglao, Presidential Spokesman and Chief of Staff of the Office of the President, said: "There will be an election therefore in 2004. No force, no move, no action on anyone's part, legal or illegal, can stop the election in 2004."

Tiglao said the move for a charter change is a congressional initiative totally divorced from the question of election.

GMA creates Anti-Smuggling Investigation and Intelligence Center

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she had signed an Executive Order creating the Anti-Smuggling Investigation and Intelligence Center which is going to be headed by former Dangerous Drugs Board Executive Director Miguel Coronel.

The Chief Executive made the announcement during her regular luncheon meeting with the members of the Malacañang Press Corps at Malacañang's State Dining Room.

The President said that the Executive Order "will specially take care of the smuggling that goes on outside the Customs area because the Bureau of Customs jurisdiction is within the Customs area."

On vegetable smuggling, the President told the Malacañang reporters that Presidential Security Group Commander Brigadier General Hermogenes Esperon, Jr. will personally head the task force to address the smuggling of vegetables.

"Wherever they are coming from, that's part of his (Esperon's) job as task force head to trace," she stressed.

The President also said that she had already directed Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo to stop the Bureau of Plant Industry from issuing permits to import vegetables to protect the Benguet farmers.

She likewise said that she did not approve the proposed executive order to reduce vegetable tariffs.

Filipino deportees should be treated humanely, GMA tells RP envoy to U.S.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she has directed Philippine Ambassador to the United States Albert del Rosario to make sure that the 100 Filipinos expected to be deported to the Philippines within the next few days for illegally staying in the US "are treated humanely."

In her regular luncheon meeting with some members of the Malacañang Press Corp, the President said that the treatment after 63 Filipinos underwent when they were deported in June this year should not be repeated. On their trip back home those deported Filipinos were handcuffed.

"Precisely I protested against that treatment that time. So it will be much much more humane this time," the President said.

The new deportees, arrested in different parts of the US would be flown out of San Diego, California to Clark Field in Pampanga or the Subic Freeport in Zambales in the next eight days.

According to the Ambassador del Rosario, the deportees, four of them women, will be treated humanely and in a manner consistent with the dignity of each individual without compromising the security of the passengers and the aircraft.

He said that Consul Henry Bensurto will accompany the deportees on their flight home to ensure that they are treated properly.

No disruption in water service, GMA assures

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured that there will be no disruption in the supply of water in Metro Manila.

In her regular luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President stated: “The most important thing that I would like to convey is that the water service will continue uninterrupted.”

The President said the government is trying to work out something with the concessionaires on what could be done to ensure that the water service will be uninterrupted and that prices will remain as stable as possible.

Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon Datumanong, who is chairman of Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), said in a press briefing at Camp Aguinaldo yesterday, after meeting with the President there, that there is still the possibility that the kinks in the contract between Maynilad Water Services Inc. and the MWSS could be resolved within a 90-day period.

Datumanong said the MWSS has 30 days to respond to the notice of early termination filed by Maynilad.

He said that if there will be no compromise settlement with Maynilad, water distribution will revert back to the MWSS.

“The MWSS would continue operating without prejudice to the delivery of the service to the people,” Datumanong said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: December 11, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029212940/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec11.htm>

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- **NAPOLCOM special action center organized to act on citizens' complaint against rascal cops**
- **Cop linked to embassies' closure relieved**
- **Palace discounts military takeover, says country is stable**
- **Lina directs LGUs to conduct regular inspections of business firms**
- **GMA presents awards to LGUs**
- **House arrest issue not affecting nation's stability — Palace**

NAPOLCOM special action center organized to act on citizens' complaint against rascal cops

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. today announced the establishment of a special action center under the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) that would address the complaints of citizens against police rascals.

Lina, who made the announcement during an interview at Malacañang, said the move is in line with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's order to strengthen the police's response to private citizens' complaints against abusive men in uniform.

"Several hundreds of rascals in uniform have been relieved since President Macapagal-Arroyo took over. There will be no let-up and we will even heighten the campaign," Lina said.

Lina explained that under the set-up, a reaction team would be dispatched to the area where the complaint was made to investigate the alleged excesses of the police officer.

Lina said the NAPOLCOM would send the team to immediately arrest the alleged offender on the basis of "pre-charging investigation," while preventive and administrative suspension may soon follow, depending on the results of a thorough investigation.

Lina noted that under the law, there are six disciplining authorities as far as police rascals are concerned. These are the Mayor, the People's Law Enforcement Board, and Regional Director of the Philippine National Police, the PNP chief, Internal Affairs Service of the PNP and the NAPOLCOM.

Lina, however, said the NAPOLCOM emerges as the one that has a greater responsibility in making sure that the police act in accordance with the law.

"The buck stops with us as we are responsible for an immediate proper response," Lina said.

Cop linked to embassies' closure relieved

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. today said the Philippine National Police has relieved the police intelligence officer responsible for the closure of the embassies of Australia and Canada and the European Union office in the country.

Lina, in an interview at Malacañang, identified the officer as Police Superintendent George Gaddi of the Western Police District.

Lina said the relief is preliminary to the heavier disciplinary sanctions Gaddi may deserve after a thorough and complete investigation.

He said that while an investigation is still being undertaken, “preliminary reports point to his involvement.”

Lina also said the authorities are looking into the officer’s possible motives in coming out with intelligence reports that led to the temporary closure of the embassies in Makati, which is under the Southern Police District.

During a luncheon with Palace reporters last Wednesday, the President said she had ordered Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., chief of the PNP, to throw the book at the officer and find out his motives.

“He did harm to our country,” the President said, adding, “we cannot allow such a lapse to go unsanctioned.”

Palace discounts military takeover, says country is stable

Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye today discounted the possibility of a military takeover as he assured the nation that the country is stable.

“We have sufficient stability in the country,” Bunye said in a radio interview.

In an interview with Malacañang reporters, Bunye said it is still uncertain if Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. was quoted correctly when he said that the nation has to accept charter changes now or face the possibility of a military takeover.

Newspapers reported the Speaker as saying that unless the country shifts to a unicameral parliamentary system soon, the inability of its leaders to solve its problems and destructive politics might lead to an authoritarian rule.

Bunye noted that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is not against proposals to amend the Constitution per se but the issue of charter change should not be tied with postponing the presidential elections in 2004.

The Press Secretary also noted that during a recent meeting with various parties, the President made known her position that as far as constitutional change is concerned, “I am not against any discussion, I am not against a debate.”

Lina directs LGUs to conduct regular inspections of business firms

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. today ordered local government units, to be assisted by the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), to conduct regular inspections of factories, warehouses and other business establishments in their localities for fire hazards and compliance with safety standards.

In an interview with Palace reporters, Lina said that in his memorandum, the BFP would head the regular inspection since it can easily enter such establishments and check if the businesses are complying with safety standards.

Lina also said that mayors may also conduct their own inspections as they have “visitorial powers” to call on business establishments and check if such places comply with the conditions of their business permits.

“*Kailangang magtulongan tayo dito* (We need to help each other in this concern),” Lina said.

The issuance of the memorandum stemmed from the recent discovery of the biggest narcotics laboratory in Valenzuela City.

After a 35-minute blaze that razed a warehouse in that city, firefighters discovered suspicious chemicals and substances inside the establishment. The chemicals were later discovered to be methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu worth P2.2 billion.

GMA presents awards to LGUs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presented citations to this year's winners of the Sajid Bulig Presidential Award for Heroism, *Lupong Tagapamayapa* Incentives Awards and *Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran*.

The awarding ceremonies, held at the Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall, was also attended by Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. and local government officials.

The awardees for the Sajid Bulig Presidential Award for Heroism were (posthumous) Allan Hernaez, a fisherman, who lost his life after saving his 12-year-old friend from drowning last March 30 in Barangay Paypayad, Candon City, Ilocos Sur;

PO2 Allan Tica, who saved the lives of several people in two different incidents: first, in Barangay Sabaan, Bantay, Ilocos Sur wherein at the height of typhoon Feria last July 5, he successfully caused the transfer of people who were stranded on their rooftops to a safer place, unmindful of the danger to his life; and second, when he led the successful rescue of passengers of a motorized banca that capsized while navigating the Abra River near the Quirino bridge in Banaoang, Bantay last July 17;

And the 24 crewmembers of DADD's Fishing Corporation based in Lucena City, whose efforts resulted in the rescue of passenger of the *M/V Carmela* that figured in a sea tragedy last April 11 off the coast of Tayabas Bay between the boundaries of Pagbilao and Padre Burgos, Quezon and approximately 10 nautical miles from the Dalahican Fishing Port.

For Most Outstanding *Lupong Tagapamayapa* in Highly-Urbanized Cities, the winners were Barangay New Cabalan, Olongapo City (national awardee); Barangay Concepcion Uno, Marikina City (first runner-up); and Barangay San Vicente, Butuan City (second runner-up).

For Most Outstanding *Lupong Tagapamayapa* in Component Cities, the awardees were Barangay Talairon, Oroquieta City (national awardee); Barangay 40, Balatong, Laoag City (first runner-up); and Barangay Rosario, Santiago City (second runner-up).

The Most Outstanding *Lupong Tagapamayapa* in First to Third-Class Municipalities were Barangay Pico, La Trinidad, Benguet (national awardee); Barangay Silangan, San Mateo, Rizal (first runner-up); and Barangay Sto. Nino, Abuyog, Leyte (second runner-up).

For Most Outstanding *Lupong Tagapamayapa* in Fourth to Sixth-Class Municipalities, the winners were Barangay Nayon, Lamut, Ifugao (national awardee); Barangay Lambayong, Tampakan, South Cotabato; and Barangay Sta. Lucia, Aringay, La Union (second runner-up).

The *Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran* (for Panlalawigan category) were given to Bukidnon (national awardee), La Union (first runner-up) and Bohol (second runner-up); (for Panglungsod category, Highly Urbanized Cities Cluster) Bacolod City, Olongapo City and Davao City; (for Component Cities Cluster) Laoag City, Oroquieta City, and Roxas City; (for First to Third-Class Municipalities Cluster) Brooke's Point, Palawan, Agoo, La Union and Carmen, Bohol; (for Fourth to Sixth-Class Municipalities Cluster) Lanuza, Surigao del Sur, Kibawe, Bukidnon and Banga, Aklan; (for Inland Bodies of Water category-Lakes) Barracuda Lake, Coron, Palawan; Lake Maughan, Tiboli, South Cotabato and Lake Danao, Ormoc City; (Rivers) Matutinao River, Badian, Cebu, Bugang River, Pandan, Antique and Wangan River, Gonzaga, Cagayan.

Special awards were given to Marikina City and the municipality of San Juan.

Meanwhile, Olongapo City and Oroquieta City bagged the Cleanest Public Market Restrooms in Cities Category.

House arrest issue not affecting nation's stability — Palace

Malacañang today disagreed with the reported assessment of the business sector that the issue of house arrest of deposed President Joseph Ejercito Estrada is affecting the peace and order situation of the country.

“It is totally irrelevant to our political stability, which is well established,” Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao today said in a press briefing in Malacañang.

Tiglao, who is also Chief of Staff of the Office of the President, said that even in the last Pulse Asia survey, the concern about stability, peace and order, has moved downward.

Tiglao emphasized that the President is focusing on economic recovery. “The President is moving really towards two major centerpiece programs — housing and job generation,” he said.

He revealed that the President has started talking to two different groups on ways in which they could help out in pushing the administration’s job-generation program.

Saying it has not been finalized, Tiglao said the approach would be to ask the business sector, including the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), to commit to a certain level of employment, even for six months, to stimulate the economy.

“But these are still plans being finalized by the President and we hope this could be finalized by the end of the year,” Tiglao added.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2002). [The President’s Day: December 12, 2002]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029043249/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2002/dec12.htm>

The President's Day: January 1-15, 2003

The President's Day: January 18, 2003

18 JANUARY 2003

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President's radio address to the nation

Magandang araw po sa inyong lahat.

Nais kong gamitin ang pagkakataong ito upang ipaabot sa inyo ang aking matibay na pananalig sa sambayanang Pilipino.

Malaki ang aking tiwala sa kakayahan ng ating mga kababayan na lampasan ang anumang problemang kanilang hinaharap.

Ang kailangan lamang ay mabigyan ang Pilipino ng kapangyarihang gumawa ng akmang desisyon at mapagkalooban ng tama at sapat na *resources* tungo sa makabuluhang pakikilahok sa mga mithiin at programa ng pamahalaan.

Hayaan n'yo ring ulitin ko sa inyo na ang lahat ng ating mga gagawin mula ngayon ay *nonpartisan*, o walang kinikilingang partido o samahan.

Ang aking mga desisyon ay bunsod ng aking responsibilidad sa ating bayan at walang anumang bahid ng pulitika.

Buuin natin ang isang *government of national cooperation* upang wakasan ang ating pagkawatak-watak.

Gagawin nating mga nasa pamahalaan ang lahat para isulong ang ating bansa, pero kailangan ko ang inyong suporta at pakiki-isa.

Bilang patunay nang tapat na hangarin, inihayag ko kamakailan ang mga detalyadong plano ng ating mga gagawin sa susunod na labimpitong buwan. Ito ay nakatuon lalung-lalo na tungkol sa *micro-economic action agenda* na ngayon ay mas mapag-uukulan natin ng pansin dahil sa desisyon kong huwag nang tumakbo sa *2004 elections*.

Patuloy kong iisa-isahin ang ating mga programa sa mga darating na araw para mas mauunawaan nang lahat at tuloy malaman kung saan at papaano kayo maaaring tumulong o makinabang sa pagpapatupad nito.

Noong Huwebes ay binuksan ko ang Super Terminal sa Pier 15 ng South Harbor at doon ipinamahagi ko ang ating *Roads and Roll on-Roll off Ferry Terminal System*.

Ang proyektong ito ay inaasahang magpapababa sa presyo ng pagbibiyaheng cargo at pasahero mula sa Mindanao patungong Luzon.

Ang DBP ay naglaan na ng dalawampung bilyong piso (P20 B) para sa nasabing modernisasyon ng ating ferry system.. Hindi lamang nito pahuhusayin ang daloy ng kalakalan sa pagitan ng ating mga isla kundi hihimukin din ang mas maraming *private sector investment*.

Sa ngayon ay may dalawampu't-anim nang kompanya ang nagpahayag ng interes na lumahok sa programang ito.

As I've said before, Filipino business has great potential. We don't need to tap it; we just need to let it be. What we need is just to create the conditions for it to flourish.

Kaya naman, kailangan nating pabilisin ang implementasyon ng mga proyektong imprastruktura para magsilbi silang mahalagang daanan ng kalakalan.

Bukod sa *RORO facilities*, sisimulan na natin ang rehabilitasyon ng *railway system* sa Luzon sa tulong ng suportang pinansyal na manggagaling sa South Korea at Tsina.

Sa loob ng taong ito, aayusin natin ang mga linya ng tren na Balintawak-Malolos at Manila-Cabuyao. Ang Manila-Cabuyao ay tulong din ng Hapon.

Palalawakin natin ang North Expressway at pahahabain ang South Expressway hanggang umabot sa Batangas Port.

At magkakaroon din ng *interconnection* ang MRT at LRT para mabawasan ang siksikan sa trapiko sa Kamaynilaan.

Sa anibersaryo ng EDSA Dos sa darating na Lunes, ihahayag ko naman kung papaano natin titiyaking magiging malinis at maayos ang eleksiyon sa susunod na taon.

Gagawin natin itong *computerized* mula *counting* hanggang *tabulation* para siguruhing bawâ't boto ng ating mga kababayan ay mabibilang nang tama.

Ang EDSA Dos ay nagluklok sa akin bilang Pangulo dahil sa malaking galit ng mga mamamayan sa nagaganap noong katiwalian.

Bilang pagkilala sa katotohanang ito, maglulunsad tayo ng isang kilusan laban sa *corruption* na mangangailangan ng pakikilahok ng sambayanan. Inuulit ko na matibay ang aking pananalig sa ating mga kababayan.

Malaki ang aking tiwala na, sa ating pagkakaisa at pagtutulungan, malalampasan natin ang anumang problema, kagaya nang ating ginawa sa EDSA. Kaya, hinihiling kong muli sa lahat na samahan ninyo ako at tulungan upang makamit ang ating pangarap na magandang bukas.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay ang Pilipino.

GMA says polls in 2004 to be computerized from counting to tabulation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she would see to it that the 2004 presidential and local elections would be computerized from counting to tabulation to insure that every vote will be counted correctly.

In a radio message, the President said she would announce her other plans to assure a clean and honest 2004 polls on Monday during the EDSA Dos anniversary.

The President also said that in recognition of the fact that EDSA Dos was a showing of the people's anger against corruption, she would be launching during the second anniversary a movement against corruption.

She said the movement would need the participation of the whole nation. “Inuulit ko na matibay ang aking pananalig sa ating mga kababayan (I reiterate my strong belief in our countrymen),” the President said.

“Ang kailangan lamang ay mabigyan ang Pilipino ng kapangyarihang gumawa ng akmang desisyon at mapagkalooban ng tama at sapat na resources tungo sa makabuluhang pakikilahok sa mga mithiin at programa ng pamahalaan (What is needed is to give every Filipino the power to make decisions for themselves and the right and enough resources so that they can meaningfully participate in the vision and programs of the government),” the President pointed out.

The President also reiterated that from hereon she would be non-partisan. “Ang aking mga desisyon ay bunsod ng aking responsibilidad sa ating bayan at walang anumang bahid ng pulitika (All my decisions would be borne out of my responsibility to the nation and not because of politics),” she said.

The President called on the people to join her in forming a government of national cooperation and to put an end to disunity.

GMA says she'll update people on all her programs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she would keep the nation informed on all her programs so that they would know where they can be of help or what will benefit them.

In a radio message, the President said her programs in the next 17 months would be focused on the micro-economic action agenda.

“Noong Huwebes ay binuksan ko ang Super Terminal sa Pier 15 ng South Harbor at doon ipinamahagi ko ang ating Roads and Roll on-Roll off Ferry Terminal System (Last Thursday I inaugurated the Super Terminal at Pier 15 of the South Harbor and there I announced our Roads and Roll on-Roll off Ferry Terminal System),” the President said.

The project, according to the President, would bring down the costs of cargo and passenger handling and transporting from Mindanao to Luzon. She said the Development Bank of the Philippines has put aside P20 billion for the modernization of the ferry system.

“Hindi lamang nito pahuhusayin ang daloy ng kalakalan sa pagitan ng ating mga isla kundi hihimukin din and mas maraming private sector investment (This would not only improve investment flow among the islands but also encourage more private sector investment),” the President said.

The President added that at present 26 companies have signified their interest in joining the program.

“As I've said before, Filipino business has great potential. We don't need to tap it; we just need to let it be. What we need is just to create the conditions for it to flourish,” the President said.

The President pointed out that there is a need to speed up the implementation of infrastructure projects to spruce up economic activities in the countryside.

The President also announced that the rehabilitation of the railway system in Luzon would soon be started. This includes the railways of Balintawak-Malolos and Manila-Cabuyao.

The North Expressway will be widened and the South Expressway will reach up to the Batangas Port. The MRT and LRT railways will also be interconnected to decongest traffic in the metropolis.

Statement by Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye

The President remains focused on growing the economy, stamping out corruption, pursuing electoral reforms and healing the nation

Her expression of preference for the constitutional convention as a mode for effecting charter change is by no means inconsistent with her declaration namely: that she is not running in 2004 and in fact elections would be held as scheduled in 2004.

Math and Science will be upgraded — GMA

San Fernando, Pampanga — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she would upgrade math and science teaching in basic education to prepare the youth to be the next generation knowledge workers.

“That’s why we have added more hours to the teaching of mathematics, the President said in a speech after her conferment of the degree of Doctor of Humanities, honoris causa, by the University of the Assumption of San Fernando, Pampanga.

The President has instructed Secretary Edilberto de Jesus of the Department of Education to add more laboratory hours to science.

The President added that the English language education be also upgraded to attract teachers to teach the subject.

The President recalled that last year, for the first time in the history of the Philippine government, she included public school teachers, the policemen and soldiers in the government employees’ extra Christmas bonus.

The Chief Executive said that these government workforce were not included because of the 1.2 million numbers of government employees, half a million are teachers, and a hundred thousand of them are soldiers.

“And they would say that if you include them in the Christmas bonus, we will have a very big financial problem,” the President explained.

However, the President said she felt that the molders of the minds and the protectors of peace should not be excluded in such benefits.

The President also disclosed that only yesterday, the Department of Education entered into an agreement with government financial institutions to buy the teachers’ debts so that they will be able to pay lower interest rates in their never ending loans.

The President also instructed Secretary de Jesus to institute school feeding programs for primary schools in the poorest school districts to increase the chances of Filipino children finishing school.

She asked Presidential Assistant for Education Mona Valisno to make sure that these instructions are carried out.

“This is part of what I said in my first State of the Nation’s Address that we should minimize the cost of going to school,” the President said.

This was started, the President pointed out, when the collection of miscellaneous fees were stopped in public schools on enrollment day.

“And we continue this also by making sure that there is a school building in every barangay by 2004, when I leave my office,” the President said.

The conferment of the degree of Doctor of Humanities, honoris causa, was a recognition by the University of Assumption of the countless achievements of the President to improve the quality of human life for the Filipino in general, and of the Kapampangan in particular.

The conferment ceremony was the climax of a year-long celebration commemorating the Ruby Jubilee or 40th year of the founding of the University.

The first ever awardee of the Doctor of Humanities, honoris causa, was the late President Diosdado Macapagal. His daughter, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was only the second.

GMA to launch educational campaign on responsible parenthood

San Fernando, Pampanga — Reiterating that her population policy is based on the Christian and Constitutional principle of responsible parenthood, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said she is launching an educational campaign on responsible parenthood by next month.

The campaign would encourage couples towards birth spacing and make them aware that there are modern technologies that are consistent with Christian formation, the President said.

In a speech after her conferment of the degree of Doctor of Humanities, honoris causa, by the University of the Assumption in San Fernando, Pampanga, the President said that birth spacing is Christian and responsible.

“We will push this all the way until I pass on the policy, hopefully, to my successor,” the President said.

It can be recalled that the President said on July 26, last year, that her administration is pushing an “aggressive natural population plan” in an effort to address the growing population in the country.

The President said that the target of her administration is to bring up the use of the natural method by 20 percent through an aggressive education campaign for couples.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, on the other hand, said that it important to get in touch with couples and educate them, “sp that they may know essentially what might be good for them.”

Mt. Pinatubo victims hail GMA’s housing program

SAN FERNANDO CITY, Pampanga — Local government officials of Pampanga and hundreds of residents here hailed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for her sincere efforts to provide free house and lot units to all the victims of Mt. Pinatubo eruption.

The President visited the province of Pampanga today to distribute the 640 Certificates of Housing Allocation and 118 Certificates of Market Stalls Award to the residence of the Bulaon Resettlement Site.

The President arrived here at exactly 1:30 this afternoon and she received a warm welcome from the residents. They thanked her for the beautiful and spacious housing units that were built for them for free by the 51st Engineering Brigade of the Philippine Army.

Earlier, the President toured and inspected some of the housing units and the newly constructed market facilities that will provide settlers there resettlement-based livelihood opportunities.

She then personally distributed the Certificates of Housing Allocation and Certificates of Market Stalls Award to the beneficiaries at the newly built Resettlement Site.

Some 323 market stalls were built but for the meantime only 118 Certificates of Market Stalls were awarded by the President during her short visit here. The Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) schedules the awarding of the remaining 205 market stalls in the next few days.

Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, HUDCC Secretary Michael Defensor, Pampanga Governor Lito Lapid, Bacolor Mayor Romeo Dungca, Jr., Mabalacat Mayor Marino Morales, President of the Pampanga Mayors League and other local officials witnessed the distribution of certificates.

The President also witnessed the turnover of Bulaon Water System to San Fernando Water District, the awarding of lot of HUDCC-PMO (formerly Mt. Pinatubo Commission) to Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for the construction of the Diosdado Macapagal Technical School inside the resettlement site, and the awarding of P5,000 checks to 37 resident-beneficiaries under the HUDCC-PMO Balik Barangay Program.

Bulaon Resettlement Project was initiated in 1994 by the defunct Mt. Pinatubo Commission and the Provincial Government of Pampanga.

The community was built on a 79.9 hectare lot purchased by the MPC amounting P32 million and constructed the 4,049 housing units there.

The beneficiaries are from the municipalities of Bacolor, Minalin and San Fernando, who were directly affected by Mt. Pinatubo eruption and lahar flows.

In early 2002, the additional housing units were constructed at the Bulaon Resettlement Site by the Engineering Brigade of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to accommodate other victims cramped in evacuation centers particularly in Mexico, Pampanga.

Majority of the beneficiaries of the 640 housing units came from barangays Cabalantian, Cabambangan, San Antonio, Cabetican, San Vicente, Concepcion, Dolores, Duat, Maliwalu, Parulog and Balas of Bacolor.

GMA earmarks P5 billion for anti-poverty campaign

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the launching of a P5-billion fund that would finance *Kabalikat Laban Sa Kahirapan* (Kalahi) for the next five years.

The President made the announcement during her keynote speech during the sectoral council meeting of the National Anti-Poverty Commission at the Rizal Park Open Air Auditorium.

The Kalahi program, an anti-poverty initiative of the President, assists the government in strengthening the capability of local government units (LGUs) to design, implement, and manage development activities. Such activities may include basic infrastructure like new or rehabilitated roads and bridges, barangay schools and clinics, and water supply and sanitation facilities.

“I am hereby announcing the launching of a P5 billion peso fund that will finance Kalahi for the next 5 years,” the President said.

The President said that this month, the government would be launching projects in 11 towns in 11 regions. Next week, she said she would be in Davao provinces to launch Kalahi projects.

She noted that in March, the government would be launching projects in 20 towns in the different regions. “Tuloy-tuloy ito dahil yung pondong 5 billion ay para sa limang taon (These projects would continue because the P5 billion fund is for five years),” she added.

The President said she wants the Kalahi project to be part of her legacy to the next administration. “Ako ang nagtanim, ang susunod na Pangulo ang mag-aani nitong mga programang ito (I planted the seeds but the next President would be the one who will reap the benefits),” she said.

The Chief Executive stressed that this is the attribute of a democracy.

She also noted that she has repeatedly said that she is not so ambitious as to want to become a great president. “I just want to be a good president.”

GMA announces release of P700 M coco levy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that on Monday, on the 2nd anniversary of Edsa 2, a check of P700 million from the coconut levy fund would be released.

The President made the announcement during the sectoral council of the National Anti-Poverty Commission at the Rizal Park Open air Auditorium.

“I hereby announce that this coming Monday, on the second anniversary of Edsa 2, a check of P700 million from the coconut levy fund would be released,” she said to the applause of the crowd.

The President’s announcement is a fulfillment of her first State of the Nation Address in 2001 that she will not stop efforts until the coconut farmers benefit from the coco levy fund.

“Hindi tayo hihinto habang hindi nakikinabang ang magniniyog sa Coco Levy Fund,” she said.

In her first SONA, the President said the government would be able to give more assistance to the coconut farmers once the case of the coconut levy fund is resolved.

“Kapag naresolba ito, magagamit ang pondo para sa modernisasyon ng mga niyugan. Pinawalang bisa ko ang kautusan sa Coco Levy mula sa dating administrasyon upang hindi madehado ang magsasaka (If the case is resolved, we would be able to use the funds for the modernization of the coconut industry),” the President has said.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: January 18, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20091017080251/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/jan18.htm>

The President's Day: January 19, 2003

19 JANUARY 2003

- **BSP notes steady growth in commercial bank lending**

BSP notes steady growth in commercial bank lending

Improvement in loans in vital economic sectors has spawned the steady growth of the volume of outstanding loans of commercial banks (KB) for the third straight month as of end-November 2002.

A report from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said the continued increase in KB lending was noted in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector, which grew by 27.1 percent, year-on-year; community, social and personal services, 11.2 percent; and financial institutions, real estate and business services, 9.3 percent.

The BSP said bank credits to the wholesale and retail trade sector and to the utilities (electricity, gas and water) sector also registered modest annual growth rates of 0.2 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively.

Altogether, these sectors accounted for about two-thirds of the total KB outstanding loans during the period in review.

Lending to manufacturing, however, continued to contract by 7.1 percent in November. Spare capacity in manufacturing could explain the weak lending activity to the sector.

The BSP said KB lending rose by 1.4 percent year-on-year to reach P1.43 trillion during the same period.

Bank lending in November last year also went up slightly compared to the 1.1-percent year-on-year growth registered in October 2002.

On a monthly basis, the growth in KB loans was faster at 0.6 percent compared to 0.3 percent in the previous month.

The modest growth in bank lending has been accompanied by some improvement in the asset quality of banks as the ratio of banks' non-performing loans (NPL) to the total loans outstanding declined to 16.36 percent as of October 2002 from 16.44 percent in the previous month.

The BSP noted that the recent enactment of the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) Act of 2002 is expected to hasten the disposition of non-performing assets of the banking system and invigorate bank lending activity.

There are increasing signs of stronger demand for goods and services as evident in the rise of passenger car sales by 2.7 percent in November, an encouraging turnaround from the 17.4-percent year-on-year decline in October.

Similarly, power consumption rose significantly by 6.4 percent in November compared to the 0.9 percent rise in the previous month.

Monetary authorities see a generally manageable inflation outlook despite foreseeable cost-side pressures emanating from the El Niño weather disturbance and volatility in world oil prices.

In addition, uncertainties regarding the strength of global economic recovery and the risks posed by geopolitical developments remained, making domestic demand conditions, including export growth, quite challenging in the near term.

But the BSP said it would ensure that monetary conditions supportive of non-inflationary growth would continue to be in place.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: January 19, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514035734/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/jan19.htm>

The President's Day: January 20, 2003

20 JANUARY 2003

- **GMA calls for continued support for economic, reform projects**
- **Braganza sworn in as new Press Secretary**
- **GMA's concern is that 2004 election should not be affected by charter change, says Bunye**
- **GMA calls on Filipino people to rally behind her**
- **GMA okays release of P2.5 billion to ensure clean and honest polls in 2004**
- **GMA declares people's war against graft, corruption**
- **GMA gets support of civil society in war against grafters, corrupt officials**

GMA calls for continued support for economic, reform projects

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today joined Malacañang employees, just as she did almost two year ago, during flag-raising rites in front of the Kalayaan (Freedom) Hall and thanked them for their support, particularly in bringing the government closer to the people.

Just as she did on January 21, 2001, she asked for their continued cooperation and support for the programs she will pursue more vigorously in her final 18 months in office.

Officials and employees of the different bureaus and offices under the Office of the President (OP) and Office of the Press Secretary (OPS), as well as the Presidential Security Group (PSG) were present during the flag ceremony.

"Thank you for your support and cooperation," the President said in her brief remarks after the raising of the Philippines colors.

Last Dec. 30, the 106th anniversary of the martyrdom of National Hero Dr. Jose P. Rizal, the President announced she would no longer seek the presidency in 2004, vowing to focus on improving the economy and on implementing her reform agenda until her term ends.

Accompanying the President at the ceremonies were First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo and other government officials.

After the ceremonies, the President administered the oath of office to new Press Secretary Hernani Braganza, Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan and Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye.

At noon today, the President will attend a Mass at the Edsa Shrine with other key players in the Edsa 2 People Power Revolution.

The President is expected to make some important announcements about her eight-point reform agenda during the Edsa Shrine event.

The President earlier announced that on the occasion of the second anniversary of Edsa 2, a check of P700 million from the coconut levy fund would be released to the coconut industry.

The President's announcement is a fulfillment of her first State of the Nation Address in 2001 that she will not stop efforts until the coconut farmers benefit from the coco levy fund. "*Hindi tayo hihinto habang hindi nakikinabang ang magniniyog sa Coco Levy Fund,*" she said.

The President has also announced the launching of a P5-billion fund that would finance *Kabalikat Laban Sa Kahirapan* (Kalahi) for the next five years.

The Kalahi program, an anti-poverty initiative of the President, assists the government in strengthening the capability of local government units (LGUs) to design, implement, and manage development activities. Such activities may include basic infrastructure like new or rehabilitated roads and bridges, barangay schools and clinics, and water supply and sanitation facilities.

This month alone, the government would be launching projects in 11 towns in 11 regions. Next week, the President said she would be in the Davao provinces to launch Kalahi projects.

She noted that in March, the government would be launching projects in 20 towns in the different regions. "*Tuloy-tuloy ito dahil yung pondong 5 billion ay para sa limang taon* (These projects would continue because the P5-billion fund is for five years)," she added.

The President said she wants the Kalahi project to be part of her legacy to the next administration. "*Ako ang nagtanim, ang susunod na Pangulo ang mag-aani nitong mga programang ito* (I planted the seeds but the next President would be the one who will reap the benefits)," she said.

The Chief Executive stressed that this is the attribute of a democracy.

She also noted that she has repeatedly said that she is not so ambitious as to want to become a great president. "I just want to be a good president."

Braganza sworn in as new Press Secretary

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today swore into office new Press Secretary Hernani Braganza in simple ceremonies right after leading the flag ceremony at the Kalayaan Hall in Malacanang.

Secretary Braganza would be taking over the Press portfolio from Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, who also took his oath as Presidential Spokesman during the rites.

Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan was also sworn in as Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform, which was vacated by Braganza.

In an interview after the ceremonies, Braganza assured that the OPS under his watch would be pro-active, transparent and accessible to the members of the media.

He was on his second term as congressman of the first district of Pangasinan when he was called upon by the President to serve in the national government and appointed Secretary of Agrarian Reform on February 5, 2001.

He began his political career in 1988 when he was elected municipal councilor of Alaminos, Pangasinan. He first ran for a seat in Congress in 1995.

During his first term, he was Vice Chairman of the House Committee on Youth and Sports as well as member of the Committees on Appropriations, Ecology, Labor and Employment, Trade and Industry, Women, Public Order and Security, Tourism, Special Committee on Law Enforcement and Special Committee on Reforestation.

From 1994 to 1995, Braganza was consultant for Political Affairs at the Office of Pangasinan Vice-Governor Ranjit Shahani. He was district coordinator of the Lakas-NUCD-UMDP party.

Braganza took up a Bachelor of Arts course at the De La Salle University where he was President of its Student Council.

An active student leader, Braganza founded the La Salle Students Democratic Alliance as well as the Sambisig Party in 1983.

He was president of the United Students for an Assimilated Philippines in DLSU in 1982.

In 1983, he became the National Chairman of the National Union of Students of the Philippines.

He was born on August 7, 1964 in Quezon City.

GMA's concern is that 2004 election should not be affected by charter change, says Bunye

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has not had a change of heart and as a matter of fact, has been very consistent on the issue of amending the Constitution, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said today.

In a briefing this morning at the Palace, Bunye said the President has been very consistent as far as the charter change issue is concerned.

"You will note that she said her only concern is that the elections in 2004 should not be affected by any discussions on charter change, so her expression of preference for constitutional convention is very much consistent with this," Bunye said.

Bunye noted that the election of the delegates to the constitutional convention is proposed to coincide with the 2004 elections. "So in other words, there would be elections in 2004 and that is consistent with the previous declaration of the President," Bunye added.

When asked to comment on the view of the Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. that it is better to have a constituent assembly as the mode for charter change, Bunye stressed that it is up to the legislature to resolve the matter.

"It's very difficult really to push one mode of amending the Constitution without the agreement of the other party. In this particular case, there is a divergence of opinion between the House of Representatives and the Senate and unless they come into an agreement as to the mode, then we might not even have a charter change at all. I don't think it's logical to assume that the President would get involved in any further discussion on this matter," Bunye said.

The President has said that a constitutional convention would be the least divisive way of bringing about fundamental changes in the political system and that "it is better to have a constitutional convention because I don't want my intention to be suspect."

She said the members of the constitutional convention that would consider changes in the charter may be elected in 2004.

"Considering the divisiveness in our country, perhaps the constitutional convention will be the least divisive way of bringing about fundamental changes in the political system," the President told the Japanese newsmen during an interview last week.

The President has maintained that she is not against any discussion or debate on proposals to amend the Constitution.

She has also declared that the issue of charter change should not be tied with the issue of postponing the 2004 elections.

The President said that during the last 18 months of her presidency, she will be focusing on the economy, healing the deep divisions within society and working for clean and honest elections in 2004.

She has also set down an eight-point work program that she will pursue with greater vigor during the next 18 months:

1. To strengthen small and medium enterprises;
2. Jumpstart housing;
3. Reduce cargo costs from Mindanao to Luzon;
4. Decongest Metro Manila;
5. Mark up the contributions of the Presidential Commission on Good Government to the fiscal resources;
6. Make Makati a specific urban tourist destination and the reclamation area on Roxas Boulevard as a tourism complex or the new Nayong Pilipino.
7. Stimulate private investment in agriculture; and
8. Address the deficit problem through both administrative and legislative measures.

GMA calls on Filipino people to rally behind her

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the Filipino people to rally behind her, saying that there will be no retreat in her solemn vow to be apolitical during the last one and a half years of her administration.

In her remarks at the second anniversary of EDSA II at the EDSA Shrine in Mandaluyong City, the President said that she had made the decision not to seek the presidency in next year's elections, and there will no turning back.

"For my part, I have made the sacrifice, I have sounded the advance—and there shall be no retreat," the President said.

The President also lamented that some of her critics have remain unconvinced that she is shedding off all political ambitions and would now focus all her attention to healing the nation and pushing the country's economic growth.

"I leave them to their self-imposed and self-serving ignorance. They can go on sounding the retreat—back to the vested interests that pay their way, back to the corruption that is for them the only way," the President said, referring to her incorrigible detractors.

She said that she had realized that effective reform boiled down to fighting entrenched vested interests "that have stood in the way of national progress and prosperity."

The President said that these vested interests have continued to block the way to better a standard of living for the vast majority rather than just the small elite.

According to the President, when she assumed the presidency it was a time when the nation and the world were facing a lot of challenges.

"But I was undaunted by the challenges because I know that our countrymen, including those at EDSA II, were prepared to support me in my efforts to speed up the country's development," the President said in Pilipino.

The President then renewed her call for unity among the Filipino people so that the country can move forward.

"Huwag na nating hintayin pa na maiwanan na naman tayo ng mundo. Ubos na ang oras natin (We should not wait for the other countries to overtake us again. We don't have the luxury of time)," the President said.

GMA okays release of P2.5 billion to ensure clean and honest polls in 2004

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the people's real choices must be ensured in the elections in 2004 as she announced the availability of P2.5 billion to computerize the quick and accurate counting and tabulation of votes in next year's polls.

"We must protect the votes of those who run on the strength of their public service rather than on the force of their private wealth," the President said after a Mass that commemorated the second anniversary of EDSA 2 at the Lady of Peace Church at the EDSA Shrine in Mandaluyong City.

In announcing last Dec. 30, 2002 that she would not run in next year's presidential elections, the President said she would concentrate on three main goals: healing the nation of the divisiveness caused by partisan politics; speeding up the country's economic development; and ensuring an honest, peaceful and orderly election in 2004.

The President pointed out that the computerized counting and tabulation of votes in 2004 will not only spare the teachers from tedious manual counting and the pressures of partisan politics but will also make sure that the votes will be counted correctly.

"High tech votes – this is the key for change," the President said.

The President said she intends to leave as her legacy to the nation the certainty that every Filipino will see that his vote is counted.

But the President said that although she will be out of the 2004 presidential derby, she is not a goner as some sectors would think. "Far from it," she said.

"A President without the baggage of reelection can move faster, hit harder and work to greater effect," she explained.

The President said her sole interest in the 2004 elections is to assure that it will take place and that it will be "utterly clean."

GMA declares people's war against graft, corruption

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today declared a non-nonsense people's war against graft and corruption, as she placed the full resources of government and enjoined the citizenry to get involved in the fight.

"There can be no exceptions whether made out of fear or favor, or because of family and business connections" in stopping graft and corruption that have victimized the people for so long, the President said in her speech during rites marking People Power II at the EDSA Shrine today.

She said it was imperative "to mobilize the real victims of corruption – the general public" who bear the brunt of the social malady.

"The ordinary Filipino is in the best position to complain" because corruption has spawned the deterioration of their standard of living, she added.

The President thus called for "a national draft of all good men and women who want to make a difference in your lives and in our country" by working closely with the government in exposing graft and corrupt practices committed by public officials and employees.

She asked the "idealistic youth and the silent majority to be our eyes and ears" in stopping graft and corrupt practices.

She ordered the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) to receive reports and follow these through until the perpetrators are put behind the bars of justice.

She also announced that she had doubled the budget of the PAGC so that it could put up an investigative unit to undertake intensive lifestyle checks on public officials. This would link the government and the people in the anti-graft thrust.

As the Chief Executive urged lawyers to volunteer their services to the Ombudsman and the Department of Justice to help expose fraud and prosecute errant public servants, she also called on Congress to pass the bill letting the Ombudsman get the help of private lawyers for free.

She ordered the Department of the Budget and Management (DBM) to allot P35 million for the Ombudsman to recruit 50 lawyers for its investigation and prosecution work.

Similar funds would also be provided to increase troop complement and to acquire state-of-the-art weaponry and information technology systems in the government's anti-graft drive.

The President likewise asked the Ombudsman to make available to the public the statements of assets and liabilities of all public officials, including presidential advisers, and to "pro-actively observe government procurement involving large amounts."

In another directive, the President ordered the DBM to also provide P700 million to step up the modernization of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), particularly for its information and communication technology department that had been able to track down tax evaders.

She cited the BIR and the Bureau of Customs for "quietly working" and starting to be showcases in the fight against graft and corruption.

The BIR, for one, was able to make major companies to agree to pay an aggregate of over P3 billion after a tax investigation of an arrested customs official.

The President also ordered the abolition of the bonded trading warehouse system, after crackdowns resulted in the closure of more than 300 customs bonded warehouses that have become notorious for smuggling.

"In due time, you will see more results," she stressed.

She also called on Congress "to create the National Authority for Revenue Administration, changing the BIR from a populous and ponderous bureaucracy to a lean and mean corruption fighting machine."

She said she launched the anti-corruption campaign "to raise the moral standards in politics and the economy."

"Corruption is the worst enemy of progress and social justice because it robs the state of the resources to prosecute the war against poverty," she added.

GMA gets support of civil society in war against grafters, corrupt officials

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today received cheers and an almost one minute round of applause from representatives of civil society which noted the administration's effort in seriously waging a war against graft and corruption.

The applause came after the President reported that the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission and the newly created Anti-Smuggling Task Force had major accomplishments in their campaign to go after tax evaders and smuggling syndicates.

In her speech during rites marking the second anniversary of People Power II at the EDSA Shrine, she admitted that she became a President because of EDSA II, particularly in the midst of a national outcry against corruption.

The President got a total of nine rounds of applause.

After her speech, the President administered the oath of office of the newly elected officers and members of EDSA People Power Commission

Among the officers who took their oath were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo as chairperson, former Presidential Management Staff chief Victoria Garchitorena as co-chairperson, Rafael Lopa as executive director, and members Alexander Magno, Guillermo Luz, Regina Jimenez-David, Danilo Songco, Ricardo Samaniego, Loreta Atienza-Lina and Atty. Gavino Mapando.

Meanwhile, in accepting the challenge of the President, members of the civil society vowed to participate in achieving the goals of her remaining 18-month reform agenda.

In a letter of support distributed to media, the civil society from Kilusan 12.30 has promised to give their “full support to the computerization of the electoral process.”

The Kilusan 12.30 said they would undertake all necessary and legitimate actions to pressure the Commission on Elections to speed up the move in the coming months.

“Simultaneous with this, Kilusan 12.30 will lobby relentlessly for the enactment of the law on absentee voting. We will closely monitor the developments in the release and proper utilization of the coco levy fund and the assets of the Marcos ill-gotten wealth,” the group said.

Kilusan 12.30 has set up four working committees to address the issues of affordable medicine, decent housing, lifestyle audits of government officials and the charter change through a Constitutional Convention.

The group would also assist the government in its campaign for asset reform in urban and regional settings, in tapping small and medium enterprises, microfinancing, enactment of the NARA bill and voter’s education.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: January 20, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514035745/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/jan20.htm>

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Food security tops GMA's accomplishments since 2001

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has released a check of P700 million from the coco levy fund that would benefit some of the 3.5 million coconut farmers and farm workers nationwide.

The check was released to UCPB Finance and Development Corporation (UFDC) Chairman Noel Cabrera at the EDSA Shrine Monday during the rites commemorating the 2nd anniversary of People Power II.

One of those who witnessed the check turnover was Presidential Adviser and Special Resource Person to the UFDC Board Secretary Dodi Limcaoco.

Also on the UFDC Board are Bayombong, Nueva Viscaya Bishop Ramon Villena and two representatives from major farmers' organizations.

The check represents the first significant amount released for the benefit of the coconut farmers and farm workers from the accrued interests of the coconut levy fund. The levy was collected from the farmers over thirty years ago.

This first major release from the coco levy fund is a major milestone in President Macapagal-Arroyo's pro-poor and poverty alleviation reform agenda.

The levy has been an issue spanning five Philippine Presidents but major strides were made only during the Macapagal-Arroyo presidency.

More benefits from the levy are expected soon after the Sandiganbayan ruling that says the fund is public in nature. The sale of the 27% uncontested levy shares in San Miguel Corporation, now estimated in the billions, is also expected to further benefit coconut farmers and farm workers.

The P700 million that has been released will directly benefit an estimated 164,000 cocount farmers or their wives in programs and projects identified by the UFDC.

An estimated 18,000 wives of coconut farmers would will be provided with 'Grameen-type' micro-finance loans for livelihood projects.

About 60,000 farmers will also benefit from increased income because of a 'farm diversification' program, which will result in increased prices for their copra and livestock.

At least 56,000 farmers will get additional income since they can sell their copra directly to oil mills cutting off traders and middle men. And roughly 30,000 farmers will benefit from loans extended to their cooperatives, non-government organizations (NGOs) and peoples' organizations.

Release of the funds directly to project beneficiaries is expected by 1st week February as processing of applications is now ongoing. The money will be released as soft loans at 9.75% interest to cover processing, training, administrative, and collection costs which will allow the funds to be 'cycled' to benefit even more farmers.

GMA releases P700 million from coco levy to benefit 3.5 million coconut farmers

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Unite to ensure victory in 2004, GMA asks partymates in Lakas-NUCD

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has called on the members of the ruling Lakas-NUCD Party which, she chairs, to unite and stay together in order to ensure the party's victory in the 2004 national elections.

“As your party chairman, I ask you to stay with me and stay together,” the Chief Executive said in her speech Monday night before members of the Lakas-NUCD Party during a meeting in Malacañang.

The President said that while in the past, she was “not exacting or demanding of your demeanor as Lakas members, but now I ask for one common response: loyalty to our party.”

She stressed that loyalty to Lakas, particularly at this crucial time in the country’s history “is loyalty to the needs and aspirations of our country.”

“That sense of loyalty dictates upon each one of us to exercise organizational discipline and cohesion. While I am a non-candidate President, I will not prejudice our right and our need to have a winning standard bearer in 2004,” the President said.

The President said there is no paucity or shortage of materials for the presidency, adding that within the Lakas-NUCD, “there are several members whose brilliance and track record of service to our people make them deserving of the “party’s attention and excitement.”

During the meeting, the President also asked all her partymates to band themselves together and choose the party’s “standard bearers at the appropriate time, perhaps at the end of the year.”

“We must choose as one, move as one, and win as one,” the President stressed.

The President likewise asked the Lakas members to have faith in the party as well as its leadership and the process by which “we will not only ensure victory in 2004, but assure the nation of a new presidency capable and determined to pursue the reforms needed by our people.”

“Let the sincerity of our plans and intentions of our people be our politics. Let us, with renewed unity and hope, dedicate our energies to the deliverance of our people out of the abyss of poverty and lethargy and into the sunlight of prosperity,” she said, adding that in the end, “this is our surest road to victory, for ourselves, for our party, and for our country.”

GMA asks Lakas partymates to support her vision of governance until 2004

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo urged her Lakas partymates to support her vision for economic recovery, national healing and a clean and honest 2004 elections and to put the people’s welfare over and above personal agenda.

During a meeting with Lakas party leaders in Malacañang Monday night, the President said the tasks that remain to be done in her remaining days in office are not easy and at stakes are 80 million Filipinos who look up to the Macapagal-Arroyo administration for deliverance from conditions of inequity, deprivation and poverty.

“You are the backbone of the biggest and most powerful political party today. As incumbent officials or chapter chairmen of the party, you wield considerable political ascendancy in your respective provinces, districts and cities as well as in Congress,” the President said.

The President specifically asked her partymates in Congress and the Senate to pass the measures that make up the structural reforms of her administration.

“These include strengthening the anti-money laundering reforms; making land reform serve our farmers better by allowing them to use farmlands as bank collateral; the revenue measures on sin products and automobiles to finance the gigantic development requirements; the reform of the BIR into a lean and mean corruption fighting corporate machine; the Transco franchise which will mobilize private capital into our power sector so as to avoid massive brownouts by the year 2007; and the absentee voting bill,” the President said.

For her partymates from the local governments, the President urged them to support the administration's micro-economic programs to increase productivity and build up domestic demand.

The President said that these programs include the massive promotion of small and medium enterprises which are the most efficient users of capital; the accelerated jump-start of housing which has the biggest multiplier effect on the economy; reducing transport costs from Mindanao through the Visayas to Luzon by building a nautical highway made of roll-on-roll-off ferry terminals; decongestion of Metro Manila; and, promotion of premier tourist destinations.

She exhorted her partymates to make Lakas a powerful structure to ensure the success of her administration's initiatives. "Help me reach out to the people. Communicate to them the urgency of these programs," the President said.

"Help me enlist the support of local officials and barangays under your influence – so that our reforms can take root and bare fruit in all our communities," she added.

The President said she could only do her remaining tasks if politics is set aside from the time being. "I ask you this even as I assure you that I know only too well your anxieties about 2004. I know that most if not all of you are direct stakeholders in the elections to be held next year," she said.

The President said she knew fully well that "there are those who wish that a rift will grow between us over the means for charter change."

"I am not about to surrender to such wishful thinking of our enemies. For I will still be your President, more than ever your strong President, until June 30, 2004," the President pointed out.

The President said she can exercise her authority fully until the last minute of her tenure, and she intends to do so.

"I do not ask you to engage in political abnegation as I did, but I do ask you to engage in the politics of performance in support of my reform program – and our administration's reform program," the President said.

The President stressed that she will help those who help her leave a good legacy of change for the country.

"I will help those who make governance work well for the good of our people. I am sure the people will be just as discerning. They, too, will take care of you," the President said.

Palace belittles impeach move vs. GMA

Malacañang today belittled the move by some key opposition and non-government organization personalities to impeach President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In a press briefing this morning in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio "Toting" Bunye said that the impeachment move "is a premature launching of the senatorial campaign of some of the gentlemen included among the complainants."

A group of opposition and civil society personalities has moved to impeach President Macapagal-Arroyo for alleged culpable violation of the Constitution, bribery, graft and corruption, and betrayal of public trust.

The group is spearheaded by former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, and People's Consultative Assembly secretary general Linda Montayre, along with former Sen. Francis Tatad.

“It looks like they have started their campaign very early. And I am referring to Mr. Enrile and Mr. Tatad. It looks like this is the start of their election period,” Bunye said.

Bunye noted that based on what he heard over the radio and what he read in the newspapers, the complaint that they are supposed to file is a rehash of all their allegations that have remained unsubstantiated.

“A number of them have been the subject of investigation by the Senate and nothing has come out of this investigation,” Bunye said, referring to the allegations.

He expressed the belief that the group “is just craving for attention.”

GMA pushes agri-industrial growth in Maguindanao

COTABATO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today released P1 million in fund aid to initially bankroll and spur the growth of small and medium enterprises (SME) engaged in agricultural production in Mamasapano town, Maguindanao.

The President, in a visit and ocular inspection of possible agri-industrial sites in newly-created Mamasapano town, sought to raise the interest of domestic and foreign investors to put up labor-intensive agri-industrial projects in the area.

Mamasapano is southeast to the towns of Datu Piang and Sharif Aguak.

Mamasapano Mayor Datu Acmad Ampatuan received the P1 million check, representing the town’s allotment under the President’s “One Town-One Product-One Million Peso” project.

The project aims to help SMEs in all towns of the country develop and market its main product. The President had released a number of similar checks nationwide since last year when the project was launched.

The promotion and enhancement of SMEs nationwide is one of the eight thrusts in the President’s reform agenda for the remaining 18 months of her administration.

In a short program during the visit, the President also released P1 million to Mayor Ervin Luntao of Sto. Niño town, South Cotabato for the same project.

The President and Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman likewise witnessed the turnover of some P50,000 worth of medicines given by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) to Mamasapano town.

The President arrived in Mamasapano by helicopter. She was welcomed by Maguindanao Governor Andal Ampatuan, Police Regional Director Amerodin Hamdag, 6th Infantry Division Assistant Commander Triponio Salazar, and 301st Brigade Commander Col. Agustin Demaala.

GMA visits Maguindanao to award medals to military personnel and assess gov’t projects

CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived here today at 11:00 a.m. to inspect government projects and award medals to some deserving military personnel.

The presidential helicopter landed at the adjacent Awang Airport.

Earlier, the President flew to Mamasapano town in Maguindanao to assess several ongoing government projects in the area.

Immediately after her arrival, the President held a close-door meeting with the town mayors of Maguindanao inside this camp's conference room.

The President later led in the awarding of medals to 14 officers and men of the Army's 6th Infantry Division (6ID) under Maj. Gen. Generoso Senga for gallantry in combat against rebels and other lawless groups operating in the Cotabato-Maguindanao area.

The Chief Executive is expected to proceed to Davao City later this afternoon.

GMA awards medals to Filipino soldiers for gallantry in the Battle of Colombio

COTABATO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the gallantry of at least 16 army officers and enlisted men who figured in operations against kidnap-for-ransom groups and helped improve the peace and order condition in Central Mindanao.

The President, who visited Camp Siongco – headquarters of the Army's 6th Infantry Division – in Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat town, Maguindanao, said the bravery of Filipino soldiers had kept criminality, banditry and terrorism at bay in the provinces of Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani.

The President mentioned the ongoing Battle of Colombio (a town in Sultan Kudarat) where some of the soldier-awardees bravely fought it out and the others are still going after and exchanging fire with a band of bandits who ran to President Roxas town in North Cotabato.

“Gusto kong bigyang pansin ang Battle of Colombio. Beinte otso na sa mga kalaban ang nasawi, kahit isang sundalo ay wala pang namamatay (I want to take note of the Battle of Colombio where our soldiers killed 28 of the enemy, without having any fatality),” she said.

The President explained that some of the soldier-awardees could not make it to the rites as they are still in the field, completing their mission.

She called the Colombio battle as “the biggest victory of my administration,” a reason why she did away with red tape and personally saw to the immediate formal awarding of medals to the hero-soldiers today.

The President quoted Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes who earlier said that the soldier-awardees “are the future of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.”

“Malaki ang galang ng sambayanang Pilipino sa kawal na Pilipino (The nation has high respects for the Filipino soldier),” she added.

The Military Merit Medal awardees included Lt. Col. Eduardo Andres of the 27th Infantry Battalion (IB), Capt. Reymundo Panaguitan of the Tactical Operations Group 12, 2Lt. Generoy Boado and 2Lt. Romeo Delgado Jr. of the 1st Marine Brigade, and Technical Sergeant Anastacio Camporedondo.

Those who received the Gold Cross Medal were 1Lt. Leather Leviste, SSgt. Alexander Alibangbang and SSgt. Leonilo Ortega, all of the 3rd IB; SSgt. Abner Gonzales, 57th IB; Sgt. Crispin Ventura, 27th IB; Cpl. Merson Lisondra and Cpl. Armand Aquino, both of the HHS Battalion; Cpl. Henry Masion of the ECC; Cpl. Antonio Felizarte of the 6th DAR; and PFC Melphy Lamson.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: January 21, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514035800/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/jan21.htm>

The President's Day: January 22, 2003

22 JANUARY 2003

- **Issuance of gun licenses, permits suspended**
- **File complaints with PAGC if you have proof against corrupt officials, Palace tells public**
- **Palace appeals to house, Senate to pass AMLA amendments soonest**
- **GMA hopes successor will continue anti-poverty war**

Issuance of gun licenses, permits suspended

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. announced today the suspension of the licensing of firearms of private individuals and the issuance of permits to carry guns outside residence.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Lina said Philippine National Police Chief Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. is organizing a tracker team to run after those in possession of unlicensed firearms.

Lina said the PNP, which is mandated by law to regulate the licensing of firearms and the issuance of permit to carry, will undertake a thorough review of existing guidelines on gun licenses and permits to reduce the volume of firearms now in the hands of civilians.

According to Lina, there are 328,000 loose firearms in the country. Some 190,000 of these guns were previously registered but for one reason or another, the owners had failed to re-register them or to renew their license.

“We are now running after those individuals because those previously registered firearms are now considered loose firearms,” he said.

These individuals will also be included in the list of individuals whose firearms will be confiscated, Lina warned.

Lina, however, said that the so-called loose firearms that have no record in the PNP will be the first target of the tracker team.

“At least those previously registered firearms which were not re-registered already have records in the PNP,” Lina said.

There were 7,000 previously registered firearms that were confiscated last year. “Some of them cannot be destroyed because they are still being used as evidence in cases where these firearms were used,” Lina said.

“So we are gathering now all the firearms that were confiscated last year and in previous years which are no longer being used as evidence in court,” Lina added.

Right now, there are 1,000 firearms that can already be destroyed, Lina said.

The DILG chief said he has asked the Firearms and Explosives Unit of the PNP to gather all these confiscated firearms and have them destroyed next week.

Eighty-five percent of gun-related crimes were committed through the use of unlicensed firearms, he further said.

In the last 10 years, he said, 12,233 firearms were involved in the commission of crimes.

File complaints with PAGC if you have proof against corrupt officials, Palace tells public

Malacañang today called on the general public to file complaints with the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) if they have proof against government officials that they perceived have committed graft and corruption.

“The invitation of the President is for the general public to submit their complaints before the PAGC and other appropriate agencies, if they have direct knowledge of anomalies involving public officials,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said in his regular press briefing in Malacañang.

Bunye said that since President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said that fighting graft and corruption is one of her goals during the last 18 months of her administration, the PAGC is expected to be getting a number of complaints in the next few days.

On the PAGC initiated complaint against General Manager Edgardo Manda of the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) and six others, Bunye said that the investigation is still on its initial stage.

As a matter of procedure, Bunye said, Manda and the other respondents would be given the chance to reply to the charges within a specific period of time.

“At this point, it is premature to make any judgment on the complaint filed. I think it’s best to allow General Manager Manda to file his reply first,” Bunye said.

The PAGC, an agency under the Office of the President, earlier named Manda and six others as respondents in an administrative case arising from their participation in the contract to build Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Palace appeals to House, Senate to pass AMLA amendments soonest

Malacañang today appealed to both houses of Congress to immediately pass the amendment to the Anti-Money Laundering Law (AMLA) in order to help facilitate the remittances of thousands of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

“We appeal to our legislators that this matter be given immediate attention,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said in a press briefing this morning in Malacañang.

Bunye said that a good number OFWs would be adversely affected by the non-passage of the amendment to the AMLA.

“It is on their behalf that I think our legislators should really take immediate action on this proposal. Because you know, two days or may be a one-week delay in the remittances of the overseas Filipino workers to their families will really result in hardship among the Filipino families,” Bunye said.

Earlier, Bunye expressed the hope that should there be no major objection to the amendment to AMLA, Congress should be able to pass it before the February 12 deadline set by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Reports said that currency traders warned that the peso could depreciate to as much as P60 to \$1 if Congress fails to pass the amendment to the AMLA as demanded by the FATF.

The Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) headed by Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the sanctions could range from tedious requirements for clearing dollar remittances of OFWs to more drastic measures, such as prohibiting foreign banks from dealing with Philippine banks.

The FATF's proposed amendments involve allowing the AMLC to investigate suspicious transactions, even without a court order, lowering the threshold to P500,000, and making the AMLA retroactive, at least just to establish the paper trail of transactions made after the passage of the law.

GMA hopes successor will continue anti-poverty war

JABONGA, Agusan del Norte — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed hope that her successor in 2004 would continue to lead the Filipino people in winning the war against poverty within the decade.

In a message during the launching of the *Kabalikat Laban sa Kahirapan* (KALAHI) program here, the President said she had obtained the necessary funds that would pave the way for the implementation of an ambitious anti-poverty program nationwide.

She said the KALAHI program was one of the main aims of her visit to Washington, DC in December 2001, when she succeeded in getting the nod of the World Bank to allot P5.1 billion to help bankroll the P9.3 billion social services program in the next five years.

To the applause of her mainly Cebuano-speaking audience, the Chief Executive said the fund aid that would be given to Jabonga would be as comprehensive as possible.

Speaking in Cebuano interspersed with English, she noted that the people of Jabonga would soon see the day when "land will be distributed where possible; more education, public works, health and sanitation services will be made available; more jobs will be encouraged, as we encourage the growth of micro small and medium enterprises."

She said Jabonga, a rice-producing town 59.7 kilometers from Butuan City, stood to get P3.5 million per year for three years for its KALAHI project.

Well-spent KALAHI funds would mean "a positive transformation when the children can be given nourishment, the household will have the sanitary facilities, gravel roads and drainage will make the community less prone to flooding," she added.

Immediately after Jabonga, the KALAHI program would be launched in 10 other towns in 10 other regions. This year alone, the program is expected to cover 70 towns with 1,670 barangays. Next year, it would spread to another 66 towns.

"After that, my successor will take over, but I have already obtained the funding from the World Bank for its continuity," ensuring that the program would "last long beyond my term as president," the Chief Executive said.

"This will be a legacy that I will bequeath to my successor in the hope that he or she will further lead the victory against poverty within the decade," she stressed.

She reiterated her vow not to run in the 2004 presidential elections, but stressed that she would pursue her programs to uplift the quality of life of the people with a vigorous anti-poverty campaign in the remaining 16 months of her administration.

She brushed off insinuations of politicking made by her detractors and critics.

She said her decision not to engage herself in the 2004 presidential polls had given her all the time to lead the Filipino in the collective goal of bringing down, if not eliminating, the incidence of poverty nationwide.

She said the lack of social and economic opportunities in Jabonga also prevailed in so many depressed areas in the country, needing the quick delivery of government services in these areas.

Earlier in her message, the President said her heart belonged to Mindanao and its people, narrating her childhood days in Iligan City.

She said she considered herself a Mindanaon, having imbibed the culture of Mindanao.

But she noted that something must be done quickly to make Mindanao the Land of Fulfillment, as she sought peace and development in the area.

“Peace and development must always go together,” she said. “Our work to bring about peace and development in Mindanao must always be founded on constitutionality, national sovereignty, territorial integrity.”

The President also enjoined everyone to “institutionalize the accommodation of ethnic traditions” as the Philippine society is a multi-ethnic one founded on social justice for all.

“Let us respect each other’s laws and religion that have become our tradition and culture,” she said in Cebuano.

She stressed her commitment to fight terrorism, as she called on the people to join her wage a battle to ward off terrorism in the country, particularly in Mindanao.

Before her speech, the President and Agusan del Norte Governor Ma. Angelica Rosedette Amante witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement between Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Regional Director Jim Rebutillo and Jabonga Mayor Glicerio Monton, Jr. to implement the KALAHATI program.

During the visit, the President was joined by DSWD Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman and Robert Vance Pulley, Philippines country director of the World Bank’s office for East Asia and the Pacific Region.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: January 22, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514035809/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/jan22.htm>

The President's Day: February 11-16, 2003

The President's Day: February 19, 2003

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- **GMA appeals to transport sector not to seek fare hike, unwraps package of benefits for its members**
- **GMA seeks to transform Buliok complex into peaceful agricultural beehive**
- **Palace to facilitate dialogue between 'doubting' Senators, FATF on AMLA impasse**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA to attend Non-Aligned Movement summit in KL**
- **Oil supply adequate even if Middle East war erupts, GMA assures nation**
- **25 declared as special national holiday**
- **GMA inducts new P.W.U. president**
- **GMA unveils plan to develop SMEs as potent force in fight against poverty**

GMA appeals to transport sector not to seek fare hike, unwraps package of benefits for its members

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today appealed to the transport sector to defer requests for a fare increase as she assured them that the crisis arising from the Middle East events will be short and temporary and that oil prices should return to pre-crisis levels soon.

"A fare hike petition now may add to instability and social unrest," the President said in a prepared statement.

The President said that an increase in transport fares is usually followed by a demand for an increase in wages and this would usually result in an increase in the prices of basic commodities.

She admitted that the unfolding events in the Middle East would affect all Filipinos and that the crisis calls for all of us to come together to achieve true and lasting peace.

"The coming weeks will call for sacrifice, fortitude and cooperation from all of us," the President said.

The President also thanked the transport group, represented by the Confederation of Land Transportation Organizations of the Philippines, for their support to her as the country faces the Middle East crisis.

"In this critical time, I thank the transport sector for being Filipinos first and foremost, before being representatives from any sector," the President said.

She said that if all sectors, including those from the transport industry, would come together as a nation, the "storm ahead will pass quickly."

According to the President, among the sectors that could be heavily affected by the artificial rise in the cost of imported oil brought about by the Middle East crisis are the tricycle drivers, jeepney drivers, FX and taxi drivers, bus operators and drivers, truckers and cargo haulers.

She said that artificial pressures brought on by the Middle East crisis, not the real supply side shortage, have caused the prices of crude oil to rise temporarily.

Realizing that in a global crisis, the transport sector is having a difficult time, she has ordered a package of benefits for those in the sector.

This package of benefits include the following:

- For the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) headed by Secretary Michael Defensor to allocate more housing units for the transport sector in addition to the 50 units per organization already awarded in Montalban, Rizal
- For the Philippine National Construction Corporation (PNCC) to immediately roll back to the January 2002 rates, the Southern Luzon Expressway toll fees for provincial buses;
- For Energy Secretary Vicente Perez to study the possibility of putting gas and diesel pumps in the terminals of the transport operators which should decrease pump prices;
- For Chairman Bayani Fernando of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to build two terminals—one in the North and one in the South—for the convenience of provincial buses to connect with the MRT stations so that they will not find the need to enter the inner city of Metro Manila; and
- At the end of the color coding experiment on February 25, for the MMDA to come up with a scheme that will reduce the inconvenience to the riding public as well as the transport group

On the construction of bus terminals, the President directed Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II to work for their initial financing, adding that these terminals would be privatized at the soonest time possible.

The President said she has directed Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza and the agencies under him, like the Land Transportation Office (LTO) and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), to coordinate closely with the MMDA in attending to the issues affecting the transport sector.

“Let us continue to work together. I will continue to count on your support,” the President said.

GMA seeks to transform Buliok complex into peaceful agricultural beehive

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today proposed the conversion of the captured Buliok complex in the Liguasan Marsh – nestled in the provinces of Maguindanao and Cotabato – into a “peaceful and bustling agricultural community.”

The President named Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, to work out a comprehensive peace and development program in Buliok, which is part of Liguasan Marsh.

She said Ermita had been instructed to “accelerate talks with investors from the Middle East who are keen in helping develop this fertile area.”

During her luncheon with the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said Cotabato Governor Emmanuel Pinol and other officials have started discussing the development plan for Pikit town where Buliok is situated.

She said the establishment of a palm oil plantation in Buliok was in order, to be bankrolled by the Khaddafi Foundation. “They have been looking for a consolidated area.”

She added that the foundation’s local partner is the National Development Corporation.

Very soon, an investment decision might be concluded, she said as she noted government’s readiness to put up the initial seed fund for the palm oil project.

Government troops have retaken the Buliok complex from armed criminal groups who used the marsh as their hiding grounds and launching pad for despicable activities in the past several years.

The President, in a statement, said the erstwhile criminals’ lair in the Liguasan Marsh area had been cleaned up and “we are going full steam ahead in the relief and rehabilitation of the affected communities.”

She said she had ordered Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman and National Anti-Poverty Commission Secretary Teresita Deles to visit the area and “make sure that the needs of the residents of the area, especially the evacuees, are met.”

“They will recommend to me short and long-term plans that will assure the well-being and livelihood of residents of the area,” she added.

The President said she was “saddened by the displacement of peaceful families from their area, but sometimes this is the price we have to pay for long-term peace and order.”

She also commended the Armed Forces of the Philippines for its “short and swift operation in capturing and occupying the Buliok sanctuary.”

Palace to facilitate dialogue between ‘doubting’ Senators, FATF on AMLA impasse

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that Malacañang will facilitate a dialogue between some “doubting” senators and officials of the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) so that the impasse on the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA) could be resolved.

In a luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said that an FATF delegation would be coming to Manila to talk with some of the senators who are opposed the needed amendments to AMLA that would conform to FATF requirements.

“Suffice it to say that we will just facilitate dialogue with FATF and the doubting senators. Then, let’s just proceed from there,” the President said.

The President said that with this dialogue, she is hoping that the senators and the FATF people can exchange ideas and come up with a solution that would be good for the Filipino people.

The FATF has given the Philippines up to March 15 of this year to come up with amendments to AMLA that would conform to its requirements.

The President also said that if the amendments to the AMLA can be resolved, she believes the Philippine peso can recover.

She also brushed aside suggestions that Malacañang should now intervene to arrest the plunging of the peso.

“The *Bangko Sentral* is the one that determines whether a movement (of the peso) is speculative or is a realistic response to objective market conditions. So, it should be a *Bangko Sentral* judgment,” the President said.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Re: Acsa Ramirez:

We will allow the NBI to follow the legal process in this regard. A decision as to whether or not an apology will be extended to Ms. Ramirez will be made as soon as the process is completed.

GMA to attend Non-Aligned Movement summit in KL

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to call for expanded cooperation in various regional and global concerns of mutual interest and benefit between and among the Philippines and 113 other member-countries of the

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) when she attends the XIII NAM Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from February 23 to 25.

The President is slated to be the 11th speaker during the NAM plenary session and general debate at the Putrajaya World Trade Center on February 24 (Monday), when the summit opens.

In a luncheon with the Malacañang Press Corps, she said that she would be having bilateral talks with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad.

“Malaysia has been very helpful to us in the peace process in the South. There are many developments taking place, so we will exchange talks,” she said.

She referred to government victories in flushing out criminal elements out of and retaking the Buliok complex in Liguasan Marsh, said to be the lair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) with whom the government is negotiating for peace in formal talks in Kuala Lumpur.

She said she also sent Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales to initiate talks “regarding the peace process” with the MILF peace panel in Kuala Lumpur.

During her working visit, she is expected to join other heads of state in an official dinner hosted by at the Royal Ball Room of the Palace of Golden Horses in Selangor Monday night.

The President will be accompanied by Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye and some officials. The President will leave on Sunday and will be back early Tuesday.

In Kuala Lumpur, Philippine senior officials are due to attend NAM preparatory meetings scheduled Thursday through Saturday (February 20-22).

At least 83 heads of state are expected to attend the XIII NAM Summit. Also expected are representatives of the observer and guest states and of observer and guest organizations of the movement.

The summit, according to NAM officials, will adopt two main documents: the Final Document that will outline the common position of the movement on various issues on its agenda and the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, that will focus on continuing the revitalization of the NAM.

The NAM was established September 1 to 6, 1961 to ensure the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, racism and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics.

Its first conference, at which 25 countries were represented, was convened at Belgrade in September 1961, largely through the initiative of the Yugoslavian government.

Succeeding NAM summits were held in Cairo, October 5-10, 1964; Lusaka, September 8-10, 1970; Algiers, September 5-9, 1973; Colombo, August 16-19, 1976; Havana, September 3-9, 1979; New Delhi, March 7-12, 1983; Harare, September 1-6, 1986; Belgrade, September 4-7, 1989; Jakarta, September 1-7, 1992; and Cartagena de Indias, October 18-20, 1995.

NAM member-nations include Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, India,

Indonesia, Iran, Islamic Republic of Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahirya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Observer and guest nations and groups include the African National Congress, Afro-Asian Solidarity Organization, Antigua and Barbuda, Arab League, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Dominica, El Salvador, Organization of Islamic Conference, Kanaka Socialist National Liberation Front (New Caledonia), Mexico, Mongolia, Organization of African Unity, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, Socialist Party of Puerto Rico, the United Nations and Uruguay.

Guests are Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Oil supply adequate even if Middle East war erupts, GMA assures nation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the nation that there will be an adequate supply of oil from the foreign sources in the event that the crisis in the Middle East would escalate into a full-blown conflict.

In a luncheon meeting with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said, "as far as the supply of oil is concerned, it will be there."

The President also said that the government's stand on the US-Iraq standoff has not changed.

"The Philippine position is calling on (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein. He has it in his power right now to avert war. That will be the main message," the President said.

The President said that what the government is watching right now is the price of oil products that could go up because of artificial pressures brought about by the Middle East crisis. But she added that this will only be temporary.

In a separate statement, the President appealed to the transport sector not to press for fare hikes at this stage as she stressed the need for cooperation and fortitude among all sectors in a time of crisis.

"That's is why we have to really ask the transport sector to continue the patriotism that they have been showing all these past two years," the President said.

To compensate for their expected difficulties, the President unwrapped a package of benefits for those in the transport sector that would be adversely affected by the oil price increases.

On oil supply, the President said that right now, the country has a 70-day supply of crude oil. "That's a very comfortable inventory," the President said.

The President recalled that as early as September last year, she had asked Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. to go to Russia to work out a new supply of oil for the country.

She said that this is significant since Russia's oil fields are in the Pacific side and would not pass through the Middle East.

According to the President, Saudi Aramco, which has a sizeable investment in Petron, has also assured her that it will continue to supply oil to the Philippines.

In an earlier interview, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez said the Philippines is in a very good shape compared to its neighbors in the region in terms of oil supply inventory in case war erupts in Iraq.

Perez said the Philippines has now 70 days of oil supply inventory while Thailand has 50 days of inventory.

Out of February's 70 days inventory, 47 days inventory is in-country, to last until end-March 2003. This consists of crude and other finished products.

Perez said there is still an additional seven million barrels loading next week, equivalent to 23 days, the total inventory to last beyond April 2003, while another 11 million barrels, equivalent to 38 days to be loaded in March, to extend inventory until May 2003.

Perez said that this came about when the President signed Executive Order 134 last October, mandating all oil companies to set a minimum oil inventory.

According to Perez, he has been quietly talking to the oil companies, telling them to advance import loadings and schedules this week or next week, rather than at the end February.

Perez also said that oil exporting countries friendly to the Philippines, such as Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iran and other Middle East countries, will provide the Philippines as much oil as the country needs, in case a Middle East war erupts.

Perez likewise enumerated other oil supply security initiatives of the energy sector, among them:

- Maximize national storage capacity for stockpiling of diesel and other products;
- Extension of the Pandacan oil depot business permit;
- Activate the Energy Contingency Task Force to implement contingency plan according to scenario level; and
- Implement the communication plan, such as the TV ads that recently came out about how to conserve oil.

Feb. 25 declared as special national holiday

Malacañang today declared Tuesday, February 25, 2003, as a special national holiday in observance of the 17th anniversary of the EDSA People Power Revolution.

By order of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Executive Secretary Alberto G. Romulo issued Proclamation No. 331 declaring a holiday to give the citizens the opportunity to celebrate the first People Power revolution in 1986 with appropriate ceremonies.

In issuing the proclamation, Malacañang stressed the need to commemorate the EDSA People Power Revolution because it restored "our democratic institutions and ushered in meaningful political, social and economic reforms in the country."

During a luncheon conference with members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said that upon her return on February 25 from her trip to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where she will attend the summit conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, she and former President Corazon C. Aquino will be joining the people in attending a Holy Mass on the last day of the celebration of the EDSA revolution.

She also said that after the Mass, she and Mrs. Aquino will go to Fort Magsaysay in Laro, Nueva Ecija where former Senators Benigno Aquino, Jr. and Jose W. Diokno were incarcerated during the martial law years.

The President added that while in Fort Magsaysay, she would declare the incarceration cell of Ninoy and Diokno as a national shrine. "It is an important place to commemorate an important part of our history," President said.

GMA inducts new P.W.U. president

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today swore in Dr. Amelou Benitez-Reyes as the eighth president of the Philippine Women's University (PWU) System and its Affiliate Schools for Men and Women.

The President, garbed in academic gown, administered the oath of office to Reyes during simple investiture rites at the Plenary Hall of the Philippine International Convention Center.

Reyes's academic achievements included masteral and doctoral degrees in Development Education from Stanford University, major in Political Sociology.

Her intensive training in development education, coupled with her socialization of feminist values derived from home and women's school environment, had a direct bearing on the programs and projects organized for the active participation of women in the Philippine centennial celebration (from 1996-1999).

Reyes is the fourth PWU alumna to assume the post as university president.

In her inaugural speech, Reyes thanked President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for "accord[ing] me the singular honor of administering my oath of office."

She said the President's late mother, Evangeline Macaraeg Macapagal, graduated from the PWU high school and moved on to being the First Lady.

"The University accorded her in 1990 the highest citation: the Francisca Tirona Benitez Medal of Merit for being instrumental in strengthening public trust in the dignity and incorruptibility of the Philippine presidency," Reyes told the President.

"The President's father, the former President Diosdado Macapagal received the Conrado Benitez Centenary Heritage Award" for "being the shining exemplar of the finest values and the noblest tasks that make a man and president of his people, a truly great Filipino," she added.

Reyes also said that President Macapagal-Arroyo likewise received the highest honor by the PWU when she was conferred the "Hiyas ng Pamantasan."

She also expressed her profound gratitude to former President Fidel V. Ramos, who greeted her on her installation as PWU president.

Reyes vowed to do her best as the new president of the PWU.

"The responsibility of a university president encompasses much more than ensuring quality education, better faculty, good facilities and effective administration," she said.

She said the leadership of a university is crucial to the role of the academe in producing leaders and achievers equipped with the values and competence to ensure a brighter future for our nation.

GMA unveils plan to develop SMEs as potent force in fight against poverty

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today unveiled before members of the media and the Management Association of the Philippines her administration's National Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Development Plan, which she described as "my No. 1 priority."

In making a new presentation of the SME development plan in Malacañang, the President described small and medium enterprises as a potent force in the war against poverty that will contribute to the equitable distribution of income and disperse economic activities to the countryside.

Earlier the other day at the Metropolis Mall in Alabang, Muntinlupa, the President launched the plan to develop SMEs into a sector that will provide a strong domestic supply base (manufacturing and services) for globally competitive industries.

The President cited the two objectives of the plan:

- expansion of the enterprise by graduating micro and small enterprise to higher levels of business undertakings, and;
- upgrading of their productivity and value-added capabilities.

"We have our short term-goal for six months and our medium-term goal which I hope to bequeath to my successor," the President said.

The six-month objective is to make 12,000 micro firms graduate to small firms by increasing the share of small and medium segments from 8.7 percent to 10 percent, strengthening 20 accessible SME centers nationwide.

"At the end of six months, what I'd like is that people will say in general 'Maraming pera sa SME ngayon. Maraming tulong sa SME ngayon.' I'd like to see that strong perception six months from now," the President said.

The President likewise expressed the hope that three years from now, her successor will be able, from the foundation her administration will build, to start from the 40 percent increase in the share of small and medium segment and that they will be able to increase their productivity in terms of gross value added to 40 percent.

The basic strategies of the SME development plan, the President said, will be a comprehensive approach to SME development, seamless access to government services, virtual organization, supply side push through non-government directed projects and localization of the plan.

The elements of the plan include training and human resource development, market development, product development and technology intervention, advocacy for enabling environment and financing.

The President said the training and human resource development will consist of a compendium of training programs of all government training institutes, streamlined training programs and standardized fees, deployment of 50 SME business counselors nationwide, and review of the academic curricula to promote entrepreneurship.

For market development, the President said she wants to promote both domestic and foreign markets (trade fairs and missions), display corner, buyer-supplier matching services, opportunities caravan and the consolidation of production inputs for SMEs.

The President explained that the Barangay Micro Business Enterprise Law exempts firms with an asset of P3 million and below from the minimum wage.

"The President said that P10 billion will be made available in the next 10 months. "And hopefully depending on the absorption capacity, P20 billion to P30 billion will be made available annually," the President.

The SMEs shall be serviced in their loans by their neighborhood banks – the thrift banks and the rural banks – by a standardized 12-point accreditation.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: February 19, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20080822000527/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/feb19.htm>

The President's Day: February 20, 2003

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Exploratory peace talks in Netherlands halted as NDF demands delisting from terrorist rolls

Exploratory talks towards resuming the GRP-NDF peace negotiations ended abruptly yesterday in Utrecht, the Netherlands as the NDF demanded a delisting of the CPP/NPA and NDF Chief Political Consultant Jose Ma. Sison from the terrorist rolls of the United States and the European Union.

"We can't move forward at the moment; the NDF wants the CPP/NPA and Mr. Sison out of the list and the government is not inclined to change its position, which has important implications on the national interests," Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr. head of the GRP Exploratory Team, said.

Afable was in Utrecht with GRP Panel Chair Silvestre Bello III and Panel Executive Director Ma. Carla Munsayac-Villarta. The GRP team met with NDF Panel Chair Luis Jalandoni and member Fidel Agcaoili and their staff.

"We gave them a 7-point proposal to restart the formal peace talks but the NDF does not want to proceed, claiming that they are under duress because of the terrorist list," Afable added.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo dispatched Afable's team to the Netherlands to propose a fast-tracked negotiation leading to one comprehensive agreement, backed by a unilateral suspension of offensive military operations (SOMO) by both sides for the duration of the formal talks.

Afable said he would immediately inform the President, the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security and the Norwegian government, which has agreed to host projected formal negotiations, of the results of the exploratory talks.

"We have reached an impasse but this is not the end of the road; the peace process will continue in other paths," he said.

My successor should also be reform-oriented, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said that she will see to it that her successor in Malacañang would continue the reforms that she has started, especially in building a strong Republic and in freeing the country from the politics of patronage.

In an interview with *Reuters*, the British news agency, the President said that in due time she will endorse a successor who is also reform-minded.

The President said that because of her desire to institutionalize her reform agenda, she has asked Congress to pass legislation on these reforms.

“When reforms are legislated, they are, in effect, irreversible for a very long time,” the President said.

When asked if there is anything that would change her mind in not running in 2004, the President said that when she announced her decision last December 30, 2002, “it was already the final decision.”

The President said that it took her a “long time” to make her announcement although the decision has already been an option from the beginning.

According to the President, during the next 17 months of her term, she would like to continue strengthening the economy in order to create jobs and to promote an investment atmosphere that is as much as possible free of corruption and red tape.

She also said that the other two major goals that she envisioned to accomplish before relinquishing the presidency next year is to heal the divisions within the society caused by too much politics and to work for clean and honest elections in 2004.

The President stressed that from her own experience in governance, there is really a need to strengthen the country’s institutions.

“We must strengthen our bureaucracy and we must work toward freeing the policy making from the control of vested interests,” the President said.

The control of vested groups in the economy, the President said, can be seen in the large gap between the rich and the poor, who have been exploited for political ends.

“This control is manifested in the politics of patronage and, at the extreme, corruption to finance that patronage. It has been manifested in the use, lately, of black propaganda and destabilization as tools of political contest,” the President said.

She said that the common denominator of all these is too much politics.

“When you have strong institutions, when you have a governance that is free from the influence or control of vested interest, then that’s when you can deliver essential services, that’s when you can execute good policy, and that’s when you will be able to have faster economic growth,” the President said.

GMA confident AFP fully supportive of gov’t

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is fully supportive of her government as she debunked insinuations that the military defied her order to stop the offensive against the Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom gang in the Liguasan Marsh in Central Mindanao last week.

In an interview with *Reuters*, the British news agency, the President said that she was very confident that the AFP is behind her and would comply with her instructions.

“I know of many occasions when they would have wished I gave another instruction, but when I gave it, they followed it very diligently,” the President said.

When asked why there was no cessation of fighting when she gave the order on February 11, the President said that when she issued the order effective at 4:00 p.m. on that day, there was a cessation of fighting on the part of the military but there were some violations from the other side.

“To begin with, I cannot tell the Pentagon or the MILF to stop fighting. As I understand it, there were two specific firefights that were initiated by the other side. And our soldiers, of course, defended themselves,” the President said.

The President said that she ordered a cessation of hostilities in deference to the request of our Muslim brothers to observe a Muslim holiday.

She said that except for the two skirmishes from 4:00 p.m. of that day to 2:00 p.m. the following day, when she ordered the resumption of the offensive in the Buliok Complex, it was generally quiet on that day.

The President stressed that the campaign in Mindanao is not against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

“We are going after any group that breaks the law. To our mind, the Pentagon gang has been breaking the law. And we are going after any group that harbors them,” the President said.

The President reiterated that her government is still willing to talk peace with the MILF or the communist insurgents.

GMA allays fears of ‘backlash effect’ on RP if U.S. attacks Iraq

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has allayed fears that a United States attack on Iraq could result in retaliatory acts against the government by Muslim rebels as she stressed that terrorism can strike anywhere even without the US attack on Iraq.

In an interview with *Reuters*, the British news agency, the President said she does not subscribe to the “backlash theory” because terrorism can strike anywhere, anytime.

The President said that she is clamping down on terrorists in the Philippines or rebels suspected of harboring criminals not because of pressures from Washington, D.C.

“It is because it is in our national interest. We want to have peace and order in our country. So, we have to enforce the law,” the President said.

The President explained that even if the government is enforcing the law against the rebels or lawless elements, it will still negotiate with those who are willing to talk peace.

She said that there is actually no contradiction in going after the rebels and in talking peace. “If you look at the history of the world, the talk and peace mode has always been there,” the President said, citing the talks between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan government, and the Israeli-Palestinian talks now being revived in Israel.

“So, you don’t need a ceasefire before you talk. In fact, the laying down of arms is supposed to be the end state of the talks,” the President said.

The most important thing, the President said, is that the government must show that for those who do not want peace, the military is capable of doing its job. “But for those who want peace, we are willing to talk peace with them,” she added.

GMA lauds NBN for launching worldwide services

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night lauded the National Broadcasting Network (NBN) for its unprecedented move in expanding their broadcast services worldwide and providing accessible lines where Filipinos can interact, by means of communication with their counterparts in other parts of the world to the million Filipinos living and working abroad.

In her one-minute message during the launching of NBN World at the Hotel Intercontinental Manila in Makati City, the President cited the government-controlled network for its important role in delivering the good message about the Filipino throughout the world.

“Ngayong gabi natupad ang isang pangarap. Ngayong gabi, isinilang ang ating sandaigdigang pamayanan. Nagkakaisa nang tunay ang sambayanang Pilipino (Tonight, a dream becomes a reality. Tonight, a world community is born. The Filipino people are really united with each other),” the President said.

In her message, the President said NBN World is now opening new windows of opportunity for Filipinos.

The President congratulated the officials and employees of NBN for the timely launching of their broadcast services all over the world.

“Binabati ko ang NBN sa dakilang pangarap na isinakatuparan natin ngayon – isang lahi, isang bayan, isang pananaw, isang daigdig – isang Republika ng Pilipinas (I would like to congratulate the NBN for making the dream come true – one nation, one vision, one world – one Philippine Republic),” she said.

She also expressed her congratulations to all the members of Congress, who worked for the passage of the Absentee Voting Law.

The President stressed that the launching of NBN World was timely because a few weeks ago the absentee voting bill was finally passed into law by the two chambers of Congress.

Before delivering her message, the President led the formal launching by switching on the facilities for global telecast followed by a short dialogue with overseas Filipino workers in Sydney, Australia through satellite.

Among the overseas Filipino workers who interacted with the President were Philippine basketball legend Carlos “Caloy” Loyzaga, Kate Andres, Leo Seneza, and Kim Campos.

For his part, Loyzaga expressed his thanks to the President because after so many years of stay in Australia, he can now watch the live telecast of Philippine basketball game through NBN World entertainment and TARBS World TV.

The President answered the questions raised by Kate Andres about the security measures being undertaken by the government.

She also inform Leo Seneza that the Philippine government is ready to implement the contingency plans to ensure the safety of 1.5-million overseas Filipinos working in the Middle East in case of an outbreak of the war in Iraq.

She also answered the question by Kim Campos about the dual citizenship bill pending in the Senate.

NBN will start its global service on Monday, February 24, the government network has been on the air almost 30 years.

Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today named Rear Admiral Ernesto H. de Leon, presently AFP Deputy Chief for Plans (J5), to the position of Flag Officer in Command of the Philippine Navy.

The designation was made by the President upon the recommendation of Defense Secretary Angelo T. Reyes and the Board of Generals.

Radm. de Leon will replace Vice Admiral Victorino S. Hingco, who is scheduled to retire on March 6.

GMA launches campaign against street crimes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo launched today a nationwide campaign against street crimes in the wake of what she called the ordinary citizens' dissatisfaction, displeasure and disappointment with the vigor of police response to crimes affecting the masses.

"Sad to say, there are even widespread perceptions that the police is ineffective, that the government is unable to protect people's lives and property from thieves, robbers, rapists and other bad guys," the President told the nation's top police commanders during an expanded Command Conference in Malacañang this morning.

The President then issued a series of directives to all the police generals and colonels to "show the people what you have been organized, trained and equipped to do: fight crimes and stop criminals."

She ordered police officials to "spend 50 percent of their working hours in the streets, not in the offices."

She reiterated her order to the police commanders to channel more resources directly to the police station levels.

She demanded accountability for performance, particularly from the station commanders, including responsibility for the rascals in uniform.

She ordered the training of barangay tanods in basic police functions and ordered the release of P10 million to jumpstart the institutionalization of the barangay tanods as part of the para-police force.

She directed all the police officers and men to carry out "an effective and vigorous response to crime not only in media but also in the streets and in the perception of the people."

The President also gave the police commanders of Metro Manila and Central Visayas marching orders to bring down the crime rate by at least 20 percent.

"To all the participants in this command conference, you are all leaders, so I expect you to show your leadership by example in this thrust of hitting the streets," the President said.

"It is not just putting more people proportionately where the crime rate is extra high but police officials, from the commander down to the precinct and station levels, should go out of their offices to the streets and to the barangays," the President said.

The President likewise said that even those in the top police hierarchy must adopt a barangay as his own case of preventing crime, but involving the community.

"So I would expect 700 barangays to be especially taken care of by the generals and colonels who are attending this conference," the President said.

The President also directed the PNP leadership to come up with a detailed plan, specially for Metro Manila, for increasing the number of barangay tanods that will institutionally become part of their para-police machinery.

She demanded the monthly submission to her office of a detailed report of the implementation of this “heightened” anti-crime campaign and a proposal on how the police are going to use the initial P10-million fund.

Pikit, Raja Muda, Buliok cleared of armed elements, says Ermita

Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process who was designated recently to oversee the rehabilitation of the Liguasan Marsh, reported from Pikit, Cotabato today as per assessment of Gen. Generoso Senga (6th Division) and Col. Cardoso Luna (602nd Brigade), that the towns of Pikit, Raja Muda and the Buliok Complex have been cleared of armed elements.

All evacuees may now return to their homes, Secretary Ermita said.

Secretary Ermita is on an inspection tour of the area together with Secretaries Dinky Soliman, Ging Deles, Jesus Dureza and Agriculture Undersecretary Ed Sana.

Ermita’s group met with North Cotabato Governor Emmanuel Piñol and Pikit Mayor Faridah Malinco to assess the situation and determine the immediate relief and rehabilitation work needed to restore the town to normalcy.

Ermita said he would recommend the immediate construction of farm-to-market roads linking the Kabankalan and Buliok areas, provision of adequate drinking water and upgrade of health facilities in the area.

The 54th Engineering Brigade is now standing by to undertake these projects as soon as provisions are available.

Fifteen barangays of Pikit (out of 42) were affected by the recent conflict.

Affected families of Pikit totaled 6,583 (39,786 individuals). They were accommodated in 16 evacuation centers.

Exactly 383 families (2,586 individuals) have since returned home, resulting in the closure of six centers.

Peace-order in RP better than in other countries, says President

The peace and order in the country is much better than in other countries and is continuously improving, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said.

The President made this remark during a meeting with the alumni of the Philippine College of Commerce High School Class of 1962 wherein she was asked if it is safe to bring their loved ones here in the Philippines.

“Actually, the peace and order in the country is not that bad,” the President stressed.

The President noted that there are no sniper incidents in the cities or such thing as the September 11 attack in the country, eliciting concurrence from the crowd.

Most of the alumni who came to see the President are based in the United States and Canada.

The President further noted that a cruise ship from Taiwan carrying hundreds of tourists recently made Manila one of their destinations and no incident occurred.

“It’s fun and it’s peaceful here,” the President said.

The President noted that tourism is steadily growing at 16 percent.

The top tourists in the country, the President said, are from Japan, South Korea, and China.

“Filipino balikbayans in the United States only place fourth,” the President said.

The President said Japan figured at the top place as there is now a \$165 tourism package for the foreign nationals for four days and three nights where they can shop and dine in Makati City with one out-of-town trip. The President said Japanese females, who are very fond of shopping, couldn’t resist the very reasonable package.

She noted that when she went to see the Banaue Rice Terraces last December, she came across Korean school children who were on a school field trip abroad.

She said that according to Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, the Koreans are even going to Zamboanga City for golfing tours.

The Chief Executive further noted that Malamawi, the home barangay of Abu Sayyaf group spokesperson Abu Sabaya in Basilan, is now free of the bandit group. “Even Basilan is safe now,” she said.

Among the members of the High School Class of 1962 of the Philippine College of Commerce are Social Welfare and Development Assistant Secretary Celia Capadocia Yangco, Professional Regulatory Commissioner Antonietta Fortuna Ibe, and Class Chairman of the Steering Committee Adeluisa Lu Burgos and Class International Coordinator Leticia Javier Romasanta.

Seven (7) point proposal presented by the government to the National Democratic Front during the exploratory talks held on February 19, 2003 in the Netherlands

1. An enhanced process whereby a single, comprehensive document in the form of a Final Peace Agreement will be the outcome at the end of the negotiations.
2. A reiteration of the agenda that shall be contained in the FPA and shall be subject to negotiations, namely:
 - Human Rights and International Humanitarian law (HR/IHL)
 - Social and Economic Reforms (SER)
 - Political and Constitutional Reforms (PCR)
 - End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces (EOH/DOF)
3. An affirmation that the end-goal of the process is the peaceful resolution of the armed conflict, leading to a permanent cessation of hostilities and renunciation of violence, national unity and reintegration of rebel forces into mainstream society in accordance with the Philippine Constitution.
4. A mutually agreed upon Work Plan aiming for completion of the negotiations within a maximum period of six months.
5. The immediate setting up of four Reciprocal Working Committees (RWCs) by the respective negotiating panels – with one RWC assigned to one agenda item – to simultaneously review the pertinent portions of the proposed draft(s) and come to agreement on each of the agenda point.
6. As a confidence-building measure, the issuance of both parties of a unilateral declaration of suspension of military operations (SOMO) during the six-month negotiation process.
7. Issuance of a Joint Statement by the Negotiating Panels from time to time during the course of the negotiations to give an update report on the progress of the talks, when deemed necessary.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: February 20, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514040600/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/feb20.htm>

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- **Drug syndicates pose biggest threat, says GMA**
- **GMA orders PNP commanders to link up with barangay leaders, tanods to fight street crimes**
- **GMA announces fuel price discounts, refueling stops for public transport groups**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA orders marshals on buses, jeepneys to catch 'kotong cops' in the act**

Restructuring in fiscal management now paying off, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said that the restructuring that she has ordered in the government's fiscal management is paying off with the budget deficit so far this year now below the projected level.

In a recent interview with *Reuters*, the British news agency, the President said that so far, the performance of the two top revenue agencies, the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs, has shown that "we are closing the budget gap."

The President attributed these improvements to the restructuring measures, which have been diligently implemented by her economic managers.

"We've modernized our way of tracking tax evasion, and also, we're strengthening the fight against graft and corruption, making BIR and the Customs as our showcases in the fight against graft and corruption," the President said.

The President also said that she has put together a team under the Office of the President to do lifestyle checks on government officials and other kinds of operational method in order to enhance this fight against graft and corruption. "I think it's going to work well," she emphasized.

The President also confirmed that her administration may also consider suspending its treasury bond and treasury bill auctions because the government has been able to exercise fiscal discipline.

She recalled that last year, the Philippines was getting very good rates on our bonds. "So our finance officials were looking at that as the main way of closing the gap," the President said.

But even last year, the President stressed that she had been instructing her finance and economic managers to do other things.

"Maybe its serendipity that they didn't do those other things because now they can do them. That's why we still have weapons in our arsenal to be able to close that gap outside of borrowing from the bond market," the President said, adding that this is a good development because "then we will be relying more on our own resources."

Drug syndicates pose biggest threat, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday that the single biggest threat to law and order now are the drug syndicates.

During a Command Conference on Street Crimes involving the nation's police commanders from regional and district directors down to the station and precinct commanders, the President also said that the National Capital Region (Metro Manila) and Region 7 (Central Visayas) registered the highest number of street crimes last year.

The most common street crimes are drug-pushing, snatching of cell phones, jewelry and purse, pickpocketing, swindling, mugging and rape, and robbery of small establishments, according to Chief Superintendent Vidal Querol, deputy director for operations of the Philippine National Police.

The President said that while the PNP has made progress in the pursuit of big-time crime syndicates, “the response to street crimes, in the minds of the people, has not been satisfactory.”

Ordinary crime cases, whose victims are mostly ordinary citizens, demand police attention, the President said. “Therefore, we must focus on police performance at the station and precinct levels,” she added.

In his report during the command conference at Malacañang, Director General Anselmo Avenido, Jr. of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency said the drug problem in the country has reached alarming proportions.

Avenido informed the President and other PNP commanders that official statistics from the Dangerous Drugs Board indicate that there are around 1.8 million regular users and 1.6 million occasional users of drugs in the country.

He said the main drug of abuse today is shabu.

Avenido also said that last year, the number of drug-affected barangays totalled 3,489 or 8 percent of the country’s 42,000 barangays.

He said that as a result of the intelligence workshop conducted by the PDEA on the Aug. 30 and 31 last year, 11 transnational drug syndicates and 215 local organized drug groups were identified to be operating in the country.

The PDEA chief said the increase in production capacity, the ease in world travel, modern communications and globalization have led shabu-source countries to look for new markets.

The Philippines, just like the other countries in the Asian region, is one of the main targets for this expansion, he added.

Avenido said shabu is smuggled into the country through four major avenues: the seaports, the international airports, the mail and parcel services, and the vast expanse of the Philippine coastlines.

Shabu from China is smuggled into the country mainly through the shorelines of Northern and Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog, specifically Batangas, Cagayan, Ilocos Sur, Zambales, Aurora, Quezon and the Mindoro provinces, Avenido added.

Other probable landing sites are Masbate, Palawan, Sorsogon, South Cotabato, Davao, Sulu and Tawi-tawi.

Avenido said the involvement of foreign nationals from China and Hong Kong is very apparent in almost all of the visible seizures of drugs by government law-enforcement authorities.

He said that from 1998 to 2002, a total of 298 foreign nationals were arrested in the Philippines for violation of the Dangerous Drugs Act. Of this total, 206 were Chinese while the remaining 92 were of various nationalities.

GMA orders PNP commanders to link up with barangay leaders, tanods to fight street crimes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered Philippine National Police (PNP) officers to link up with the barangay chairmen and tanods and mobilize them for crime prevention.

Giving her guidance to the nation's top police officers at the end of the special command conference in Malacañang on the campaign against street crimes, the President also directed PNP officials "to spend 50 percent of their working hours in the streets, not in the offices."

She directed that each precinct set up a unit consisting of at least two police officers who will be solely in charge of mobilizing the barangay leadership in the prevention of crimes, particularly street crimes like cell phone snatching, mugging, rape and drug-pushing.

"One of the specific things that you have to do at the station level – and this will be the essence of the (PNP) initiative – is to tap the active involvement of the community to the barangays and not just civil and non-government organizations," the President said.

The President likewise ordered the mobilization of more policemen where the population is bigger, and in the neighborhood which she said is essentially the barangay.

The President, however, pointed out that this requires not just putting more people proportionately where the crime rate is extra high.

"Police officials, from the provincial commander down to the precinct and station commanders, should go out of their offices to the streets, and to the barangays," the President said.

The President said she expects the PNP leadership to come up with a detailed plan, especially in Metro Manila, for increasing the number of barangay tanods that are part of their para-police machinery.

To jumpstart this, the President said she will release P10 million for the mobilization of barangay tanods against street crimes.

Ordering the close monitoring of the success of the anti-crime campaign in the problem areas, the President said she will be closely watching the anti-crime drive in Metro Manila and also in Region 7, where the crime rate is highest.

"So here I will need a monthly report on the anti-crime campaign with a monthly crime rate statistics," the President.

In the case of the National Capital Region (Metro Manila) where the crime rate is highest, the President said she needs monthly crime statistics at the city level.

"We have already the baseline and your marching order is to bring down the crime rate by at least 20 percent in these two regions – NCR and Region 7 (Central Visayas) — and in the most crime-prone NCR districts," the President said.

The President said she will summon the PNP officials to another command conference on March 7 where she expects to get a report on the implementation of her instructions.

"Then I can make a judgment whether the campaign against crime is progressing well or the people are still dissatisfied," the President said.

"You are all leaders," the President told the PNP commanders, "so I expect you to show your leadership by example in this thrust of hitting the streets."

GMA announces fuel price discounts, refueling stops for public transport groups

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that the government is set to adopt a number of packages that would greatly benefit public transport operators and workers.

The President made the announcement during a luncheon meeting with some 15 officials of various Metro Manila and provincial transport groups in Malacañang's Heroes Hall, where she also acknowledged the latter's promise to postpone their request for a fare increase.

She reiterated the government's commitment to help the public transport sector find ways to ease the impact of recent increases in the price of world crude.

To this effect, she said the Department of Energy (DoE), in two weeks, would implement a set of beneficial packages.

The packages include a P0.40 to P0.50 discount on diesel and gasoline and the setting up of re-fuelling facilities with discounted prices on diesel and gasoline products in bus and jeepney terminals in Metro Manila.

The DoE, the President said, would give out discount cards.

Three gasoline stations – along EDSA-Shaw Boulevard in Mandaluyong City and in Guadalupe and near the Philippine Refining Company, both in Makati City – would offer automatic refuel discounts.

During the meeting, the transport sector leaders assured the President they would not ask for any fare increment, to help mitigate problems similarly facing other economies worldwide because of the series of world oil price increases.

“We're trying to hold on to it. We do not want a fare increase at this point in time,” Engineer Albert Suansing, secretary general of the Confederation of Land Transportation of the Philippines, told the President.

Claire de la Fuente, president of the Integrated Metro Bus Operators Association (IMBOA), said her group is one with the President in looking for ways to solve any public transportation problem that might arise.

De la Fuente said the oil price increases would be temporary, a spin-off of an impending US-led attack on Iraq whose President, Saddam Hussein, has continued to defy calls to disarm his weapons of mass destruction.

“We know that this is temporary. What we can promise is that we are really 100 percent behind this government. We want to help the government in easing the problem. If we are going to ask for a fare hike, that would be a start of another major problem,” she said.

She added that a fare hike could have a domino effect and raise the prices of basic goods, bring about petitions for wage increases and others.

Aside from De la Fuente and Suansing, the transport leaders in the meeting included Eleonor Santos of the North East Metro Manila Bus Operators Group; Ramon Castillo, Metro Manila Bus Operators Association; Aladin Simundac, Intercity Bus Operators Association; Alejandro Yague, Provincial Bus Operators Association of the Philippines; Michael Potenciano, Southern Luzon Bus Operators Association of the Philippines; Leonardo Naval, Association of Taxi Operators of Metro Manila; Zenaida Maranan, Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines; Efren De Luna, Philippine Confederation of Drivers Organization Alliance of Concerned Transport Organization; Melencio Vargas, Federation of Rizal-Cubao Operators Drivers Alliance; Roberto Martin, Pangkalahatang Sanggunian ng mga Suburban Drivers Association Nationwide Inc.; Orlando Marquez, Makati Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association; Ariel Lim, National Confederation of Tricycle Operators and Drivers; and Luther Estrada, Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association Pilipinas.

Also in the meeting were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, Transportation and Communication Secretary Leandro Mendoza, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, Media and Ecclesiastical Affairs Secretary Conrado Limcaoco, and Dante Lantin, Chairman of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Balikatan

This will be a joint training exercise. American soldiers will not engage in offensive combat operations against the Abu Sayaff. They will only fire back in self-defense. They will operate under the overall command of the AFP. The training activities will be coordinated with the provincial government of Sulu so that the communities involved will be properly informed. These training exercises will not displace peaceful civilian communities. Civic action will be conducted to support social services in the area. This will be a peace and development initiative as much as a training exercise.

CBCP on Anti-Money Laundering

We share the CBCP's desire to flush out dirty money, but we can't make this a mud-slinging debate. The important thing is for FATF representatives to explain their standards right before our lawmakers so they can get the answers from the horse's mouth. We need to resolve this issue with sobriety and we also need to act fast.

Mindanao Conflict

The President has a vision that the conflict can be transformed into something beneficial for the people Mindanao, whether Christian, Muslim or Lumad. The ball is in the MILF's hands. It should not lose this opportunity to show that it is also sincere in seeking peace.

Iraq Situation

Let us not jump the gun on war if it is not imminent. Saddam has still time to respond to the call to disarm and avoid war. We are for peace and we pray for a peaceful resolution of this issue. We will eventually act by taking into consideration the US position as an ally against terrorism, the UN position and the position of the world at large and most importantly, the security of Filipinos here and abroad.

GMA orders marshals on buses, jeepneys to catch 'kotong cops' in the act

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered Chief Superintendent Reynaldo Velasco, director of the Philippine National Police-National Capital Regional Police Office (PNP-NCRPO), to field traffic police marshals aboard buses and jeepneys plying Metro Manila to pounce on so-called "kotong cops" extorting money from drivers.

The President's order came after leaders of various transportation groups, with whom she met at Malacañang for lunch, complained about the activities of traffic policemen and traffic enforcers who continue to mulct them for money.

"Maglagay na tayong espia sa mga bus (Let's put 'spies' on buses)," President told Chief Superintendent Velasco.

She also directed Velasco to meet with the bus and jeepney operators to work out the mechanics on the deployment of marshals on public vehicles, adding that she expects him to conduct regular monthly meetings with the operators.

The President said she wants to put an end to the illegal activities of scalawags in uniforms, particularly those from the Traffic Management Group of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the traffic enforcers of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

The traffic marshals are not only expected to secure public vehicles against mulcters. The President said she expects them to file cases against scalawags in uniform caught extorting money from drivers.

The President also ordered Chief Superintendent Pedro Bulaong of the Western Police District to designate jeepney parking and passenger loading zones along major thoroughfares in Manila.

The President orders came just a day after she directed the nation's police commanders, particularly those in Metro Manila, to take more assertive action against street crimes.

During a command conference in Malacañang, the President also ordered the police commanders, from the regional and district levels down to the station and precinct levels, to spend more time in the streets, "not in offices," fighting crime.

She directed them to carry out "an effective and vigorous response to crime, not only in media but also in the streets and in the perception of the people."

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: February 21, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071128144133/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/feb21.htm>

The President's Day: February 22, 2003

22 FEBRUARY 2003

- **Thousands of OFWs assisted on site, DOLE reports**
- **No combat operations for U.S. troops in Sulu, Palace restates position**
- **GMA unveils marker of new Municipal Hall of Binalonan, Pangasinan**
- **GMA opens MNR-Binalonan-Asingan Road**
- **President's radio address to the nation**
- **GMA to PNP: 'give no quarters to 'kotong' cops'**

Thousands of OFWs assisted on site, DOLE reports

On-site medical and counseling services to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) have gained ground following the deployment of doctors and social workers to various OFW host countries, according to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

In a report, DOLE Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas said that 2,677 OFWs were given medical assistance in the different Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs), while 3,738 more were given assistance by social workers for various cases.

The DOLE's International Labor Affairs Service (ILAS) said that under the Overseas Comprehensive Social Services Package (OCSSP) for OFWs, medical doctors and social workers would provide basic medical and counseling services to OFWs in identified posts for a period of one year.

The doctors and social workers were deployed in October last year, Sto. Tomas said.

"The deployment of these doctors and social workers demonstrates the Macapagal-Arroyo administration's concrete and continuing efforts to protect and enhance the safety and welfare of our overseas Filipino workers," Sto. Tomas said.

Sto. Tomas said medical officers provided medical assistance to about 987 OFWs in Kuwait, 520 in Riyadh, 219 in Jeddah, 208 in Bahrain, 125 in Abu Dhabi, 303 in Hong Kong, 242 in Singapore, and 73 in Korea.

The medical officers also visited 65 OFWs in different jails and hospitals in the said countries, she added.

In Korea, the doctors attended to 60 distressed OFWs. Filipino doctors posted in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Bahrain, Jeddah, Riyadh and Kuwait have also provided medical treatment to more than 500 OFWs suffering from ailments such as hypertension, respiratory track infection, bronchitis, and common colds.

Sto. Tomas also reported that social workers assigned in seven POLO posts handled various cases of OFWs with Kuwait having the most number of cases handled at 1,165 and about 1,584 more cases in Abu Dhabi, Singapore, Taichung, Hong Kong, Jeddah and Dubai.

A total of 124 OFWs also benefited from jail and hospital visits made by the social workers, Sto. Tomas said.

The social worker detailed in Singapore counseled 136 OFWs, while in Hong Kong, 63 OFWs were assisted in settling their small claims, labor cases, and unpaid salaries and wages, the DOLE chief said.

No combat operations for U.S. troops in Sulu, Palace restates position

Malacañang today restated its firm position that American soldiers will not be allowed to engage in combat operations against the Abu Sayyaf bandits in Mindanao.

In an interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that reports about the go-signal for American troops to join in the fight against the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu were based on a supposed interview with an unnamed source in the Pentagon.

Bunye said that this source, who obviously was misinformed, wanted to make it appear that he was knowledgeable, and that what he was saying was factual. Unfortunately, the *CNN*, the *New York Times* and other American media outlets picked up his claim without checking its veracity, he added.

“*Kaya, nakuryente rin sila,*” Bunye said, meaning that they (media outlets) were burned out because they carried erroneous information.

He also bewailed the propensity of some of our officials to immediately comment on something that has not been verified. “*Huwag na man sanang sakay ng sakay ang ating mga legislators* (We wish that our legislators would not just ride on this wrong information),” Bunye said.

Bunye reiterated that the Balikatan 03-1, scheduled in Sulu and Zamboanga City, is a joint training activity by Philippine and American military forces, and is basically similar to Balikatan 02-1 which was held in Basilan last year.

Like in Basilan, the Sulu Balikatan will also have a development or civic action component. “This will be a peace and development initiative as much as a training exercise,” Bunye said.

Bunye said that Balikatan 03-1 will be conducted in accordance with the Philippine Constitution and all existing laws, and since the Constitution and existing laws prohibit foreign forces from engaging in combat duties in the country, hence the American soldiers would not be allowed to join in the actual military operations against the Abu Sayyaf.

He also assured the nation that all US forces in the Balikatan would be under the direct supervision of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and all their operations and activities will be coordinated with the local officials in Sulu.

“The bottom line here is that there will be no aggressive combat role for American troops in Sulu,” Bunye stressed.

GMA unveils marker of new Municipal Hall of Binalonan, Pangasinan

BINALONAN, Pangasinan—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today unveiled the marker of the newly renovated Binalonan Municipal Hall on the occasion of the town’s fiesta.

In her remarks after the unveiling ceremony, the President said she expects that the municipal hall can help make Binalonan, her mother’s hometown, a strong and progressive municipality.

The President expressed the belief that the effective implementation of her administration’s program would help build a strong Republic.

A strong Republic needs effective local governments, the President said, as she expressed elation that the president of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines is none other than Mayor Ramon Guico, Jr. of this town.

The construction of the Binalonan Municipal Hall started during the administration of former President Diosdado Macapagal.

However, its construction was stopped when President Ferdinand Marcos assumed the presidency in 1965. At that time, the municipal hall was already 75 percent complete.

Unable to acquire the remaining funds to complete the project from then President Marcos, then Binalonan Mayor Ramon Guico, Sr. decided to infuse his personal money to finally build the municipal hall.

In 2002, Binalonan officials led by Mayor Guico, Jr. appropriated the amount of P3.1 million to finally put the finishing touches on the long overdue Binalonan Municipal Hall.

Earlier, the President inaugurated the newly concreted Manila North Road-Binalonan-Asingan Road, a portion of which is near the Binalonan Municipal Hall.

After her speech at a program in front of the municipal hall, the President went to the Guico ancestral residence to have a reunion with some 3,000 members of the Macaraeg clan who attended the Binalonan town fiesta here.

The President also took the opportunity to talk to the newly elected officers of the Pangasinan Radio and Press Club, after their oath taking which she administered.

GMA opens MNR-Binalonan-Asingan Road

BINALONAN, Pangasinan—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today inaugurated the Manila North Road-Binalonan-Asingan Road here, which she said will strengthen commerce not only in this town, the hometown of her mother, but also of the neighboring areas.

Speaking at a program in front of the municipal hall of Binalonan, the President said this road is a very important diversion that will make the traffic through Urdaneta town much more convenient.

The President expressed elation that the Urdaneta Road, which is the cause of heavy traffic for those travelling to and from Baguio City and the Ilocos Region, will soon be widened.

This road, the President pointed out, will make the transport of products from the Ilocos Region and other regions for Manila faster.

The President stressed that her administration is doing everything possible to strengthen the economy, and one of the components of her economic blueprint is the construction of more vital roads and bridges not only in Pangasinan but throughout the country.

“We are doing all these to give jobs and livelihood to the people,” the President said.

The President said despite the comfortable growth rate during the past year, there are still thousands of Filipinos who are out of work.

She said that is the reason why she had launched the small and medium enterprise (SMEs) development program to expand the domestic market and generate more jobs, especially in the countryside.

Early this week, the President announced that the government would allocate P10 billion for SMEs for the next 10 months, adding that depending on the absorption capacity of SMEs, some P20 billion to P30 billion would be made available to them annually.

With the President during the drive-through ceremony of the newly-concreted MNR-Binalonan-Asingan Road, were Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Public Works and Highways Secretary Bayani Fernando, Congressman Mark

Cojuanco of the 5th District of Pangasinan, local officials of Pangasinan led by Gov. Victor Agbayani, and Binalonan Mayor Raqmon Guico, Jr.

President's radio address to the nation

Magandang araw po sa inyong lahat.

Pinulong ko kahapon ng tanghali ang mga kinatawan at lider ng transport sector na siyang nagbunga ng maraming magandang kasunduan at plano pagkatapos ng halos dalawang oras ng tapat at malayang talakayan.

Nung isang araw, bago kami nagpulong, hiniling ko sa kanila na ipagpaliban muna ang paghingi ng pahintulot na itaas ang pasahe dala ng pagtaas ng presyo ng langis sa pandaigdigang merkado. Hiniling ko sa kanila na tumulong sa bansa mga kritikal na araw na ito. Sinabi ko, na sa tingin ko madaling lilipas ang krisis at babalik sa normal ang presyo ng langis. Nangako ako na hahanap ako ng mga paraan na sila ay tulungan kapalit ng kanilang pagmamalasakit sa akin at sa bayan at para maibsan ang kanilang mahirap na kalagayan.

Nais ko sanang ibalita sa inyo ang ilan sa aming napagkasunduan.

Iniutos ko kay Vince Perez at sa DOE na agarang buksan sa loob ng dalawang linggo ang mga bomba ng krudo o filling pumps sa tatlong terminal ng pampasaherong sasakyan sa Kamaynilaan: sa EDSA – kanto ng Shaw Boulevard, sa EDSA – kanto ng Guadalupe, at sa Philippine Racing Club sa Makati. Si Ginoong Martinez ng Eastern Petroleum ay nangako na itatayo niya ang tatlong filling pumps na ito. Ang mga samahan ng transport sector na nasa mga lugar na ito ang siyang magsisilbing dealer at ang mangangasiwa sa mga filling pumps na ito. Tinataya na malaki ang mura ng diesel dito kaysa sa mga ibang gasolinahan. Pinapahanap ko pa kay Dante Lantin ng LTFRB ang ibang lugar na pwedeng lagyan ng mga filling pumps.

Iniutos ko din Kay Vince Perez na kausapin ang ilan sa mga dealer at may-ari ng gasolinahan upang magbigay ng diskuwento sa mga pampublikong sasakyan. Ilalabas natin sa mga pahayagan ang mga makabayang dealer na ito na magbibigay ng diskuwento sa mga pampublikong sasakyan para alam ng mga drayber kung saan sila maaring magpakarga ng diesel at gasolina na mura.

Lahat ng ito ay mangyayari sa loob ng dalawang linggo. Walang tawad. Dalawang linggo. Dadaluhan ko mismo ang pagbukas ng filling pumps sa tatlong terminal. Dadalawin ko din ang ilan sa mga gasolinahang pumayag magbenta ng diesel at gasolina na mas mura para sa mga pampublikong sasakyan.

Kapag lumala o tumagal ang krisis, pinapag-aralan ko ang ibang paraan na pagbigay ng tulong sa transport sector tulad ng mga kupong pang-diskuwento na pwedeng gamitin sa pagbayad ng buwis ng gasolina.

Ang problema ng mga kotong cops at traffic enforcers ay tinalakay din. Inutusan ko ang PNP, si General Velasco, hepe ng pulis sa kalakhang Maynila, at si General Bulaong, Hepe ng pulis sa Maynila na maglunsad ng kampanya laban sa lahat ng mga mangongotong. Tutulungan sila ng mga transport sector na tukuyin ang mga mangongotong. Walang patawad ngayon ang mahuhuling nangongotong. Iniutos ko na huwag nang ibalik o ilipat lamang ang mahuhuling nangongotong. Iniutos ko na kasuhan, ikalaboso, tanggalin sa serbisyo, o ipadala sa mga liblib at mahirap na labanan. Sa loob ng isang linggo ay aasahan ko ang unang report mula sa PNP tungkol sa kampanyang ito. Gawin nila ang lahat ng kailangan tulad ng mga pagtatalaga ng mga secret marshals para hulihin ang mga ito. Lubos na pinahihirapan ng mga nangongotong, di lang ang transport sector, pati din ang mga pangkaraniwang motorista. Kung may kilala kayong nangongotong, itawag niyo kay General Velasco sa loob ng tatlong araw ay kailangan niyang aksiyunan.

Pina-alala ko kay Rollie Macasaet ng PNCC na ibalik sa dating halaga bago magtaas noong Enero 2002 ang toll para sa mga pampasaherong bus na gumagamit ng Southern Luzon Expressway.

Pinakausap ko kay General Bulaong at General Velasco ang mayor ng Maynila na hanapan ng paraan kung papaano bigyan ng titigilan para magsakay ng pasahero ang mga pampublikong sasakyan ng hindi na sila paikot-ikot sa paghahanap ng pasahero. Magastos sa diesel ang paikot-ikot. Inaasahan ko ang kooperasyon ng pamahalaang lokal sa panahon ng krisis tungkol dito.

Inuutusan ko naman si DILG Sec. Joey Lina na makipag-ugnay sa mga mayor ng mga bayan at munisipyo na nagpapataw ng mga terminal at toll fees sa mga pampublikong sasakyan. Lubos na nakakabigat ito sa kanila. Ang kuwento sa akin ng isang transport sector leader ay higit sa tatlong daan piso ang binabayad nila sa terminal at toll fees sa mga bayan-bayan mula Davao hanggang Surigao. Kakausapin ni Joey Lina ang mga mayors na ibaba o tanggalin ang mga terminal at toll fees na ito.

Binuo ko ngayon ang isang Task Force laban sa colorum at out of line vehicles, at laban sa illegal terminals ng mga ito. Ito ay pamumunuan ni Larry Mendoza ng DOTC. Binibigyan ko ang Task Force na ito ng isang buwan para itigil ang lahat ng colorum at out of line na sasakyan sa Kamaynilaan, kasama na ang jeep, bus, FX at mga van. Bubuwagin din nila ang lahat ng terminal nitong mga illegal na sasakyang ito sa loob ng isang buwan. Aasahan ko ang unang report ni Larry Mendoza in two weeks time.

Iniutos ko na kay MMDA Chairman Bayani Fernando na itigil na ang eksperimento sa number o color coding para sa mga pampublikong sasakyan.

Iniutos ko din na ipalaganap ang paggamit ng coco-diesel na kapag dinagdag sa diesel ay ginagawang mas malinis ang binubugang usok nito. Ang gagamit ng coco-diesel ay malamang papasa sa mga reglamento ng bagong batas na Clean Air Act.

Pinaaaral ko kung pwedeng gamitin ang coco levy funds para pondohan ito. Pinautos ko sa DBP na magpadaan ng pondo sa Postal Bank na siyang magpapautang sa mga bus operators para ma-convert ang mga sasakyan nila mula sa diesel o gas tungo sa compressed natural gas o CNG. Ang CNG ay gawa na natin ngayon sa Malampaya at hindi inaangkat. Ang CNG ay kalahati lamang ng presyo ng diesel. Si Vince Perez at si Dodi Limcaoco ay magtutulungan para gawin ito.

Yung ibang daing at mungkahi ng transport sector ay pag-aaralan ko.

Iniutos ko sa lahat ng ahensiya na may kinalaman sa transport sector na mag-dayalogo at kumunsulta sa kanila sa palagian. Isumbong niyo sa akin pag may mga opisyal ng pamahalaan ko na ayaw makipag-usap o makipagkita sa inyo.

Doon sa NCRPO, sinabi ko kay General Velasco, buwan-buwan na makikipag-dayalogo sa transport sectors.

Gusto ko sanang magpasalamat sa mga lider ng transport sector na muling nakinig sa aking pakikiusap na huwag munang humingi ng fare increase. Kayo ay mga tunay na makabayang Pilipino.

Mga kababayan ko, may krisis tayong hinaharap sa mga darating na linggo. Hindi natin gusto ito. Hindi natin gawa ito. Gayunpaman, handa po ang inyong gobyerno. Sapat ang imbentaryo natin ng langis, may padating pa. Ang Crisis Committee ni Roy Golez ay may mga plano na tutugon sa anumang pangyayari.

Magka-isa tayo, magtulungan tayo, madaling lilipas ang bagyong ito kung tayo ay magkapit-bisig muli.

Maraming salamat po at magandang araw.

GMA to PNP: 'give no quarters to 'kotong' cops'

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Philippine National Police (PNP) to give no quarters to mulcting or "kotong" policemen as part of her package of benefits for the members of the transport sector.

In her radio message this morning, the President also exhorted the public to immediately pass on to Director Reynaldo Velasco, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), any information about the activities of these mulcting policemen.

“Walang patawad ngayon ang mahuhuling nangongotong (We will not forgive cops who will be found mulcting),” the President said.

The President told the PNP hierarchy that cops found guilty of mulcting should not only be transferred to minor posts but should also be charged in courts, jailed, or dismissed from the service.

She said that it is not only the transport sector but also the general public that suffers because of the activities of these mulcting policemen.

The problem of mulcting cops was one of the topics that were discussed during the meeting held in Malacañang Friday, which was attended by the leaders of the country’s transport groups.

During the meeting, the transport groups assured the President that they will not seek an increase in transport fares.

In return, the President unwrapped a package of benefits for them that include fuel price discounts and the setting up of refueling facilities with discounted prices on diesel and gasoline products in bus and jeepney terminals in Metro Manila.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: February 22, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071009084119/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/feb22.htm>

The President's Day: February 24, 2003

24 FEBRUARY 2003

- **GMA leads prayer rally for world peace**
- **GMA joins other heads of state in NAM Summit**
- **ASEAN oil producers vow to help Philippines in case of oil crisis**
- **Ople lauds Malaysian role in Mindanao peace initiatives**
- **Ople to NDF: Return to negotiating table, accept final peace pact draft of gov't**
- **S. won't use Mindanao as jump-off point in war against terrorism**
- **GMA asks Saddam to assuage fears of war in NAM Summit**
- **Malacañang assures Mindanao officials it will consult them on Balikatan exercises**
- **Gov't to pursue peace process with MILF with the help of NAM, says GMA**
- **Mahathir to GMA: Malaysia to go on helping push peace talks with MILF**

GMA leads prayer rally for world peace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night led the nation in a prayer rally for world peace, asking God's guidance to enlighten both the leaders of the United States and Iraq for the peaceful settlement of the impending crisis in the Middle East.

The President also prayed for the end of the armed conflict in Central Mindanao between government forces and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels.

The rally was held at the Quirino Grandstand in Luneta Park and organized by the Bangon Pilipino Movement headed by Donald Dee of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines. The President led thousands of peace loving Filipinos from the different sectors of society in releasing a thousand doves which symbolize peace.

Before President Macapagal-Arroyo read her prayer, a representative each from the business community, youth sector, local government units, overseas Filipino Workers, and women's as well as religious groups also offered prayers for peace in the Middle East and in Central Mindanao.

Among those who participated in the rally were Catholic Bishop Teodoro Bacani, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, El Shaddai leader Bro. Mike Velarde, Miguel Varela, president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, businessman Sergio Luis Ortiz, Avelino Valerio, vice president of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, Isaias Samson Jr. of the Iglesia ni Cristo and Donald Dee.

GMA joins other heads of state in NAM Summit

KUALA LUMPUR – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today joined at least 83 heads of state and other ranking officials of the 114-member Non-Aligned Movement in the opening rites of the grouping's 13TH summit at the Putrajaya World Trade Center (PWTC) here.

The President, attired in orange formal business dress designed by half-Japanese half-Filipino Ito Curata, entered the NAM session halls shortly before 9:00 a.m.

She was the third female head-of-state who arrived at the PWTC. She came after Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Upon her arrival, President Macapagal-Arroyo was met by the Malaysian Deputy Minister-In-Attendance and was escorted to the holding lounge of the Tun Razak Hall 4 at Level 4 of the PWTC.

At the entrance of the lounge, the President was welcomed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohammad.

Before the start of the opening program at 10 a.m., the President joined the third group of NAM leaders to be ushered inside the plenary session hall.

The President was seated at the front row. She will be the fifth speaker during the plenary session and general debate this afternoon.

She is expected to speak at about 2:30 p.m. on the NAM's Agenda No. 8 focused on a review of the international political and economic situation and the role of the NAM in the 21st century.

The President arrived at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, about 70 kilometers from here, shortly before midnight Sunday.

She came from Villamor Air Base in Pasay City and flew aboard a Hawker 800XP private aircraft that cruised for about three hours and 45 minutes to this Malaysian capital.

Received by Philippine foreign ministry officials and Malaysian officials, the President was immediately escorted by car to her suite at the Ritz Carlton Hotel.

ASEAN oil producers vow to help Philippines in case of oil crisis

KUALA LUMPUR – Oil producers Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam are committed to supply oil to the Philippines in any case of an acute oil shortage in the world.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople said the three fellow members in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) would not hesitate to help the Philippines weather any oil crisis that might break out because of a possible US-led attack on Iraq.

“There is an agreement to that,” he said.

Ople noted that the ASEAN Petroleum Supply Agreement (APSA) signed by the region's energy ministers committed the supply of crude by oil-exporting ASEAN members to non-oil producing ASEAN neighbors.

Philippine-based oil firms have been sourcing some of their crude and petroleum requirements from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand.

Ople said Russia and Iran have also pledged to supply crude to the Philippines.

However, the volume of oil to be supplied had not yet been specified, he said.

He said additional oil would further increase the country's oil inventory level which has already reached 77 days of supply.

He noted a recent report of Energy Secretary Vicente Perez that “we still have a 77-day supply, which is the highest in the region.”

Ople lauds Malaysian role in Mindanao peace initiatives

KUALA LUMPUR – A generous enough contribution.

This was how Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople described the support and help Malaysia has been giving the Philippines in the latter's peace initiatives in its southern islands.

Ople, in an interview late Sunday at the Ritz Carlton Hotel here, said the Malaysian government has continued "to lend its good offices" to help resolve the issue on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the three-decade-old Mindanao Problem.

Ople said Malaysia, historically, has been hosting the Philippines-MILF peace talks.

He also noted the initiatives of Malaysia and neighbor Indonesia in pushing for and supporting "our bid for an observer status in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)."

The powerful 49-member OIC, composed of Islamic nations, has been taking up the problem in Southern Philippines since 1994, since the grouping's meeting here.

"(The OIC had) emphasized respect on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines" in resolutions on the Mindanao problem they approved year after year, Ople said.

He noted that the next Ministerial Conference of the OIC would be conducted in Tehran with Iran as host.

He also assured that the OIC would not misread recent developments in Mindanao.

"We do not allow any communications gap to develop" between the government and the OIC, he said.

Before he left to attend the Non-Aligned Movement Summit that opened here this morning, Ople said he met with all Manila-based OIC ambassadors and "gave them a detailed briefing on the latest developments concerning the MILF in Mindanao, including the battle in Pikit, Cotabato."

Ople also stressed that the government had "resisted attempts to list the MILF as a foreign terrorist organization "because we want to give way to the peace process in full."

He said the MILF peace panel based here, speaking through its head Al Haj Murad Ibrahim, "has expressed its willingness to participate in the peace talks under Malaysian auspices."

The matter, he noted, is being handled by Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita and Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last week sent Gonzales here to initiate contact with the MILF after the latter refused to go back to the negotiating table following a military offensive on a major MILF camp in Liguasan Marsh, Pikit, Cotabato.

The military was after a notorious kidnap-for-ransom gang and other criminal elements said to have sought refuge at the Buliok complex in the marsh. Reports said the MILF harbored the criminal groups.

The ceasefire pact specifically provided that the MILF would not harbor criminal and lawless elements.

Ople said Gonzales will report to the President the progress of his back-channel talks with the MILF.

He hinted that the President and Gonzales would likely meet here to discuss the peace initiatives with the MILF.

Ople to NDF: Return to negotiating table, accept final peace pact draft of gov't

KUALA LUMPUR – To be stricken out of the list of foreign terrorist groups, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its political and military arms must return to the negotiating table and accept the final peace pact prepared by the Philippine government.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople asserted this, saying he was willing to “humble myself and go back to Europe and say ‘Please delist these gentlemen because they are no longer terrorists’.”

Ople, in an interview in his room at the Ritz Carlton Hotel late Sunday, said he was willing to ask for a review of the sanctions imposed by the European Union on the Netherlands-based top CPP leader, Jose Ma. Sison, and the communist group.

Sison is also facing murder charges in Philippine courts for the cold-blooded killing of former Cagayan Congressman and Governor Rodolfo Aguinaldo.

“It is up to them,” Ople said, referring to the CPP, the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the New People’s Army (NPA).

“If they want peace, they should come back to the peace table without so many pre-conditions,” he stressed.

The CPP-NDF-NPA, whose leaders are holed out with Sison in the Netherlands, demanded to be freed of the terrorist tag before they talk peace with government.

Brushing aside this snag to the peace talks, Ople said the demand of the communist group “is unlikely to happen.”

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo recently sent a team, composed mostly of the members of the Philippine peace panel, to Utrecht in the Netherlands for exploratory talks aimed at resuming the peace negotiations. Keeping all options open in the search for ways to peacefully resolve the 30-year insurgency problem in the Philippines, the President cited the benefits of social, economic and political growth under an atmosphere of security.

Government officials have recently asked the NDF to give the government draft final peace agreement a chance.

U.S. won’t use Mindanao as jump-off point in war against terrorism

KUALA LUMPUR – The use of Mindanao as a staging area and launching pad of the United States in a possible attack against Iraq is “very, very remote.”

The US would not even consider using the Philippines’ second largest island as a jump-off point in its campaign against global terrorism.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople allayed fears of the people of Mindanao that they might get caught in the crossfire of a conflict not of their own making.

In an interview in his room at the Ritz Carlton hotel here late Sunday, Ople said the US had only considered Turkey and Kuwait as their immediate reference points in an American-led invasion of Iraq.

But a possible war in the Persian Gulf could be averted if Iraqi President Saddam Hussein accedes to the provisions of United Nations Resolution 1441 on the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction.

Ople said the 114-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting here on February 24 and 25 is set to categorically reject the current threat of war in the Middle East.

The NAM, mainly composed of the world's developing nations, is also expected to call on Iraq to surrender any weapons of mass destruction said to be in its arsenal.

Ople added that the US would not use their men to be stationed in Sulu in launching anti-terrorist campaigns, particularly against the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in neighboring Southeast Asian nations.

The US soldiers going to Sulu would be joined by Filipino troops in a military training exercise dubbed as Balikatan 03-1.

He said "the US is relying on governments in the Southeast Asian region to deal with terrorism in their areas."

He noted that Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines have been dealing with terrorism "quite effectively."

He cited the arrest of the JI leader and the indictment of those responsible for the Bali bomb blasts.

GMA asks Saddam to assuage fears of war in NAM Summit

KUALA LUMPUR – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to initiate moves that would allay the world's collective fears of a possible war in the Persian Gulf.

In a seven-minute speech before fellow heads of state and other state ministers during the plenary session of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit here, the President said Saddam should "urgently negotiate a win-win settlement that will spare the heroic Iraqi people the agonies of a devastating war."

"Perhaps President Saddam might now wish to take the initiative and invite the UN Secretary General, the UN inspectors, representatives of doubting countries and of the international media to see for themselves if Iraq really possessed weapons of mass destruction," she said.

This, the President noted, was in accordance with the call of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan made this morning in a speech read before the NAM by his representative.

"Perhaps, he may wish to show them all they want to see, so that the fears of the world can be assuaged, so that we can have peace," she added.

The President believed the Iraqi people, Iraq's friends, the non-aligned nations and the world's inhabitants of all faiths and persuasions would recognize the move as a "judicious act" and an "act of the highest statesmanship that will avoid war and save thousands of lives."

At the same time, "the Philippines joins the call of the international community for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to return to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty," the President said.

She cited the NAM's consistent view that "security should be sought through nuclear disarmament, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, as well as balanced and progressive conventional disarmament."

But the President stressed that "in our movement's stand against terrorism and, more broadly, in our movement's search for global security, we are not against any community of faith."

She called on both Iraq and the DPRK to go beyond the disarmament crisis and "beyond a strategic accommodation with the UN demands."

There would be a great future for an outward-looking and pluralistic Iraqi and the North Korean peoples, she said.

By being so, they could make friends with their neighbors – Kuwait, Iran and other protagonists for Iraq and the Republic of Korea for the DPRK, she explained.

Further, an “outward-looking and pluralistic Iraq and DPRK “can lead their people to peace and prosperity, and perpetuate the names of their leaders in history,” she said.

She called on Iraqi and DPRK leaders to “take the pragmatic path and seek ways to integrate their rich cultural heritage with the modern world.”

The President looked forward to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein ably turning Iraq “into an example of the continuing relevance of Islam in modernizing a nation for peace and development,” so exemplified in Asia by Malaysia’s Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad.

The Chief Executive also cited the NAM for consistently being around as the “largest international bulwark of peace,” next to the UN.

“It is a movement that has chosen to temper conflict ... a movement that has offered its influential offices not only to stop the firing of weapons, but also to steward peace towards the welfare and benefit of the poor,” she stressed.

The President said the NAM could “continue to be revitalized if we harness our unity towards promoting global peace and development in this new century ... where global challenges have multiplied or deepened ... where hundreds of millions still go hungry and unschooled against their will ... where we awaken to the fact that no country is immune to tragedies inflicted by agents of discord and terror.”

She called for mutual respect for sovereignty of states and a democratic system of international relations.

The President was the fifth speaker during the plenary session and general debate.

Malacañang assures Mindanao officials it will consult them on Balikatan exercises

Malacañang today assured Mindanao political leaders that it would confer with them on the issue of joint Philippine and United States military exercises in Sulu at the proper time.

In a phone patch interview from Kuala Lumpur where President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is attending the 13th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said the government would definitely hear the side of the local officials once the terms of reference (TOR) on the planned exercises is worked out.

“In due time, as soon as TOR are worked out, the process for consultation will take place. That is the framework within which we are working,” Bunye said.

The Palace Spokesman also reiterated that the plan is to have American troops “not as combatants but to train and assist Filipino soldiers.”

“And they’ll be going there to bring civic and humanitarian projects. And we hope that as in the case in Basilan, the assistance in this regard, especially the civic and humanitarian project, will be able to provide development assistance to the area,” Bunye said.

Balikatan 02-1, the joint military exercises between Philippine and U.S. troops staged in Basilan last year, has been very successful as it brought civic and humanitarian programs as well as infrastructure projects in the province.

Gov’t to pursue peace process with MILF with the help of NAM, says GMA

KUALA LUMPUR — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that despite some setbacks, her government would pursue the peace process in Mindanao with the help of its friends in the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM).

Speaking at the plenary session of the 13th NAM Summit this afternoon, the President said that in 2002, her government resumed peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) through the efforts of Malaysia and Libya.

“Although we have encountered some setbacks, we hope to move forward soon by the generous participation of our allies in the Non-Aligned Movement,” the President said.

The President recalled that in 1996, the Philippine government also forged a peace agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) after four years of negotiations participated in by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

She said that the NAM could continue to be revitalized on the basis of the first principles of Bandung, Indonesia where NAM was born.

“These are the ramparts of peace and development and this is the path the Philippines has taken,” the President said.

The President was the fifth speaker on the summit’s Agenda Item 8, which calls for a review of the international of political and economic situation and the role of NAM in the 21st century.

She said that the NAM can continue to revitalize “if we could harness our unity towards promoting global peace and development in the new century.”

Mahathir to GMA: Malaysia to go on helping push peace talks with MILF

KUALA LUMPUR – Malaysia will continue to play the role of a benevolent host and mediator when the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) continue peace negotiations.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad made this commitment in bilateral talks with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, part of the latter’s working visit to Malaysia and attendance in the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit here.

In a separate bilateral, Libyan Foreign Minister Abdelrahman Mohamed Shalghem also promised the President of Libya’s full support and cooperation in enhancing the peace talks with the MILF.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye today told Filipino reporters at the Putrajaya World Trade Center here that the President met with Mahathir for 15 minutes, from 3:20 to 3:35 p.m.

Bunye said the bilateral focused on what Malaysia could do to help push and complete the peace process with the MILF, seen to eventually solve the three-decade-old Mindanao problem.

Malaysia would play the pivotal role of go-between to hasten the peace process, he said.

They also had the chance to talk about the welfare of Filipino expatriates in Sabah, he added.

During the bilateral with Shalghem, the President was informed of the keen interest of the Khadaffi Foundation, headed by the son of Libyan leader Moammar Khadaffi, to establish a palm oil plantation in Liguasan Marsh, North Cotabato.

Bunye said the plantation will be put up in joint venture with the National Development Corporation.

The government, in an unrelenting military offensive, recently retook the marsh area from criminal elements and secessionist rebels.

The Presidential Spokesman said the President likewise had the chance to have a bilateral meeting with Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Prime Minister of Bahrain.

They talked about the welfare of Filipino expatriates in Bahrain and the Middle East and what Bahrain could do to help in the event that a war erupts in the Persian Gulf.

The Bahrain premier also told the President of his plans to visit Manila on February 26 on his way home, Bunye said.

He added that following the President's speech before the NAM delegates, leaders from the Islamic countries of Brunei Darussalam, Pakistan, Libya and Qatar stood to congratulate the President.

The Islamic leaders expressed their belief that what the President said in her speech would be helpful in finding a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis, he noted.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: February 24, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514040648/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/feb24.htm>

The President's Day: February 25, 2003

25 FEBRUARY 2003

- **GMA leads EDSA 1 celebration, inaugurates Aquino-Diokno Memorial as national shrine**
- **GMA joins People Power 1 personalities in Thanksgiving Mass at EDSA Shrine**
- **GMA inaugurates Ninoy-Diokno National Shrine**

GMA leads EDSA 1 celebration, inaugurates Aquino-Diokno Memorial as national shrine

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will lead today the 17th anniversary celebration of EDSA People Power 1 by joining the masses for the traditional Eucharistic celebration at the EDSA Shrine and then motoring to Nueva Ecija for the inauguration of the Aquino-Diokno Memorial.

The President arrived early this morning from Kuala Lumpur, where she attended the 13th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement.

After presiding over the executive committee meeting of the National Economic and Development Authority in Malacañang, the President will proceed to the EDSA Shrine for Mass.

Afterwards, she will fly to Fort Magsaysay to preside over the inauguration of the Aquino-Diokno Memorial as a National Shrine.

The memorial is to the former detention site of the late Senators Benigno "Ninoy" S. Aquino, Jr. and Jose "Pepe" W. Diokno, who were imprisoned in Fort Magsaysay during the early months of Martial Law.

The President ordered the rehabilitation of the detention cells following a visit last December 17 to the Aquino Center at the Hacienda Luisita complex in Tarlac City.

Inspired by what she saw at the Aquino Center museum, where photos and memorabilia of the late senator were on exhibit, the President instructed Maj. Gen. Alberto Braganza to improve the site.

Braganza is the President's former Senior Military Aide and is now Commanding General of the Philippine Army's 7th Infantry Division based in Fort Magsaysay in Palayan City (formerly Laur).

Reconstructing the site and transforming it into a memorial in time for this year's EDSA 1 commemoration proved to be a challenging task. The 51st Engineer Brigade of the Philippine Army provided the skilled labor for the construction while the Seventh Infantry troops provided the labor force.

The detention facility was actually the former headquarters of the First Military Security Detachment of the Military Security Unit of the Philippine Army. It was converted into a detention facility for political prisoners during the early months of Martial Law.

From March 12 to April 11 1973, Ninoy Aquino (codenamed "Alpha) and Pepe Diokno (codenamed "Delta) endured a month of isolation, indignity and uncertainty in separate small stuffy and nearly bare rooms. With the windows nailed shut, only fluorescent bulbs lighted the rooms 24 hours a day.

Left with only few pieces of clothing, the two opposition leaders were not allowed to wear wristwatches, or to see and talk to each other. They kept track of one another by alternately singing "Lupang Hinirang" and "Bayan Ko."

Christmas tunes were played in the summer to further disorient the detainees. Ninoy kept track of time by observing the shadow of a barely visible fence post and marked the passing of each day on a window jamb.

Similarly, Diokno used tobacco residue from his pipe to count the days on a soapbox. Later, he would tie knots in his mosquito net to keep trace of the days that passed.

In solitary confinement, Ninoy found comfort in knowing that the “jail warden” was his godson, First Lieutenant and now Ambassador Voltaire T. Gazmin. He was also touched by the compassion shown by Capt. Diosdado Garcia, the medical officer on duty and Miss Basilica Tolentino (now Mrs. Ollero).

Upon his release in 1974, Pepe Diokno organized the Free Legal Assistance Group for the benefit of small farmers, fisherfolks, workers, students and urban poor, many of who had been detained unjustly like him.

GMA joins People Power 1 personalities in Thanksgiving Mass at EDSA Shrine

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today joined the people and some of the principal personalities in the 1986 People Power Revolution during a Thanksgiving Mass celebrated at the Our Lady of Peace Church at the EDSA Shrine in Ortigas, Pasig City in commemoration of the 17th anniversary of the popular uprising that toppled a dictatorship and restored democracy to the country.

With Jaime Cardinal Sin as the main celebrant, the Mass was also attended by former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos, Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr., Senate President Franklin Drilon and some members of the Cabinet led by Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo.

During his homily, Cardinal Sin urged Filipinos to “rekindle the dream” of the first people power revolution.

“Now is the time to act,” said the Cardinal. “There is so much to be done.

Former President Aquino, described as the inspiration of the first EDSA revolution, said that people power is about assuming responsibility for ourselves and for others.

“Let us not just concentrate on our rights but also on our responsibilities,” said the widow of former Sen. Benigno S. Aquino, Jr.

Former President Fidel Ramos, one of the main characters in People Power I, said: “We Filipinos must never allow our political processes and institutions ever to fail again.”

Ramos pointed out that the only true path to sustainable development and enduring nationhood should be through the strengthening of ethical values, political institutions and social cohesion as a united and capable people and as a competitive national team performing competently in the globalized world of the 21st century.

Epifanio de los Santos Avenue was the center of the world’s attention for four days in February 1986 when people from all walks of life converged on EDSA and pulled a miracle: a bloodless uprising that toppled President Ferdinand Marcos.

In January 2001, a second people power revolution or EDSA II became necessary because of the nationwide outrage over a corrupt and inept leadership that almost brought down the economy.

The outcome of that revolution was the assumption into office of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

After the midday Mass, the President and Ms. Aquino flew by helicopter to Fort Magsaysay, in Laur, Nueva Ecija to declare the incarceration cell of former Senators Aquino and Jose W. Diokno as a National Shrine.

The President flew in early today from Malaysia where she attended the 13th summit conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kuala Lumpur.

GMA inaugurates Ninoy-Diokno National Shrine

FORT MAGSAYSAY, Palayan City — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo inaugurated here today the Aquino-Diokno Memorial commemorating the sacrifice and strength of spirit of the late Senators Benigno “Ninoy” S. Aquino, Jr. and Jose “Pepe” W. Diokno.

After attending the eucharistic celebration at the EDSA Shrine on the 17th anniversary of EDSA People Power 1, the President flew here to witness the launching of the memorial.

Along with former President Corazon Aquino and Carmen Diokno, the widows of the two senators, and the other members of the Aquino, Cojuangco and Diokno clans, the President unveiled the marker at the former detention facility.

The cells were the former Army Intelligence Headquarters of the First Military Security Detachment.

The President then viewed a 20-minute video presentation on the history of the two senators’ incarceration. Afterwards, the President toured the detention facility with the families of the two senators.

In a short program, the President witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the Department of National Defense and Department of Tourism, making Fort Magsaysay a tourist destination in Central Luzon.

The area would also offer adventure trips for tourists who want to experience mountain-trekking, rappelling and water sports.

The MOA was signed by Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon and Defense Undersecretary Edgardo Batenga.

The President ordered the rehabilitation of the detention cells following a visit last December 17 to the Aquino Center at the Hacienda Luisita complex in Tarlac City.

Inspired by what she saw at the Aquino Center museum where photos and memorabilia of the late senator were on exhibit, the President instructed Maj. Gen. Alberto Braganza to improve the site.

Braganza is the President’s former Senior Military Aide and is now Commanding General of the Philippine Army’s 7th Infantry Division based in Fort Magsaysay in Palayan City (formerly Laur).

In brief remarks, Mrs. Aquino thanked the President and Maj. Gen. Braganza for putting up the memorial. She admitted that when the proposal was raised by the President last December 17 in Tarlac City, she was not initially fully convinced that it could be done.

She noted that Ninoy’s detention here was “one of the most traumatic experience of our lives.” The former president said, however, that the experience paved the way for the strengthening of Ninoy’s spirituality. “It was the start of his being prayerful,” Mrs. Aquino said.

The former President said Aquino and Diokno’s detention was part of their supposed punishment for smuggling an article to the *Bangkok Post*. But she noted that “poor” Diokno had nothing to do with such and that actually, it was Ninoy, and their daughter Ballsy, who did the act.

She noted, however, that it made her feel much better that Diokno was with Ninoy at that time. From March 12 to April 11, 1973, Ninoy (codenamed “Alpha”) and Pepe (codenamed “Delta”) endured a month of isolation, indignity and uncertainty in separate small, stuffy and nearly bare rooms. With the windows nailed shut, only fluorescent bulbs lighted the rooms 24 hours a day.

Left with only a few pieces of clothing, the two opposition leaders were not allowed to wear wristwatches, or to see and talk to each other. They kept track of each another by alternately singing “Lupang Hinirang” and “Bayan Ko.”

Christmas tunes were played in the summer to further disorient the detainees. Ninoy kept track of time by observing the shadow of a barely visible fence post and marked the passing of each day on a window jamb.

Similarly, Diokno used tobacco residue from his pipe to count the days on a soapbox. Later, he would tie knots on his mosquito net to keep track of the days that passed.

In solitary confinement, Ninoy found comfort in knowing that the “jail warden” was his godson, then first lieutenant and now Ambassador to Cambodia Voltaire T. Gazmin. He was also touched by the compassion shown by Capt. Diosdado Garcia, the medical officer on duty, and Miss Basilica Tolentino (now Mrs. Ollera).

The two detainees were later transferred to Fort Bonifacio.

Reconstructing the site and transforming it into a memorial in time for this year’s EDSA 1 commemoration proved to be a challenging task. The 51st engineer Brigade of the Philippine Army provided the skilled labor for the construction while the Seventh Infantry troops provided the labor force.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: February 25, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20050908065447/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/feb25.htm>

The President's Day: February 26, 2003

26 FEBRUARY 2003

- **Gov't to bring development to Buliok, GMA says**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Igancio R. Bunye**
- **GMA thanks Khalifa for assurance of help to OFWs in the event of a Gulf war**
- **Making a difference in the Kuala Lumpur summit**
- **Give priority to remote areas in micro-finance scheme, GMA orders NACP**
- **GMA makes surprise visit to Tondo police station to check on campaign against street crimes**

Gov't to bring development to Buliok, GMA says

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the government would bring development immediately to the Buliok Complex in Pikit, Cotabato so that the evacuees can resume their normal lives.

“What we want to do now, precisely, is when the evacuees go back to Buliok, we want them to go back not again to another no man’s land. We want them to go back to a land of development now,” the President told the members of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) during an *en banc* meeting in Malacañang.

Responding to a letter from the Sectoral Representatives Council of the NAPC appealing for immediate cessation of hostilities to enable the evacuees to return to their homes and rebuild their lives, the President said that North Cotabato Governor Emmanuel Pinol has already drawn a development program for Pikit, using mainly local government funds.

The President said she has already released P5 million from the national government to assist in the development plan.

According to the President, part of the development fund will be used for planting corn and part of it will be for planting palm oil.

The Chief Executive said that Malaysia, after her talks with Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed in her last visit to Kuala Lumpur, will be providing the planting materials for palm oil.

The President said the evacuees, who are abandoning the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), should be given a chance to live peacefully and to prosper.

The President assured the NAPC sectoral representatives that she has ordered a halt to hostilities in the area. The reason why there are still skirmishes there is that soldiers undertaking demining activities in some areas are being attacked by elements of the MILF, the President said.

The President cited several surveys that say they don’t want the Philippines to be involved in the war in Iraq, but they want the government to finish off the Abu Sayyaf and other lawless elements in Mindanao.

“Now, I don’t want to finish the MILF,” the President said, stressing that the government has already drafted a peace agreement with the MILF. “I want peace,” the President pointed out, saying she has told the MILF that the Philippine government is willing to back to the negotiating table.

She said the military was forced to engage in combat operations in Buliok because the kidnappers were there. The President recalled that the MILF, in an agreement in Kuala Lumpur, assured the government that it will help catch the kidnappers.

“Instead of helping us catch the kidnapers, they kept them there. We have to enforce the law,” the President said.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Igancio R. Bunye

Re MILF

In the past, several calls for so-called “jihad” have been aired but our Muslim brethren have largely ignored these extremist gestures. The majority of Filipino Muslims are already in the mainstream of peace and democracy. Calls for them to engage in war will be futile and will fall on deaf ears.

Four points are important: First, the government shall continue its operations against criminal elements in Mindanao; second, we are calling the MILF back to the negotiating table; third, we are calling on our neighbors to mediate in the peace talks; and fourth, our peace and development programs in the region will be unrelenting.

Re Drug Problem

The administration has already swooped down on a number of drug laboratories in the countries, busted drug syndicates and hauled drug lords into jail, and this administration will continue to address that problem. But there are credible reports that the Philippines continues to be a transit point for drugs being brought to other countries. This is one of the reasons why we need to have more stringent financial controls such as those proposed in the AMLA. We must work with the international community in battling this global menace.

Re Agile

The interest and welfare of the Filipino people, nothing more, nothing less, comes first in every major government decision. AGILE has no power to either influence or subvert this principle. Let us not raise smokescreens to cover up for inaction on the AMLA. The March 15 FATF deadline is ticking like a time bomb threatening our people and our economy.

Re Non-Aligned Movement

Far from being isolated in the NAM conference, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became the center of attention. Her speech was warmly applauded especially by the OIC delegates. She was elected vice chair of the conference and she presided over the most of the afternoon session during the opening day. She also stole the show for her fashion statement. The *Malay Mail* wrote: “Resplendent in her red attire, the Philippines President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was a sure fire standout in the crowd of somber-coloured clothes preferred by the other heads of state.”

“Great dressing” chorused five out of seven male observers in the NAM conference.

GMA thanks Khalifa for assurance of help to OFWs in the event of a Gulf war

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain for his assurance that Bahrain will help in securing the welfare of some 3,000 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the kingdom in the event that war erupts in the Persian Gulf.

The President made the remarks during the luncheon she hosted for the visiting dignitary at the Malacañang State Dining Room.

“His Highness assured me of the continued protection and welfare of our countrymen during the current crisis in the region,” the President said in her remarks, referring to her bilateral meeting Monday with the Prime Minister in Kuala Lumpur during the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit.

The Chief Executive and the Prime Minister were among the 63 heads of state and government who attended the summit.

In her remarks before offering a toast, the President also thanked Khalifa for the financial support extended by the Kingdom of Bahrain to finance development projects in Mindanao.

“Your support to finance government projects in Mindanao is highly appreciated by the Philippine government and the Filipino people,” the President told Khalifa.

The President recalled that the visit of Khalifa, as well as his previous visit last November 2001, has greatly enhanced the close relations between the Philippines and Bahrain.

She said that these visits, as well as the dialogues between officials of the two countries, have resulted in the signing of agreements that would benefit the people of the Philippines and the Kingdom of Bahrain.

For his part, Khalifa thanked the President for the warm hospitality extended to him and his delegation.

“It’s a great pleasure to thank you for your hospitality. I hope my friends in the Gulf will follow my steps to visit the Philippines,” Khalifa said in his response.

Before the luncheon, the President received Khalifa and his delegation at the Palace Music Room for the courtesy call.

Among those present at the luncheon were former President Fidel Ramos and members of the Cabinet, that included Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza, and Acting Foreign Affairs Secretary Jose Brillantes.

Making a difference in the Kuala Lumpur summit

KUALA LUMPUR – She stood tall and made a difference.

As fiery as her seven-minute speech urging Iraq and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to help avert a global crisis was President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s resplendent but respectable formal business suit that literally lit the halls of the Putrajaya World Trade Center here last Monday.

As soon as she disembarked from the official car to march into welcoming arms and smiles of Malaysian officials, heads of other delegates to the 13th Non-Aligned Movement Summit turned to take a long look at the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

The President arrived shortly before 9:00 a.m., an hour early for the summit’s opening ceremonies at 10:00 a.m.

Her outfit: an orange formal business attire designed by Filipino-Japanese Ito Curata.

People at the hall, used to seeing the men in dark suits and the women in formal light-shaded business attires, could not but noticed and expressed awe over the lady wearing the orange suit.

She was the third lady head of state who arrived at the PWTC, coming after Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Many of the mediemen in the spacious and well-equipped International Media Center (IMC) inside the PWTC momentarily stopped badgering on their computer keypads to stare at the numerous television screens spread strategically in the hall.

For some 20 seconds, they watched the President walked towards Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad who stood at the end of the hall to welcome his guests, some 63 heads of state and a big number of other government ministers and representatives of NAM guest-and observer-nations.

A reporter from India remarked that the President was “different,” and he surely wanted to see and hear her deliver her short speech during the summit’s plenary session and general debate scheduled in the afternoon.

The President was the fifth speaker in Monday’s afternoon session. At the rostrum, her orange suit flared anew to get the attention of the people inside the plenary hall and the IMC who attentively listened as she spoke of NAM as the “largest international bulwark of peace” next to the United Nations.

The NAM, she said, is a movement that has “chosen to temper conflict . . . a movement that has offered its influential offices not only to stop the firing of weapons, but also to steward peace towards the welfare and benefit of the poor.”

Her speech was well applauded, particularly by members of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), a grouping of Islamic nations that had been helping the Philippines resolve the conflict in Mindanao.

“(The OIC had) emphasized respect on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines” in resolutions on the Mindanao problem they approved year after year, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople earlier said.

Among those who stood up from their seats to congratulate the President after her speech were Qatar Prime Minister Sheikh Abdulla bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, Libya Foreign Affairs Minister Abdurrahman Mohamed Shalghem and Brunei Darussalam Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, according to Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye.

The President’s orange suit stood out again during the official photo session.

Reporters learned that she was initially assigned to the left outermost position in the second row after the seated officials of the NAM headed by Prime Minister Mahathir. But organizers immediately corrected the situation and she was escorted to the middle of her row as her peers gave way for her change of position.

Amid a sea of black and dark blue suits, the President in her orange dress stood out again.

The telltale images in thousands of photographs taken and immediately sent worldwide through the Internet showed the difference she made.

To cap it all, the attention to the head of state in a bright suit practically grew when the President presided for about an hour at the plenary session.

It was about 5:00 p.m. and she took over the chores, as acting chairman, of three-year NAM Chairman Prime Minister Mahathir.

She introduced and thanked speakers, all of whom were heads of state and ranking government ministers in their respective countries.

From the opening ceremonies until the end of the plenary session, the President enjoyed the warmth of fellow-delegates, sharing photo sessions with them and giving an ear to what they have to say while exchanging diplomatic notes on cordial relations between countries.

Lastly, the President's personality drew raves the next day by Malaysia's leading newspapers.

The respected *Malay Mail* said that resplendent in her red attire, the President was "a surefire stand-out in the crowd of sombre-coloured clothes preferred by other heads of state."

Give priority to remote areas in micro-finance scheme, GMA orders NAPC

Making microfinance a cornerstone in her fight against poverty, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) to give priority to remote areas in their innovative microfinance scheme called "credit plus five."

The "credit plus five" refers to credit plus training, product development, market access, new technologies and social insurance.

In the 6th NAPC *en banc* meeting in Malacañang, NAPC Lead Convenor Teresita Deles informed the President that as of January 31, 2003, the People's Credit Finance Corporation (PCFC), through its microfinance institutions, has already served 79 provinces, 113 out of 114 cities (Cotabato City still unserved) and 1,083 out of 1,496 towns, or 72 percent.

In her 2002 State of the Nation Address (SONA), the President made a personal commitment to reach out to one million poor women or 300,000 new borrowers a year from 2002 to 2004.

What has been accomplished so far, Deles said, was a total of 595,899 new borrowers, or an increase of 160 percent from the 372,349 borrowers in 2001.

The President approved the NAPC recommendation to set up a mechanism to serve remote and conflict areas, and basic sectors such as the elderly, disaster victims, and the disabled.

On the issues of sustainability of micro-financing institutions and clients, the President directed the continued rationalization of credit programs in geographic coverage and client targeting.

At the same time, she directed that the NAPC continue to be the champion for micro-enterprise development and open access to markets for the poor.

GMA makes surprise visit to Tondo police station to check on campaign against street crimes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today made a surprise visit to Police Station 2 in Moriones, Tondo, to personally check on the nationwide campaign against street crimes that she had ordered the Philippine National Police (PNP) to implement.

The Chief Executive, accompanied by Western Police District director Chief Superintendent Pedro Bulaong, motored to the police station in Tondo, which, she said, is number one in crime incidents in Manila.

Upon her arrival in the area, she immediately conferred with Police Station 2 Commander Superintendent Elmer Jamias on the crime situation in the area and what the police have been doing.

On drug-related problems in the area, Jamias reported that out of the 76 barangays under his jurisdiction, 13 are affected by drugs.

Bulaong also told the President that for 2002, "we made 3,700 arrests on drug-related cases citywide."

Later in a media briefing, the President said that it was her responsibility to see to it that her instructions are followed. “Ultimately, the supervision and controls is mine,” she said.

The President said that the next step will be a meeting with the mayors of the National Capital Region and Regions 3 and 4, as part of her plan to personally oversee the fight against street crimes.

She said that the crime rate in Metro Manila is still high and she would like to find out how to bring it down.

Bulaong pledged to reduce criminality in his jurisdiction by 30 percent.

The President also clarified that those who can carry guns are only police officers and soldiers when they are on duty.

“Basically its police officers when they are on duty and the soldiers when they are also on duty,” the President said when asked who can carry guns.

She noted that those who are off-duty can not carry guns “unless they are specifically under threat.”

“Sad to say, many crimes are committed when a policeman involved is ... carrying his gun off duty,” the President said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: February 26, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514040709/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/feb26.htm>

The President's Day: February 27, 2003

27 FEBRUARY 2003

- **GMA witnesses signing of M.O.A. on internet-based education program**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Malacañang disowns Mindanao memo**
- **Nazario named Sandigan Presiding Justice**
- **GMA cites Vietnam for key role in defusing tension in South China Sea**

GMA witnesses signing of M.O.A. on internet-based education program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between Coca-Cola Co. and the Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development (FIT-ED), a non-governmental organization responsible for implementing the so-called "Coca-Cola ed.venture" program in the Philippines.

Coca-Cola Philippine Division president James Harting and FIT-ED Chairman and Senior Adviser on International Competitiveness Secretary Roberto Romulo led the signing ceremonies, held at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang.

Aside from the President, those who witnessed the event were Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus, Coca-Cola Phils. Foundation president Cecile Alcantara, and hundreds of Coca-Cola employees.

The memorandum of agreement pushes forward the President's program to bring educational opportunities to more children, prepare them further for a more fruitful life ahead and empower them for the Information Age.

Coca-Cola ed.venture is part of a pan-Asian initiative aimed to contribute to local efforts to bridge the digital divide, bringing a new world of information technology (IT) learning to tens of thousands of young people across Asia through Internet-based educational resources.

Under the MOA, the Coca-Cola Co. is contributing further \$650,000 towards the second phase of the ed.venture program, building on its initial \$350,000 commitment towards the first phase.

"We are proud to continue supporting this national effort to empower and prepare the young people of the Philippines for the Information Age," Harting said.

He said the new phase of ed.venture is an exciting extension of our commitment to youth development and education in the Philippines."

"We know that ICT education continues to be a national developmental priority and we're looking forward to building our partnership with the Department of Education and FIT-ED as we bring the promise of e-learning to thousands more students and teachers in the years to come," he added.

According to Harting, the second phase, though it is only an extension of what has been achieved in the first program, includes a significantly deepened training component for public school students, teachers and administrators.

The ed.venture program has already built 15 fully equipped, Internet-connected and fully air-conditioned computer laboratories in public school selected by FIT-ED in coordination with the Department of Education.

These Coca-Cola ed.venture centers are located in the Quirino High School in Quezon City, Rizal School Sagad Annex in Pasig City, Negros Oriental National High School in Dumaguete City, Camanjac National High School in

Negros Oriental, Manga National Manga National High School in Tagbilaran City, San Roque High School in Bohol, Bitoon National Vocational School in Cebu, Ipil National High School in Ormoc City, Hilongos National Vocational High School in Leyte, Guimbal National High School in Iloilo, Passi National High School in Iloilo, Bais City High School in Negros Oriental and Parang High School in Marikina City.

Harting added that the ed.venture program also equips teachers with the knowledge and skills that will allow them to leverage ICT in the teaching process.

Over 600 public high school teachers and administrators have already participated in ongoing workshops designed to introduce them to “educational telecollaboration,” a learning device that allows people in different locations to use Internet tools and resources to work together.

The centers deliver Information and Communications Technology (ICT) access, connectivity, training and educational resources to more than 15,000 students and public schoolteachers and administrators. The program is rolled out with active participation of local communities and local school boards.

FIT-ED, which aims to elevate IT awareness and capability in the Philippines, provided the technical expertise for the program’s infrastructure requirements and facilitates the program’s training component for schoolteachers.

“Educational quality and relevance in today’s world mean, among other things, ensuring that students know how to use ICT appropriately and responsibly,” FIT-ED chairman Secretary Roberto Romulo said.

“With Coca-Cola ed.venture, FIT-ED is doing its part in helping build an effective and sustainable model for ICT-enhanced high schools in the country,” Romulo added.

Harting also informed the President that the Philippine division is the sixth largest operation of Coca-Cola in the world. Manila, he added, is also the site of the first bottling operation of Coca-Cola outside of the United States.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

In its meeting today, the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security, chaired by Executive Secretary Alberto G. Romulo, discussed with ARMM leaders the planned Balikatan 03-1 exercise which will be held in Sulu. Balikatan 03-1 is designed to assist out troops in dealing with Abu Sayyaf terrorist and kidnapping group.

It was emphasized that Balikatan 03-1 builds on the successes of Balikatan 02-1 in Basilan. US troops will not be involved in offensive combat nor in any unilateral operations. US military personnel will undertake counter-terrorism training assistance and support for AFP troops and will at all times be under the supervision of AFP officers.

The program will involve a major socio-economic component, which the Philippine government hopes and expects will help in the economic growth of Sulu, as a similar exercise had done in Basilan.

ARMM leaders, led by Gov. Parouk Hussin and Sulu Gov. Yusop Jikiri, expressed concerns that there might be resistance among Sulu residents against the presence of US military personnel, owing to the area’s history of struggle against US troops at the start of the last century.

ARMM leaders, however, agreed to undertake talks with their constituents to explain the purpose and nature of Balikatan 03-1.

Malacañang disowns Mindanao memo

Malacañang today disowned a supposed memorandum of instruction from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordering the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to capture Hashim Salamat dead or alive.

Emerging from the meeting of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS), Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye categorically denied that the document came from the Palace.

“We’d like to state that this document is spurious. It is not true. This document is fake and it’s been circulated probably to agitate the Muslim population in Mindanao,” Bunye said during his regular press briefing.

Bunye said it is very difficult to pinpoint the source of these documents. “Obviously it emanated from a group that doesn’t want peace between MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) and the government,” Bunye said.

The spokesman said Presidential Assistant on Mindanao Jesus Dureza presented during the COCIS the fake document, which has been widely circulated in the region.

“We don’t know and we don’t want to point any fingers at any particular group. It’s enough that we belie this statement, that we correct the impression that this emanated from Malacañang,” Bunye said.

The false memo, dated February 11, orders the AFP to undertake a so-called Operation Greenbase, whereby the Armed Forces must also “capture and occupy” simultaneously within one week the Buliok Complex fronting the Liguasan Marsh area comprising Kabalsalan Island Complex, Rajamuda Complex and Buliok Complex where Hashim Salamat’s headquarters or Islamic Center is located.

The so-called memo from the President further orders the AFP to serve the warrants of arrest against Salamat, Samier Hashim, Al Haj Murad and Eid Kabalu by various courts two years ago.

“The AFP must bear in mind that the high-value target of the plan is to capture Salamat Hashim dead or alive,” the fake memo said.

Nazario named Sandigan Presiding Justice

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has appointed Minita Chico-Nazario as presiding justice of the Sandiganbayan.

Prior to her appointment, Nazario was acting Presiding Justice of the Sandiganbayan, a designation made by the Supreme Court in a resolution promulgated last November 28, 2001.

Nazario, 64, has served for 40 long years in the judiciary in various capacities without having been charged criminally or administratively by any party-litigant or lawyer in connection with her performance.

She was the chairperson of the Special Division constituted by the Supreme Court to try the Joseph Estrada cases per resolution promulgated last January 21, 2002.

She also served as Regional Trial Court Judge in Biñan, Laguna, was the first woman Justice of the Sandiganbayan, and Chairperson of the Sandiganbayan’s Fifth Division.

A native of San Miguel, Bulacan, Nazario earned her Associate in Arts degree at the University of the Philippines from 1956 to 1958.

She obtained her Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of the Philippines in 1962 and passed the Bar Examinations in November of that same year with a rating of 78.1 percent.

Nazario is married to Rodolfo Nazario with whom she has three children.

GMA cites Vietnam for key role in defusing tension in South China Sea

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the important role played by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the forging of the Declaration of the Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, which has defused tension in the contested area.

“We are very grateful that you have the same position which made the position of the Philippines very strong,” the President said in her remarks during the courtesy call in Malacañang of Vietnam’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Dy Nien.

The President said the landmark agreement, which was signed before her state visit to Vietnam in November last year, identified the areas of cooperation the two countries will explore in the future, further strengthening the two countries’ economic and diplomatic ties.

In that framework, Vietnam and the Philippines declared their determination to continue with the process of confidence-building despite territorial disputes among various claimant countries.

Aside from the Philippines and Vietnam, the Spratlys, the string of islands and islets that straddle the South China Sea, are also being claimed partly or wholly by China, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei Darussalam.

The President also expressed the hope that the trade imbalance between the Philippines and Vietnam will be resolved soon. The trade imbalance is in favor of Vietnam.

“We have many investments in Vietnam,” the President said, pointing out that the Philippines has one of the biggest investments in Vietnam, which include the food and beverage conglomerate, San Miguel Corporation.

“And we buy a lot of rice from Vietnam too,” the President said.

The Vietnamese Foreign Minister was accompanied to Malacañang by Vietnamese Ambassador to Manila Dinh Tich.

The President said that the Foreign Minister’s visit to Manila would further strengthen the already strong relations between Manila and Hanoi.

She congratulated Vietnam for its 7 percent growth rate, the second highest growth rate in Asia, next only to China. The Philippines, with the third highest growth rate in the region, trails behind Vietnam, the President said.

The President likewise congratulated the leaders of Vietnam for what they have done in Vietnam, for “the reunification and healing of the deep division that existed after the Americans left in the 70s.”

“I hope I will be able to do that in the Philippines as well,” the President said, referring to her vision of healing the divisiveness in the country caused by partisan politics.

The President reiterated her offer to continue hosting Vietnamese refugees in Palawan who fled their homeland when the Americans left some two decades ago.

Some 1,500 Vietnamese “boat people” are still stranded in resettlement areas in Palawan, after they failed to be repatriated to host countries in the West where they applied for political asylum.

“For humanitarian reasons, we will just keep them where they are,” she said.

*Source: **Office of the Press Secretary***

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: February 27, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514040721/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/feb27.htm>

The President's Day: February 28, 2003

28 FEBRUARY 2003

- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA orders AFP to wipe out Abu Sayyaf in 90 days**
- **GMA calls anew on CPP-NPA to lay down their arms**
- **RP mulls lodging a protest on Hong Kong wage cut with the I.L.O.**

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

There is no truth to a report that PAGC Chair Dario Rama has been replaced by Chief of Staff Rigoberto Tiglao.

There is no plan to remove Chair Rama. In fact, Chair Rama is doing a good job.

The report must have arisen from instructions by the President for Secretary Tiglao to review the proposed system or process for conducting lifestyle checks on presidential appointees.

Secretary Tiglao has been tasked to study if the proposed unit which would conduct lifestyle checks would be directly under the PAGC or would be a monitoring unit separate from, but coordinating with, PACG.

GMA orders AFP to wipe out Abu Sayyaf in 90 days

TANAY, Rizal – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to wipe out the notorious Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) within 90 days to reinstate normalcy in Mindanao.

“I’ve given the military a deadline for the ASG, 90 days,” the President said.

The President issued the directive to AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Dionisio Santiago during an interview with Malacañang reporters in Camp General Mateo Capinpin this morning, right after the baptism of Sheena Rose Cocoy, the daughter of rebel returnee Rosalinda P. Cocoy, at St. Martin of Tours Parish here.

During the interview, the President said she strongly believes in the capability of the military to follow the deadlines that she has been giving them. When she told them to capture the Buliok complex in three days, the Armed Forces completed their mission before her deadline.

“So I suppose they’ll be able (to meet the deadline), if they do the proper allocation of resources. They’ll be able also to finish Abu Sayyaf in 90 days,” she said.

The President denied reports that the presence of US troops in Zamboanga was aimed at going after the Abu Sayyaf. She clarified that the ongoing training here was part of a \$25-million training program approved by the US government during her visit to Washington in November 2001.

She explained that the ongoing training in Zamboanga was not the Balikatan 03-1, as the newspaper reports claimed.

“The training in Zamboanga is not the Balikatan that people are writing about because the Balikatan 03-1 is still under consultation, negotiation. But the one in Zamboanga is training of two light reaction companies and it’s a \$25-million training. It’s a very, very valuable training. That’s different from the other one which is still under consultation,” President said.

On the continued military operation against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the President said that her directive has not yet changed and she wanted the military to enforce the law and pursue the peace process with the Moro rebels.

“We want peace but they have to enforce the law. We have a call to the MILF to come to the peace table. We have given them the draft of the peace agreement and we have to run after those who break the law,” the President added.

She also said Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad has been helping the Philippine government to pursue the peace talks with the MILF and details of this are being worked out by Presidential Adviser for Special Concern Secretary Norberto Gonzales.

The President clarified that she was very hopeful that the MILF would return to the negotiation table and continue the peace talks with government negotiators.

GMA calls anew on CPP-NPA to lay down their arms

TANAY, Rizal – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the leaders and members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New Peoples Army (CPP-NPA) to return to the fold of the law and the government is willing to accept them wholeheartedly and provide them with means to live a decent life.

“Nananawagan tayo sa kanila na kapag kapayapaan pipiliin nila na hakbang, pag-aalaga at pagkalinga at kaunlaran ang aabutan nila (I’m appealing to them that if they choose peace, we will take care of them and the government will help them improve their lives),” President said during the interview at Camp General Tomas Capinpin here.

The President said that she hopes CPP-NPA will end their armed struggle and give way to peace.

The President assured them that once a peaceful solution is reached in the decades-old conflict between the government and the communist rebels, the government will implement development projects in the rural areas.

“Peace and development is very important, if we’re going to fight terrorism. We also need to root out the cause of poverty,” the President said.

She explained that because of poverty, it would be easy to brainwash people and lure them to join the rebels fighting the government.

But on the same vein, the President also warned that if the CPP-NPA continues to fight the government, the military will go after them and implement the law.

The President motored here to fulfill her promise to be the godmother of 22-day old Sheena Rose Cocoy, a daughter of rebel returnee Rosalinda P. Cocoy. The child was baptized at the St. Martin of Tours Parish here in Camp Capinpin.

On February 7, the President visited Rosalinda at the AFP Medical Center in V. Luna, Quezon City, when she learned that the former rebel amazon gave birth to Sheena Rose, her second child.

After the baptismal rites, the President joined the sponsors and relatives of Rosalinda in a “merienda.”

As a gift to her new godchild, the President gave a scholarship and some other little things to Sheena Rose as well as financial assistance to Rosalinda.

“My wish to Sheena Rose is that I want her to live in a society with peace and development,” the President said.

Among the sponsors were Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Dionisio Santiago, Rizal Governor Rebecca “Nini” Ynares, General Efren Abu, commander of the 2nd Infantry Division; Brig. General Dante Bonifacio, also of the 2nd Infantry Division; General Ronald Kempis of the AFP Medical Center; Lieutenant Don Villanuevo of the 1st Infantry Battalion; Benilda Cuerpo; Lorna Abu; Colonel Melba Bonifacio, chief nurse of the Philippine Army; and Evelyn Galinato.

Rosalinda, alyas Ka Rose and Ka Lorena in the underground movement, is from Sitio Makaingalan, Barangay Puray, Rodriguez, Rizal and was born on June 27, 1980. She is the youngest of the 11 children of Abundio and Paulina Cocoy.

Before she joined the underground movement in 1996, Rosalinda was 2nd year at the Geronimo High School in Rodriguez, Rizal. During her five years stay in the movement, Rosalinda became an organizer and instructor of the communist rebels.

Rosalinda was one of the 150 former members and sympathizers of the NPA who surrendered to the 1st Infantry Battalion based in Cavinti, Laguna. She was presented to the President last Nov. 15, 2002 in surrender rites at Barangay Pinugay, Rizal.

RP mulls lodging a protest on Hong Kong wage cut with the I.L.O.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) will consider lodging a protest with the International Labor Organization (ILO) after it has studied the implications of Hong Kong’s new wage policy on its international commitments under the ILO and other pertinent covenants and instruments.

“The wage policy is unfair and unjust and, therefore, I am not foreclosing the possibility of protesting the decision to the ILO,” DOLE Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said in a statement.

She said the DOLE will also appeal to the sense of fairness of Hong Kong employers to maintain the present salaries of Filipino domestic helpers in consideration of their long service and quality performance.

“We are not really out of options and we continue to review them,” Sto. Tomas said.

Sto. Tomas has directed the governing board of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) to immediately convene and discuss its options regarding the Hong Kong government’s new minimum wage policy for overseas domestic helpers.

She said that the meeting will also explore new policy directions and strategies that will mitigate the impact of the wage policy on the welfare of Filipinos working as domestic helpers in Hong Kong.

The DOLE chief bared these responses after she received the report of the Philippine Consulate on the decision of the Hong Kong government to reduce the minimum allowable wage for foreign domestic helpers by HK\$400 per month effective April 1, 2003.

At the same time, Sto. Tomas warned against the indiscriminate layoffs or termination of employment without just cause of Filipino domestic helpers, to which employers may resort as a result of the wage cut decision.

She said the Department is not entirely helpless and may not be inclined in approving new contracts for employers who resort to this kind of practice.

DOLE, Sto. Tomas said, is presently reviewing the full implication of the Report of the Task Force on Population Policy which was made the basis of the wage cut decision and other measures affecting Filipino domestic helpers.

There are some 240,000 foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong, 153,000 of them Filipinos, who will be affected by the wage cut.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: February 28, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514040732/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/feb28.htm>

The President's Day: March 1, 2003

01 MARCH 2003

- **DFA moves to resolve problems on absentee voting**
- **NAPC cites gains in GMA's nationwide micro-finance program for poor women**
- **President's radio address to the nation**
- **GMA appeals anew for unity to attain peace**
- **Reyes: Rumsfeld vows to respect RP charter in conduct of RP-US joint bilateral exercise**
- **COCIS proposes 4 talking points to get MILF back to peace table**

DFA moves to resolve problems on absentee voting

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has formed a group to resolve problems in the implementation of the Absentee Voting Law, especially in areas abroad where there are large concentrations of Filipinos but far from Philippine embassies.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople said the group has been reviewing reports from various posts and is due to release their findings soon.

Ople said a case in point is the situation of some half a million Filipinos in Sabah, Malaysia.

"There is a problem of the Filipino population in Malaysia. Most of them are in Sabah," Ople said.

Sabah, located at the northeastern tip of Borneo in East Malaysia and practically near the Philippines' group of southern islands off the Sulu Sea, is about two hours by plane from Kuala Lumpur.

Ople said the law on absentee voting "requires physical presence of voters for registration and voting."

"If there are half a million Filipinos in Sabah, do you expect them to travel to Kuala Lumpur because we have no consulate in Sabah?" he asked.

But Ople disclosed that there have been suggestions that "we allow (Filipinos in Sabah) to register and vote in Brunei Darussalam which is closer."

The DFA had been deputized by the Commission on Elections to implement the absentee voting law abroad, including in areas with large concentration of Filipinos like the United States, the Middle East, and some countries in the Asia-Pacific.

NAPC cites gains in GMA's nationwide micro-finance program for poor women

A total of 595,899 poor women availed themselves of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's loan program for micro-business enterprises in 2002.

National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Lead Convenor Teresita Deles said this represented an increase of 160 percent from 372,349 women-borrowers registered in 2001.

In a report to the President, Deles said the growth in the micro-finance program reflected the people's acceptance of the President's commitment to implement activities that would spur national social growth and economic development.

The President, in her State of the Nation Address in July 2002, said her administration intended to reach out to about one million poor women or more than 300,000 new borrowers yearly from 2002 to 2004.

Deles informed the President that as of January 31, 2003, the People's Credit Finance Corporation, through its micro-finance institutions, had served 79 provinces, 113 out of 114 cities (Cotabato City still unserved) and 1,083 out of 1,496 towns, or 72 percent.

During an en banc meeting in Malacañang last Wednesday (February 26), the President directed the NAPC to give priority to remote areas in their innovative micro-finance scheme called "credit plus five."

The "credit plus five" refers to credit plus training, product development, market access, new technologies and social insurance.

The President instructed the NAPC to set up a mechanism to serve remote and conflict areas, and the basic sectors such as the elderly, disaster victims, and the disabled.

On the issues of sustainability of micro-financing institutions and clients, the President directed the continued rationalization of credit programs in geographic coverage and client targeting.

She urged the NAPC to continue to be the champion for micro-enterprise development and open access to markets for the poor as the Department of Trade and Industry will focus on the small and medium enterprises program of the government.

President's radio address to the nation

Bahagi ng mabuti at wastong pamumuno ng bansa ang pagsisikap para sa kapayapaang makatarungan at matibay.

Sa simula ng aking administrasyon, agad kong binuksang muli ang mga landas ng pagpupulong at pagkakasundo sa hangad wakasan ang mga labanang malaon nang nagpapahirap at pasakit sa ating taong bayan.

Nung ika-28 ng Pebrero 2001, nilagdaan ko ang Executive Order #3 upang baguhin ang balangkas ng pangkalahatang proseso para sa kapayapaan kasama ang iba't-ibang programang bumubuo nito. Habang mas mahigpit ang paglaban natin sa dahas ng rebelde lalong masigasig ang mga hakbang ng pamahalaan upang agad maisulong muli at mabuo ang pulong-pangkapayapaan.

Patuloy ang pagpupunyagi ng gobyerno upang itayong muli ang mga pamayanang nasalanta sa labanan at isakatuparan ang mga repormang kakalas sa mga sanhi ng pag-aalsa ng bayan.

Mahalagang haligi ng pagpapalaganap ng kapayapaan sa bansa ang pakikilahok ng iba't-ibang kaagapay mula sa mga samahang bayan at pribadong sektor. Hangad ng pamahalaang paramihin ang mga kaakibat, kalalawigan na taos pusong nagpupunyagi para sa kapayapaan, karapatan, at pagkakasundo ng magkatunggali sa kani-kanilang sektor at lugar.

Tunay silang nakatutulong upang itaguyod nang madla ang prosesong pangkapayapaan at magkatugma ang mga kilusang bayan at ang balangkas ng pamahalaan para sa kapayapaan. Upang lalong maliwanagan ng taong bayan ang mahalaga nilang papel sa prosesong pangkapayapaan, at mapalakas ang kilusan para sa pagkakasundo, pinatupad ko noong isang taon ang proklamasyon #161.

Itinakda nito ang Pebrero 28 hanggang Marso 6 bilang National Peace Consciousness Week. Ang linggo ng pagkamulat sa pambansang kapayapaan na ipagdiriwang taun-taon. Iniatas ko sa Office of the Presidential adviser on the Peace Process, ang tanggapan ng Tagapayo ng Pangulo sa Prosesong Pangkapayapaan upang isulong at subaybayan ang pag-gunita sa linggong ito.

Ito ang panahon upang sama-samang ihayag ng lahat ng mamamayan sa malikhaing paraan ang ating damdamin at paniniwala sa kapayapaan. Pagmuni-munihan din natin ang mga karanasang matimbang at mga hamong kaharap ngayon sa pagtataguyod ng kapayapaan at pagkakasundo. Dapat ipagdiwang din natin ang mga munting tagumpay at magkaisa sa pag-asang mapalaganap ang kultura ng kapayapaan sa buong bansa.

Sa ngayon, kung saan saan naririnig ang mga masigabong panawagan para sa kapayapaan mula sa iba't-ibang sektor at pangkat. Bagaman iba't iba ang paraan upang mapalaganap ito.

Tunay nga habang nagiging mas masalimuot ang tunggalian at karahasan sa lipunan, lalong mahirap mahuli ang kapayapaan. Mismong ang kayamanan natin sa iba't ibang kalinangan at pananampalataya ay nagiging dahilan ng pagwawatak-watak.

Panahon na upang maliwanagan natin at tanggapin ng lubos na walang mas mabuting daan tungo sa kapayapaan kaysa sa maglakbay at kumilos bilang isang bayan.

Bagaman iba't ibang kultura ang bumubuo sa atin, hindi dapat natin makaligtaan ang magkakatulad na pangarap, diwa, at paniniwalang nagbubuklod sa atin at nagbibigay ng inspirasyon at lakas sa pagtugon sa mabibigat na usaping sumasalang sa kanya-kanyang pangkat sa lipunan.

Samakatuwid, iwaksi natin ang pangungutya sa kapwa at sa halip, tanggaping kailangan natin ang isa't isa. Palawakin natin ang pagkaka-isa ng pamayanan nang higit sa sari-sariling bukluran ayon sa kanya-kanyang wika, relihiyon, kultura at pulitika. Namumuhay tayong lahat sa iisang lupain kaya dapat tayong magsikap at kumilos ng may iisang pangarap at tungo sa iisang kinabukasan bilang mga Pilipino kapayapaan ang hangad.

Kung positibo at bukas ang pananaw, haharapin natin ang mga alitan at krisis bilang mga pagkakataon upang lalong pagandahin ang pagsasama.

Buong loob akong umaasa na sa pagdiriwang ngayong taon ng Linggo ng Pagkamulat sa Pambansang Kapayapaan, lalong lalalim ang pagpapahalaga nating lahat sa pagkakaisa ng bayan at titindi ang paninindigan ng bawat isa sa atin na isulong ang pagbabago bilang mga mamamayang may pananagutan sa kapwa at sa Republika.

Mabuhay.

GMA appeals anew for unity to attain peace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today renewed her appeal for unity for the Filipino people to attain peace, overcome any crisis, and push the socio-economic growth of the country.

In a radio message, the President noted the imperative need for peace and security in the homeland.

She enjoined the people to creatively demonstrate their thoughts and beliefs on achieving peace while reflecting on their experiences and challenges in waging the call for peace and unity.

“Ito ang panahon upang sama-samang ihayag ng lahat ng mamamayan sa malikhaing paraan ang ating damdamin at paniniwala sa kapayapaan. Pagmuni-munihin din natin ang mga karanasang matimbang at mga hamong kaharap ngayon sa pagtataguyod ng kapayapaan at pagkakasundo,” she said.

The President, in Proclamation No. 161, last year set February 28 to March 6 of every year as National Peace Consciousness Week.

In her message, the Chief Executive said it was high time for all Filipinos to accept the truth that the best way to achieve peace was to join hands and effect national destiny as one people, one nation.

“Panahon na upang maliwanagan natin at tanggapin ng lubos na walang mas mabuting daan tungo sa kapayapaan kaysa sa maglakbay at kumilos bilang isang bayan,” she added.

The President called on everyone to bring about national unity that would go beyond parochial groupings according to dialect, religion, culture and politics.

She stressed that the Filipino people live in one nation and must therefore move with a collective dream for a better and peaceful future.

“Kung positibo at bukas and pananaw, haharapin natin ang mga alitan at krisis bilang mga pagkakataong upang lalong pagandahin ang pagsasama (With a positive outlook, the people will likely see any crisis as an opportunity to further strengthen the collective will to achieve peace and growth),” she said.

Reyes: Rumsfeld vows to respect RP charter in conduct of RP-US joint bilateral exercise

Defense Secretary Angelo T. Reyes today said the United States Defense Department has committed to give its “maximum support within the context of respecting all provisions included in the Philippine Constitution” in the conduct of RP-US joint military training exercises.

Reyes said “we appreciate the commitment made by US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.”

In a report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Reyes said the respective military officials of both countries would be ironing out “the details of the implementation of this initiative taking into consideration the unique situation of both countries, including provisions contained in the Philippine Constitution.”

He said he was sent to Washington to discuss the “enhancement and continued cooperation of the Philippines and the United States on issues pertaining to terrorism.”

“These meetings have served to strengthen the strategic alliance between our two countries, an alliance based on deep friendship and historic ties, as well as shared values and common threats,” he said.

Among the issues Reyes discussed with Secretary Rumsfeld were the basic principles and general terms of the exercises.

In a statement, Rumsfeld said the arrangements for the exercises are being discussed and he did not know what the formula would be.

“Whatever our role is, it has to be consistent with their Constitution and their circumstance. We want to be helpful,” the US Defense Secretary said.

“We will have something like a Balikatan 03, that will be related to terrorism, and it very likely will have an intelligence component, a command-and-control component, a training component, some exercises,” he added.

Rumsfeld did not put a timetable on setting up the Blikatan 03-1, adding that the shape and size of the exercise remained to be worked out in a plan acceptable to both countries.

He said the US looked forward to working closely with the Philippines, which is a long-term ally of the US and is a stalwart foe of terrorism worldwide and within its borders.

The Philippines and the US share a common goal in the bilateral military exercises: to enhance the capability of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to effectively meet various threats to the country.

COCIS proposes 4 talking points to get MILF back to peace table

Malacañang today presented four talking points designed to bring the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) closer to the negotiating table.

The talking points, presented at a meeting of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS) in Malacañang, proposed “the setting up of an acceptable monitoring team which will effectively monitor ceasefire mechanisms on the ground.”

It also called for “the establishment of a proposed area of temporary stay to avoid mistake encounters while negotiations are ongoing.”

It likewise stressed the need to “reaffirm the commitment of both sides to observe the commitments in the joint communiqué of May 6, 2002 in Kuala Lumpur on how to address the issue of criminal elements seeking refuge in known MILF occupied areas.”

Lastly, the talking points also emphasized the “need to pinpoint responsibility for the spate of bombings in urban areas and the toppling of National Power Corporation’s transmission lines.”

The talking points, approved in principle by the COCIS chaired by Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, would still be submitted to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for approval, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said.

According to Secretary Eduardo Ermita, presidential adviser on the peace process, these talking points would be conveyed to the MILF through the usual back channels.

Ermita said the government hoped that the MILF would “respond positively” to the talking points.

He explained that the proposed “area of temporary stay” is to ensure that there would “be no spillover of armed groups in the concerned areas.”

“We will lessen the probability of skirmishes,” Ermita added.

Asked about the possibility of meeting the six-month deadline set by the President at the start of the year for a peace pact with the MILF, Ermita said the government is exerting its best efforts.

“Six months would still be a very reasonable time to discuss the substance of the peace agreement as approved by the President,” Ermita said.

Meanwhile, Bunye said the COCIS recommended the convening of the government peace panel headed by Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza and co-chaired by Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong, a Maguindanaon.

Bunye also reported that in after-operations reports, Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Dionisio Santiago clarified that the President ordered the Buliok operations to flush out elements of the Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom group and deprive them of a refuge in the MILF area in Pikit, Cotabato.

Santiago, Bunye added, said that the Buliok operations ended on February 20. Armed Forces troops are now holding their positions and conducting an active defense of the area.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 1, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20080314005627/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar01.htm>

The President's Day: March 3, 2003

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- **GMA leads Inaugural rites of Sun Cellular**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **DSWD steps up relief, rehab in Buliok complex**
- **Spanish Queen arriving tomorrow for visit**
- **Central Mindanao on path to normalcy**
- **Japan gives green light for a projects worth P6-B**

GMA leads Inaugural rites of Sun Cellular

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the launching of Sun Cellular, the latest GSM service of the Gokongwei-owned Digitel Philippines, assuring that the entry would further promote competition in the industry and further lower telecommunications costs.

The President launched the latest cellular service provider at the Manila Midtown Hotel with an inaugural call to Joel Pacarro, an overseas Filipino worker based in Kuwait. Joel has been in Kuwait with his wife Arlene and two children since 1992.

In brief remarks during a toast, the President said she expects that telecommunications costs would further decrease with the entry of the latest player.

“Please join me to a toast for the success of interconnectivity at low cost,” the President said.

National Telecommunications Commissioner Armi Jane Borje, in brief remarks, congratulated Sun Cellular for “daring” to enter the very competitive wireless industry.

She stressed that real competition is always good for the Filipino consuming public. “And for Sun Cellular to attempt to offer Filipinos value phone service without a high price tag associated with wireless technology, this is indeed a very much welcome development,” she added.

The President noted that NTC, with the full support of the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC), has vigorously pursued a one-stop public assistance center to specially attend to the numerous complaints of cellular phone snatching and theft, problems associated with a very high demand for very low priced although regrettably at times stolen cellular phones.

She said that hopefully, the government would continue to see the unity among the players in the telecom industry with the signing of all interconnection agreements.

“This will enable not only Sun Cellular to interconnect its voice and SMS networks with other operators but to finally achieve full interconnection of all existing telecom companies even, specially, in far-flung areas in the Philippines,” she added.

Aside from the President, on hand to talk to Joel during the inaugural call were his mother Patricia Pacarro, sister-in-law Mrs. Editha Pacarro and cousin Melissa Soler.

Joel expressed appreciation for the President recent visit to Kuwait to check on the conditions of OFWs there.

Joel assured the Chief Executive and his mother that things are still normal in Kuwait, despite the tension brought by the impending conflict in neighboring countries.

“Huwag kayong mag-alala. Tahimik naman dito (Don’t worry. Everything is fine here),” Joel said.

Sun Cellular offers P2 per minute of Sun to Sun calls and 50 centavos for Sun to Sun texts.

Among those in attendance were tycoon John Gokongwei, JG Summit executive Lance Gokongwei and Charles Lim, Chief Executive Officer of Digitel GSM.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Plan to Decongest Metro Manila

Presidential Adviser Lito Osmeña today sought approval from the President to go ahead with a proposal to develop Clark and environs as a possible relocation site of two key national government offices. The proposal aims to decongest Metro Manila which is now bursting at the seams with a daytime population of 12 million. The proposal calls for paying off national government debts to GSIS in the form of land in Clark and other proposed sites. GSIS in turn will provide P15 billion over the next five years to develop the land and put up buildings and support facilities which will house DPWH and DOTC. Counterpart funds for the development of residential, commercial and support infrastructure are proposed to be provided in partnership with the private sector.

President GMA endorsed the proposal to Secretary Alberto G. Romulo and Chief of Staff Rigoberto D. Tiglao for further evaluation.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

The President is suffering from minor eye irritation.

Deadline to Neutralize Abu Sayyaf

The President’s call for the neutralization of the Abu Sayyaf in 90 days underlies her firm belief in the ability of the Filipino soldier to finish the job. This will, of course, entail asking our troops to “double time.” Our troops have proven their mettle in the past and the President is confident they can do so again. This will not stretch our forces too far, because the PNP is there to conduct holding actions in the Mindanao mainland, while the AFP moves elsewhere for the tactical offensive. At any rate, the limited AFP offensive to take the Buliok complex is finished. The PNP and CAFGUs can secure the areas already cleared of lawless elements by the AFP. The important thing is to make sure our forces always stay alert and not leave themselves vulnerable to surprise counter-attacks from the MILF. *Kaya ng ating sundalo ang deadline na ito.*

Joint training exercise and technological support from the US will help in an important way, but only the Filipino soldier can finish the job. He has proven this in Basilan and in Central Mindanao.

Balikatan

The Balikatan exercises will be conducted under absolute Constitutional standards. The people of the place-wherever it will be held in the future-will be consulted. Terms of Reference (TOR) will be drawn up and will be made public. Human rights will be protected and ethnic sensibilities will be respected.

Peace with MILF

The Government has not signed any peace agreements violative of the Constitution. The intention has always been to bring about peace, but not peace at any cost.

FATF

We are hoping that the senators and the FATF representatives can come up with a solution that would facilitate the passage of the AMLA. We ask the public to focus on this rather than allowing themselves to be distracted by extraneous issues.

IRAQ

We have faith that the UN will ultimately make a decision for the good of mankind. We abhor the idea of war and continue to hope and pray for peace.

Arrest of AL Qaeda Leader

Terrorism is a global threat and the only way to address it effectively is through global cooperation. No country is ever safe from terrorist groups that recognize no boundaries and have no respect for human life. We laud the cooperation of nations in facing this threat and will do our share to eradicate terrorism and its proponents within our country.

DSWD steps up relief, rehab in Buliok complex

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has stepped up its relief, rehabilitation, medical and civic work in and around the conflict-torn Buliok complex in Liguasan Marsh, Pikit, Cotabato.

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman said the agency is coordinating with the Task Force Liguasan Marsh under Presidential Assistant on the Peace Process Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

In a report to Malacañang, Soliman said the task force has identified the most urgent needs of communities affected by the armed conflict in the area and has speedily responded to such needs.

Coordination in fast-tracking the implementation of high-impact programs and projects is also being made with the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), she said.

In its report, the DSWD Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and Information Center said relief and rehabilitation activities continued in 89 of 101 evacuation areas earlier set up in parts of Central Mindanao region and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Most of the still existing 89 evacuation centers are located in Cotabato and Maguindanao provinces where effects of the military's recapture of a major rebel camp in the Buliok complex spilled out.

Soliman said the Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council (MDCC) has stood as the coordinating body to ensure the smooth implementation of the relief operations.

"Through this arrangement, issues and concerns of concerned agencies and the affected families are discussed and resolved immediately," she said.

She added that the Municipal Disaster Operation Center was created, with Ariel Cabanog of the Pikit municipal government as coordinator and Roberto Leyson of the Pikit Parish assisting.

Soliman said the DSWD had centralized the receipt and stockpiling of donations had been centralized while the distribution of relief goods was coursed through the different evacuation centers.

She said DSWD regional workers have been posted in major evacuation centers on a shifting basis since February 13 to address the psycho-social needs of displaced families, notably women and children.

To ensure health and sanitation in Pikit, the following were also undertaken:

- The 54th Engineering Brigade made 60 compartments with toilet bowls and drums in the different evacuation centers;
- Water tanks were put up in the evacuation centers and six fire trucks provided water rations to families in the different evacuation centers;
- The Department of Health (DOH) provided immunization to 1,648 children inside the evacuation centers; and
- The DOH/RHU medical team for emergency purposes was operationalized to serve the evacuees on a 24-hour basis.

Soliman said she has prepared a detailed report on the relief and rehabilitation work in Mindanao for presentation to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during the Cabinet Meeting Tuesday (March 4).

Spanish Queen arriving tomorrow for visit

Queen Sofia of Spain will arrive tomorrow night (March 4) for a two-day private trip to the country which will see her visit Spanish development aid projects and inaugurate the Spanish overseas cultural program exhibit at the National Museum.

She will be accompanied in her trip by Spain's state secretary for international cooperation, Miguel Angel Cortes, and other Spanish officials involved in development aid and cultural affairs. Philippine officials will be on hand to meet the Queen and her delegation.

Highlight of the Queen's Manila visit will be the turnover of the third set of funds worth \$1.6 million for the Filipinas Eye Center Foundation of the Philippine General Hospital and the groundbreaking of the Jose Rizal Eye Referral Center. A total of \$3.2 million has already been donated to the Foundation.

She will also visit the Makabata Foundation or the Center for Education for Street Children of Metro Manila and meet with Spanish development workers in the country.

The Spanish royalty is scheduled to tour Intramuros, the site of future cultural and tourism cooperation projects between Spain and the Philippines. While in Intramuros, she will visit San Agustin church and will have a *calesa* tour of the Walled City with Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon.

She will later inaugurate the exhibit of the Spanish overseas cultural program at the National Museum.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will host a dinner for the Queen on Wednesday night prior to her departure the following day.

Mrs. Arroyo will be the guest of the Royal family when she makes a state visit to Spain late this month.

The Spanish Queen last visited the country three years ago to similarly oversee Spanish development aid projects. She was also here in 1998 with King Juan Carlos to co-celebrate the Centennial of Philippine independence.

Central Mindanao on path to normalcy

The path to normalcy is now under way in Central Mindanao as displaced residents affected by the armed conflict have returned to their respective homes after staying for a time in various evacuation centers.

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman said that as of March 2, 2003, twelve (12) evacuation centers in Region X, XII and ARMM have been closed from the original number of 101 during the outbreak of the armed conflict.

To date, a total of 36,160 families or 195,090 persons have been served both inside and outside evacuation centers. The cost of assistance reached P15.1 million of which P12M came from DSWD; P1.35M from the local government units (LGUs); and P1.74M from the combined resources of NGOs and other Gos.

Meanwhile, as the situation in Central Mindanao improves, the DSWD Field Office XII in coordination with the local governments of Central Mindanao, continues to monitor the evacuation centers to fast-track the provision of augmentation assistance and other social services to enable residents to regain normal lives.

Japan gives green light for a projects worth P6-B

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has announced that Japan has agreed to fund three infrastructure projects in the country worth P6.04 billion, with another peace and development project soon to get its nod.

NEDA Director General Romulo Neri said that with the approval of the three projects by Japan, the Philippine government expects some P26.7 billion worth of Japan official development assistance (ODA) loan under the 26th yen loan package (YLP) to be concluded within the 2002 Japanese fiscal year that ends on March 2003.

These projects are the Central Mindanao Road Project, P2.06 billion; Arterial Road Bypass Project Phase 1, P3.45 billion; and the Subic Bay Freeport Environmental Management Project Phase 2, P538 million.

A fourth project, the Social Fund for Peace and Development Project for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) worth P1.26 billion is now in its final stage of negotiation, Neri said.

In addition, Neri said, four projects worth P19.4 billion are up for further discussions between the Philippine and Japanese governments.

Three out of the four projects are included under the highly concessional Special Term for Economic Partnership (STEP) financing scheme of the 26th YLP.

These include the Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement Project, P4.46 billion; Philippine Ports Development Project, P5.1 billion; and the Mindanao Container (Bulk Cargo) Terminal Phase II, P2.94 billion.

The fourth project, the Agno River Integrated Irrigation Project worth P6.89 billion, is proposed to be financed under the regular soft loan financing scheme, also under the 26th YLP, Neri said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 3, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20070623081730/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar03.htm>

The President's Day: March 4, 2003

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- **RP's war on terror antedates 9/11 attacks in U.S.**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **AIG official cites better business climate in RP**
- **Gov't declares Pikit, Buliok Complex as 'zones of peace'**
- **GMA orders AFP, PNP to secure power transmission lines in Mindanao**
- **Eastern Petroleum, Pasang Masda ink pact on filling stations, discounted gasoline**
- **DOJ Ladies' Circle homes to aid of women prisoners**
- **Gov't assures safety of evacuees when they return to homes in former conflict areas**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**

RP's war on terror antedates 9/11 attacks in U.S.

Like a Pandora's box that opened intriguing revelations, the remains of the fire that gutted a sixth floor apartment in the Josefa Building on President Quirino Avenue some eight years ago could have been the trigger that actually pushed the Philippines into the global war on terrorism, way ahead of the events leading to the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.

What police found at 3 a.m. on Jan. 7, 1995 in the one-bedroom flat that was later learned to be a cell occupied by Islamic militants out to kill Pope John Paul II during his visit here were not the remains of a typical kitchen fire, according to the book *The Age of Sacred Terror* by Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon.

There, in the kitchen, the police found a large cauldron by the sink and an assortment of bottles and jugs while in the bedroom was a table covered with an assortment of bibles, crucifixes, vestments, pictures of the Holy Father and Casio timers, including wristwatches with wires attached to them and a soldering iron.

The whole place, police learned, was a typical bomb factory, sitting a few hundred yards away from where the Pope would stay at the Papal Nuncio's Residence along Taft Avenue. They then swept up documents, papers and a laptop computer, summoned the experts to look at the makeshift lab, then called Washington.

A piece of paper with a series of numbers, when finally put together by American counter-terrorism officials, revealed a sequence of airline flights while encrypted files on the laptop showed a broad outline of a terrorist plot called Bojinka, calling for the blowing up of as many as 12 Boeing 747 jumbo jets out of the skies over the Pacific.

For Benjamin and Simon who sifted through a series of terrorist attacks and are now serving as directors for White House's counter-terrorism program, the plan was staggering and the shock was magnified by the revelation that the laptop belonged to Ramzi Yousef who is now serving a life term in a US prison for masterminding the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York which killed six people and wounded 1,000.

Yousef is a nephew of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, suspected mastermind of the September 11 attacks now in US custody who is believed to be the architect of another plot, still part of Bojinka, designed to crash a plane packed with explosives into the headquarters of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Virginia.

It was not immediately known, however, whether Mohammed, a Kuwaiti who spent time in Manila in 1994-95, was involved in the plot to send a suicide bomber to assassinate the Pope. The plot was foiled by police when the room they were occupying at the Josefa apartments caught fire.

American officials hailed the arrest of Mohammed in Rawalpindi, near Pakistan's capital of Islamabad, last Saturday as the biggest catch so far in the global war on terror. Washington branded Mohammed as one of Osama Bin Laden's most senior lieutenants at Al Qaeda and mastermind of the 9/11 attacks that killed around 3,000 people.

The Philippines, led by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, was among the first members of the world community to respond positively to the US call for a global war on terrorism when Washington linked the Abu Sayyaf, one of four radical groups seeking an Islamic state in the South, to Bin Laden's Al Qaeda.

It was learned that the group dispatched equipment and trainers to the Philippines to work with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and helped found the Abu Sayyaf which would eventually distinguish itself with its penchant for beheading its victims.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Balikatan

We are not married to the idea of holding the Balikatan 03-1 in Sulu. The search is on for other possible venues for Balikatan 03-1 that would add value to the joint training effort and be of greater benefit to our people.

AMLA

We heard that there was a breakthrough in the meeting between our legislators and the FATF representatives. That is very welcome. The economy of our country is a stake and so is the welfare of our OFWs and the families they help support here.

Al Qaeda

Our intelligence community has long confirmed the presence of extremist cells in the country and their links to Al Qaeda. We are not discounting the possibility that some of Khalid's cohorts are seeking refuge here. We must be aware of the transnational nature of terrorism and the need for allied and global action to fight this threat.

Peace in Mindanao

The decision to end this conflict lies on the hands of the MILF command through simple adherence to joint accords earlier reached with the government. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has gone farther by approving the draft of a comprehensive proposal which, if accepted by the MILF, will contribute to a just peace in the area.

AIG official cites better business climate in RP

Government moves to provide a healthy business climate for big-ticket domestic and foreign industrial ventures are bearing fruit.

This was stressed in a letter to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo from American International Group (AIG) American General president and chief executive officer Rodney O. Martin, Jr. who cited the President and several Cabinet members for their "support and cooperation" in facilitating the location of the firm's joint venture project in Muntinlupa City.

In his letter, Martin said the President's signing of the proclamation declaring the Madrigal Business Park in Barangay Ayala-Alabang, Muntinlupa City as an Information Technology Zone "further solidified our belief in your government's support."

He also extended his appreciation, on behalf of his colleagues, “for your consideration of our application and continued support.”

The AIG Business Processing Services Inc., a joint venture of AIG American General and Philamlife, has located in the business park.

Martin also lauded Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo and the staff of the Department of Trade and Industry, the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority for their help in the selection of the venture’s site.

“We are deeply grateful for this action and the benefits it provides,” Martin said.

He said the company “is operational and processes are already being transitioned to the Philippines.”

He added that over 75 local jobs have been created since October “with many more to follow.”

Gov’t declares Pikit, Buliok Complex as ‘zones of peace’

The government has declared the former conflict areas in Pikit the Buliok Complex in North Cotabato as “zones of peace” where massive development efforts will be undertaken so that the thousands of displaced civilians could return and start rebuilding their lives.

In a joint press conference in Malacañang, Presidential Adviser for Mindanao Jesus Dureza said there is now a convergence of the efforts of all government agencies to attend to the total rehabilitation of the areas that have been the scene of recent fighting between government troops and elements of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Dureza said that things have already stabilized in the two areas and all efforts are now concentrated on how the evacuees can be brought back to their former places of abode.

The Buliok Complex, part of the huge Liguasan Marsh, has been the sanctuary of the notorious Pentagon kidnap gang and other lawless elements in Central Mindanao. It used to be an armed base of the MILF where its elusive chairman, Hashim Salamat, was reported to be hiding.

Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman reported that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has already spent a total of P15.2 million for relief and rehabilitation efforts in the affected areas, in coordination with local government units (LGUs) and other donors.

Soliman said that of the total amount spent, P12 million came from the DSWD, P1.35 million from LGUs and P1.7 million from non-government organizations (NGOs) and other donors.

According to Soliman, the DSWD has already served a total of 40,163 displaced families, or 214,072 individuals. The DSWD used to operate a total of 101 evacuation centers but 12 of them have already been closed, leaving a total of 89 centers still in operations.

Soliman said that the DSWD is now closely coordinating with other government agencies, the LGUs, the military, and the evacuees themselves so that efforts in bringing back the “zones of peace” into normalcy can be speeded up.

She said the management of the evacuation centers is being done by the evacuees themselves where they are organized into committees. These committees handle the food distribution and sanitation within the centers, Soliman added.

The Department of Health has provided the medical services for the evacuees while the 54th Engineering Brigade of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) constructed 60 compartments complete with toilet bowls and drums for water, Soliman said.

National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Lead Convenor Teresita Deles said that the government is now determined not just to work for relief but for the overall rehabilitation of those affected by the fighting.

“It is important that this time around in these zones of peace we move into the long-term development of the areas so that hopefully, we will now be able to finally address the roots of the conflict,” Deles said.

According to Deles, what the evacuees immediately need right now are houses and means of livelihood to start a new life.

She said that it is now a season for plowing and planting in the Liguasan Marsh and the government would assist the evacuees in their agricultural activities.

Deles said that the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) has already allocated P3.5 million for the “food or cash for work” scheme. This would mean that the evacuees would already be paid everyday as they work in their farms so that they do not have to wait for the harvests, she added.

Earlier, the President had released the initial amount of P5 million as the national government’s share in the implementation of the development plan for Pikit and Buliok Complex as presented by North Cotabato Governor Emmanuel Pinol.

Deles said that the President has also released another P1 million from the Presidential Social Fund for the establishment of a training center in the area.

GMA orders AFP, PNP to secure power transmission lines in Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to coordinate with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the local government units (LGUs) to ensure power lines and facilities in Mindanao are secured.

In a joint press briefing in Malacañang, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes said that the President’s order was aimed at preventing the recurrence of blackouts in Mindanao.

The presidential order was issued in the wake of the toppling of transmission towers in some areas in Mindanao by elements of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

“We would like to assure everybody that the armed forces, the police, and local officials will work closely towards this objective,” Reyes said.

In the same briefing, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez said the National Transmission Corp. (TRANSCO), of which he is the vice chairman, is determined to ensure that their transmission lines would be protected in cooperation with the AFP and the PNP and the local officials.

“We abhor this deliberate attempt at destroying our transmission lines because it affects the lives of 18-million innocent residents in Mindanao and disrupts business,” Perez said.

Eastern Petroleum, Pasang Masda ink pact on filling stations, discounted gasoline

Energy Secretary Vicente Perez today announced that Eastern Petroleum Corporation has signed a supply agreement with Pasang Masda, a national association of jeepney drivers, to put up filling stations at terminals in Mandaluyong and in Pantranco, Quezon City.

The Pantranco filling station will be opened on March 11.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Perez said jeepney drivers could avail themselves of a 60-centavo per liter discount against prevailing market prices in the filling stations.

Perez said this was the first concrete free market initiative between an oil player and the transport group that aimed to help mitigate world oil price increases brought by tensions in the Middle East.

He said officials of the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board witnessed the signing of the agreement Monday.

“We hope that other gasoline players will follow the lead of Eastern Petroleum in providing the special discount to the public transport group,” he added.

Perez said the DOE had identified five major jeepney routes in Metro Manila and the major gasoline stations located along the routes, hoping that the station operators could also give discounts to jeepney drivers.

He said they are encouraging agreements on volume discounts between oil players and transport groups in Makati, Malabon, Novaliches and other areas.

“It is a power of choice as to where (the drivers) buy their gasoline from,” he said, but adding that jeepney drivers could use their big number to buy collectively and get volume discounts.

“This is our way of mitigating oil price increases,” he said, pointing out that the oil price increase was inevitable.

“We cannot stop it, we can only try to mitigate it through initiatives such as this,” he said.

Besides continuing dialogues with the transport sector, Perez said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has instructed the DOE to come up with other measures to avert public transport rate increases and avoid its rippling effect on labor wages and the prices of prime goods.

Other proposed oil price mitigation initiatives include the implementation of efficient traffic control, a rollback on toll fees at superhighways, the suspension of the import duty on petroleum products and specific tax exemptions.

Perez reiterated that the country has 70 days inventory as of the end of February, with a 43-day in-country inventory to last until mid-April 2003.

“With additional 11 million barrels loading this month, equivalent to 36 days, the total inventory will last up to mid-May,” Perez said.

Another 7 million barrels equivalent to 23 days have been tabled for April to extend the petroleum inventory beyond the first week of July.

DOJ Ladies' Circle homes to aid of women prisoners

Prisoners at the Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) are having their day out of court.

For them, serving terms will no longer be as punitive as it appears as they engage in a livelihood program that will earn for them hard cash while affording them a more productive role inside their rehabilitation home.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Ladies' Circle and the CIW have recently signed a memorandum of agreement for the implementation of a livelihood program.

The agreement provides assistance to the women prisoners in the production of bed sheets, pillows and pillowcases, among other things.

Already, the DOJ Ladies' Circle has turned over to the CIW 12 sewing machines with motors, 900 pieces of bed sheets, 450 pieces of mats, 83 dozens of face towels, 400 kilos of open fiber pillows, 120 yards of cloth for hospital uniforms, 960 yards for pillows, pillowcases and rolls of threads.

The DOJ Ladies' Circle noted that the program would give the beneficiaries a source of income, enable them to spend productive hours while in prison, and prepare them for their eventual reintegration into society's mainstream.

The circle is mandated to undertake and promote social welfare programs and activities for the less privileged members of the community particularly prisoners in national penitentiaries.

The members of the DOJ Ladies' Circle include undersecretaries, wives of undersecretaries, assistant secretaries, division chiefs, heads and assistant heads of bureaus, commissions, administrations and offices under the DOJ.

Gov't assures safety of evacuees when they return to homes in former conflict areas

Defense officials today assured the safety of displaced families in Pikit and the Buliok Complex in North Cotabato when they return to their former homes now that the former conflict areas are being declared by the government as a "zone of peace."

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes said that the declaration of a "zone of peace" is a step that the government has taken to facilitate and encourage the evacuees to return to their former homes and live normal lives.

"Of course, we will secure them and we will try, as much as possible, to let them live their normal lives," Reyes said.

Reyes, however, said that there is no airtight guarantee that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as well as other lawless elements would not harass them.

But Reyes said that the military and the police will go after these lawless elements if they will harass or harm the residents.

In the same briefing, Gen. Dionisio Santiago, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), said that when an area is declared a zone of peace, the military would move out from the population centers and will be just in the periphery.

Santiago said the police and the military will make sure that criminal elements would not enter the zone to ensure the security of the returning evacuees.

In case there will be criminal activities inside the populated areas, the police and the military will have to go there and make sure that the perpetrators of these criminal acts would be apprehended and prosecuted.

"That is as simple as that. We will sort of box the area. And we will just be in the periphery," Santiago said.

Presidential Adviser for Mindanao Jesus Dureza said that the cooperation of the MILF in the setting up these zones of peace in Mindanao would be most welcomed.

“The government is determined to take the initiative in pushing for this because we feel that this is the right thing to do for the people in the affected areas,” Dureza said.

Dureza, who is also the chairman of the government panel in the peace talks with the MILF, said that the government has taken these efforts to preserve the gains of the peace and to put back on track again the peace process that has been disrupted by the recent fighting in Central Mindanao.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

The President strongly condemns the Davao bombing as a brazen act of terrorism, which will not go unpunished. She’s calling an emergency meeting of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security at 7 p.m. tonight.

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

The Davao City bombing early this evening is a brazen act of terrorism that will not go unpunished. The killing is a cowardly crime not only against the Filipino people but against humanity itself. I assure you justice will be done.

I will mobilize the full powers of the Presidency to identify and capture not only the inhuman perpetrators of this crime but their co-conspirators as well.

The Philippine National Police has responded quickly to the bombing, and I have been informed that their men have already several men in custody being interrogated for committing these murders

I have ordered the PNP and the AFP to set up a joint command center in Davao City that would undertake a massive operation to hunt down the bombers and their accomplices. I have ordered the PNP to expand their security perimeters around critical and heavily-populated centers, and the AFP to clear suspected lairs of terrorists around Davao City.

I am directing DILG Secretary Joey Lina and Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes to proceed immediately to Davao City to make sure on the ground that my orders are implemented. I am directing Secretary Lina to make sure that local government units are mobilized in preventing future such acts of brazen terrorism. I have appointed Davao City Mayor Rudy Duterte as crisis manager to oversee operations against the terrorists responsible for the bombing and to ensure the security of Davao City.

I extend my sincerest condolences to the loved ones and relatives of the Davao victims of such a heinous crime. I am vowing to you: Justice will be done.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 4, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20051026172517/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar04.htm>

The President's Day: March 5, 2003

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- **Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **SEAMEO's 38th Council Conference opens today at Shangri-la Plaza Hotel**
- **GMA assures justice for victims of Davao airport blast**
- **DOH has enough medicines for victims in twin blasts in Davao City and Tagum City**
- **GMA welcomes renewed U.S. aid in fight vs. terrorism**
- **GMA inspects relief, rehab area in Cotabato**
- **Gov't still willing to extend the 'hand of peace' to those who will renounce violence — GMA**
- **GMA hosts a dinner tonight for visiting Queen Sofia of Spain**

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

The decision of the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HK-SAR) to slash the minimum wage for foreign domestic workers in the territory is unfair and unjust.

On the very night that this new policy was announced, the Philippine government, through our Consulate General in Hong Kong, immediately moved for the reconsideration and the deferment of its implementation.

It will be recalled that I sent HK-SAR Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa my personal appeal on this matter last year yet. The DFA and DOLE in the persons of no less than Secretaries Blas Ople and Patricia Sto. Tomas, assiduously pleaded our case with the Hong Kong government. Even Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia gallantly threw the weight of their respective offices behind this cause.

Today, I have directed the POEA Board to temporarily suspend the processing of all contracts for domestic helpers in Hong Kong. I have also instructed the Secretary of Labor to review existing policies on the deployment of Filipino domestic helpers in other problems areas around the world.

I have likewise ordered the DFA to forge a coalition with other labor source countries in order to protest unfair levies or wage cut.

Even the Hong Kong Equal Employment Opportunities Commission has ruled that a levy imposed on foreign domestic helpers discriminates against those workers.

Accordingly, the Philippine government fully supports our workers in Hong Kong who are availing themselves of available mechanisms to contest the levy or wage cut even as government itself is exploring all means possible in calling upon the sense of fair play of the Hong Kong SAR, for it to reconsider the implementation of his discriminatory policy.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Davao Blasts

We call on the public to stay calm. We must show these terrorists that we cannot be cowed into fear. The government is on top of the situation. All concerned government agencies have been deployed to get the culprits and to thwart similar incidents anywhere in the country. Mayor Duterte has been designated crisis manager and the people of Davao City can count on the full backing of the national government in resolving this crisis.

The enemy has hurled its worst challenge. We shall respond resolutely and comprehensively. Commercial traffic in the Davao airport shall be restored immediately. Normalcy must be pursued even as we share condolences over the departed and care for the wounded.

We call upon the Filipino people to wage a total war against terrorism. We call on the public to raise its level of awareness and vigilance.

AMLA

We are grateful that agreement has been reached on the AMLA. Let us not dwell anymore on recrimination or blame tossing.

Zone of Peace

Peace means everything to the residents of this war-torn town. We hope this will be the start of a new life in the community and the rest of Mindanao.

SEAMEO's 38th Council Conference opens today at Shangri-la Plaza Hotel

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) opened its 38th Council Conference at the Shangri-la Plaza Hotel in Makati City today hoping to achieve a more viable educational policy for member countries, including the Philippines.

Ten education ministers and 140 delegates from Southeast Asia and six associate member-states of SEAMEO are attending the three-day meeting which will introduce the policy forum on the theme, "Engaging Communities in Delivering Quality Education."

Discussions aimed at introducing reforms that each member country could utilize to alleviate the education system in their respective countries will be led by Dr. Pratima Kale, president of the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IRR).

The Department of Education (DepEd) said, however, that no agreement will be made after the forum which is intended to just get the consensus and ideas from the ministers that will guide the activities of SEAMEO next year, particularly in the field of engaging communities in education.

Education Secretary Dr. Edilberto de Jesus said the Philippine education sector is taking the initiative in developing the country's capability to meet the future needs of learning in line with SEAMEO's goals of empowering regional understanding and cooperation in education, science and culture.

"This translates into continuously improving education quality even as we carry on with expanding access to education services through formal and non-formal streams," de Jesus said.

With the Philippine basic education sector servicing over 18.6 million schoolchildren enrolled in elementary and secondary schools throughout the country, de Jesus further stressed that "preparing our students for productive citizenship is a major challenge and demands every bit of effort."

Established 30 years ago as an organization to meet the needs of education ministers as purveyors of a complete and meaningful education for its citizens, SEAMEO serves to spur and sustain synergy in confronting education issues throughout the region.

Its member countries include Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines. The associate member states are Australia, Canada, France, Germany, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

Since the Philippines joined the organization in 1968, it has witnessed the growing tangible presence of SEAMEO through its centers such as INNOTECH, the Regional Tropical Medicine and Public Health Network (TROPMED) and the Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA).

GMA assures justice for victims of Davao airport blast

DAVAO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the families of Tuesday afternoon’s bomb blast victims at the international airport here that the perpetrators of the cowardly crime would be made to account for their terrorist act.

The President said the government would do everything to get those responsible for the powerful airport bomb explosion that claimed at least 21 lives and scores injured.

Citing reports, she said several suspects have been arrested and detained.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, who arrived with the President, said five persons, said to belong to the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), were taken in for questioning.

The President arrived here at about 10:40 a.m. and immediately inspected the bombing site, the Davao City International Airport’s public waiting area just outside the passenger terminal.

At the site, she lit and planted a candle and said a silent prayer for those killed and wounded in the bomb blast, which she earlier said was “a brazen act of terrorism that will not go unpunished.”

From the airport where normal operations have resumed, the President preceeded to the Davao Medical Center (DMC) where most of the bombing victims were brought.

At the DMC, about three kilometers from the airport, she visited the wounded and conferred with them.

She also dropped by the hospital chapel and condoled with the families of those killed in the bombing.

The President reiterated to them her vow to mobilize the full powers of her office to identify and capture the perpetrators and their co-conspirators in the airport blast.

“I extend my sincerest condolences to the loved ones and relatives of the Davao victims of such a heinous crime. I am vowing to you: Justice will be done,” she said.

From the hospital, the President returned to the airport, where she took off for a visit to evacuation centers in Pikit, Cotabato.

Pikit had been the site of a military offensive to flush out criminals hiding in Liguasan Marsh, also known as a lair of the MILF.

Meanwhile, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye today called on the public to stay calm amid the Mindanao bombings.

“We must show these terrorists that we cannot be cowed into fear,” Bunye said in a statement.

He said the government was on top of the situation as concerned government agencies “have been deployed to get the culprits and thwart similar incidents anywhere in the country.”

“The enemy has hurled its worst challenge. We shall respond resolutely and comprehensively,” he added.

Bunye said normalcy must be pursued even as “we share condolences over the departed and care for the wounded.”

He enjoined the people to wage a total war against terrorism and to raise the public’s level of awareness and vigilance against threats to national security and development.

DOH has enough medicines for victims in twin blasts in Davao City and Tagum City

The Department of Health (DOH) today assured the victims and relatives of the twin bombings in Davao City and Tagum City that there are sufficient medical, surgical and other emergency supplies in government hospitals to cope with their medical needs.

Health Secretary Manuel M. Dayrit said that the Davao Medical Center (DMC), where most of the victims were brought, has abundant stocks of medicines.

“They (DMC) has enough resources,” Dayrit said, even as the DOH central office in Manila has readied more medical supplies for immediate shipment to Davao City.

Dr. Gerardo Cunanan, DMC director, said that of the initial patients rushed to the hospital 17 were dead on arrival.

Of the 39 patients brought to the DMC four more died Wednesday night while undergoing treatment.

Cunanan said that 20 of the patients, who had less serious injuries, were sent home after treatment.

The bombing victims in Tagum City were brought to the Davao Regional Hospital in the city. One died in the blast in Tagum City.

GMA welcomes renewed U.S. aid in fight vs. terrorism

DAVAO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she welcomes the assistance being offered by United States President George W. Bush in the Philippine government’s all-out fight against terrorists.

In a press conference at the Davao City International Airport here, President Macapagal-Arroyo said that “as a matter of policy, I just draw the line at ground combat, where I want our soldiers to do the fighting, and not their soldiers.”

“We have drawn the line there from the very beginning,” she said, recalling the 2001 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit when she first spoke to President Bush about the war against terrorism.

Earlier, a statement from Washington quoted President Bush as condemning the Tuesday bomb attack that killed at least 21 people and wounded scores at the airport waiting area here.

The terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group claimed responsibility for the bombing.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer today said President Bush has condemned the wanton terrorist act and has pledged cooperation and assistance to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

Fleischer said the blast underscores the seriousness of the terrorist threat in Mindanao.

“The president knows that we will continue to work closely with President Arroyo to assist her and her government’s campaign to defeat the terrorists, and we will continue to do so,” he added.

GMA inspects relief, rehab area in Cotabato

COTABATO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today flew to the Buliok Complex in Pikit, North Cotabato to inspect the ongoing relief and rehabilitation in the area following the skirmishes between the military and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that displaced over 100,000 evacuees.

The Chief Executive, accompanied by some members of her Cabinet, arrived here this afternoon after her visit to Davao City where she personally commiserated with the victims of the bomb explosion Tuesday afternoon at the passenger terminal of the Davao City Airport.

Some P5 million worth of funds would be poured for the conversion and development of the Buliok Complex in Pikit into a zone of peace and development.

The allocation came about after the President ordered the transformation of the former MILF stronghold into a peaceful, productive and bustling agricultural community.

North Cotabato Governor Emmanuel Pinol, who was with the President during her visit, said the P5 million would be coursed through the Social, Economic Enhancement and Development Program in Pikit (SEED-Pikit).

Pinol pointed out that the money would specifically be used for the procurement of farm inputs and equipment for the farmers in the area which, he said, would be converted into corn and banana plantations under the SEED-Pikit project.

The Cotabato provincial government has identified 3,500 farmers, most of them relatives of MILF fighters, to work on the farmlands.

Under the SEED-Pikit scheme, both local government and provincial government will procure hybrid seeds to be distributed by the Department of Agriculture to farmer beneficiaries.

Pinol stressed that the Buliok Complex will become a model farming community in the province of Cotabato.

“It will become a model farming community in Cotabato province and the rebels would realize it would be better to be armed with plows and agricultural equipment than carrying firearms,” he said.

Under the SEED-Pikit program, various cornfield and banana plantations will be merged into integrated production areas where all the farmers will work together for a take-home pay of P100 per day. Other hand, the Agriculture Department will provide the technical assistance.

Gov't still willing to extend the 'hand of peace' to those who will renounce violence — GMA

DAVAO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that despite Tuesday's deadly bombing incident in this city, the government would continue to extend the “hand of peace” to those who will renounce violence.

But in a press conference here after she visited the bombing site at the Davao International Airport and commiserated with the victims and their relatives, the President also vowed to use the full force of the law in going after the perpetrators and to those who will continue to resort to violence in furthering their goals.

“There is always the hand of peace for those who renounce violence but for those who will continue to use violence as a means to carry out their messages, then there is also the long arm of the law,” the President said.

The President also called on Mindanaons not to be distracted by the tragic incident but to continue working for the economic growth of Mindanao.

“What we have to do is to really move on. This is the message that I would like to give to everyone. These are unfortunate and tragic incidents. But these should not deter us from proceeding and pushing for the development of Mindanao,” the President said.

In the same press conference, the President also reiterated her position that any assistance from the United States in the fight against terrorism in the Philippines should be in the form of equipment, training, surveillance and civic action work.

“As a matter of policy, there is only one parameter. In the ground combat, I want our soldiers to do the fighting, and not theirs,” the President stressed.

GMA hosts a dinner tonight for visiting Queen Sofia of Spain

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will host a dinner tonight for visiting Queen Sofia of Spain at the Metropolitan Museum at the Bangko Sentral Complex, along Roxas Boulevard, capping the Queen’s two-day private visit to Manila.

Queen Sofia, who arrived yesterday, had a hectic schedule the whole day today where she inaugurated development and charitable projects funded by the Spanish government. She will leave tomorrow.

The highlight of the Queen’s visit was the turnover of the third set of funds worth \$1.6 million for the Filipinas Eye Center Foundation of the Philippine General Hospital and the groundbreaking of the Jose Rizal Eye Referral Center.

The Spanish government has already donated a total of \$3.2 million to the foundation.

The Queen also visited the Makabata Foundation or the Center for Education for Street Children of Metro Manila and met with Spanish development workers in the country.

The Spanish Queen also toured Intramuros, where she pledged to support future cultural and tourism projects to be jointly undertaken by the Spanish and Philippine governments.

While in Intramuros, the Queen visited the San Agustin Church accompanied by Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon.

Later in the day, the Queen inaugurated the exhibit of the Spanish overseas cultural program at the National Museum.

The Queen was accompanied in her trip by Spain’s state secretary for international cooperation, Miguel Angel Cortes, and other Spanish officials involved in development aid and cultural affairs.

Mrs. Arroyo will be the guest of the Royal family when she makes a state visit to Spain late this month.

The Spanish Queen last visited the country three years ago to similarly oversee Spanish development aid projects. She was also here in 1998 with King Juan Carlos to co-celebrate the Centennial of Philippine independence.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 5, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514040918/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar05.htm>

The President's Day: March 6, 2003

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- **MIMAROPA governors appeal to GMA to hold Balikatan in Occidental Mindoro**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **IMF says RP economic situation comfortable**
- **Palace renews commitment to work for lasting peace in Mindanao**
- **GMA names new MTRCB chair, vice chair, executive director, board member**
- **GMA okays creation of 'Maralitang Tagamasid' to help railway youths get jobs, be productive**
- **GMA asks beneficiaries of housing programs to report abusive, illegal occupants**

MIMAROPA governors appeal to GMA to hold Balikatan in Occidental Mindoro

The governors of the two Mindoro provinces, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan (MIMAROPA) have appealed to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to hold the "Balikatan" exercises in the MIMAROPA region to be hosted by the province of Occidental Mindoro.

In a resolution dated March 5, 2003, the MIMAROPA governors said the holding of the Balikatan exercises in their region would minimize if not totally eradicate the peace and order problem in the area and reduce the threats and dangers posted by unwanted groups to the region and to the country as whole.

The resolution was signed by Governors Eleandro Jesus Madrona of Romblon, Bartolome Marasigan of Oriental Mindoro, Jose Villarosa of Occidental Mindoro, Carmencita Reyes of Marinduque and Joel Reyes of Palawan.

The five governors pointed out that the gains in the exercise of the Balikatan in Mindoro could be replicated and utilized in the other provinces in the Southern Tagalog region experiencing the same peace and order problem and this would ultimately impact on the overall pursuit of lasting peace and development.

"The island of Mindoro, particularly Occidental Mindoro, has been the haven of insurgents and their continued presence in the province does not only pose danger to the people but also adversely affects their socio-economic activities," the resolution said.

According to the governors, the Balikatan exercise was successfully undertaken in Basilan and seen to have a notable impact not only on the peace and order situation but also on the economic activities in area.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Davao Bombing

The military and police have been ordered to integrate all intelligence and investigative findings so that our people can be fully apprised of the situation. We are happy to report that the PNP has accepted the offer of Australia and the US FBI to provide forensic assistance to local probers.

Diplomatic initiatives must reinforce our efforts. We are working closely with the Islamic countries to isolate all terrorist cells in Mindanao and deprive them of legitimacy or clandestine foreign support. For our legislators, it is time to refocus their sights on a tough anti-terrorism law.

AMLA

Our lawmakers did a very good job. It is a credit to the leadership of both Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia. The President will sign the enrolled bill incorporating the amendments at 10 a.m. tomorrow.

But the job doesn't stop there. We must now refocus on vital transnational concerns that affect our national interest foremost of which are the growing terrorism and a possible conflict in the Middle East.

The President feels it is time to work doubly hard to reinforce our weakened economy. She urges our legislators to move on to other priorities in our legislative agenda that will improve our economic productivity and shore up investment.

Freeze on Processing of OFW Application for HK

The President's order is a form of diplomatic protest. She represents the people, and the people cannot stand aside while Filipinos are being discriminated upon or treated unfairly in a foreign country. Our domestic workers are the best in the world. We deserve respect and dignified treatment.

Economy

Our economy is being temporarily battered by Middle East tension and the series of bombings in Mindanao. The President is hoping for an early resolution of the standoff in Iraq while we consolidate all efforts to stabilize the peace and order situation in Mindanao. The President feels that this is just a temporary setback. The country's economic fundamentals are sound. When temporary instabilities retreat, we will be back on the road to a quick recovery.

IMF says RP economic situation comfortable

"The situation in the Philippines is pretty comfortable," according to the International Monetary Fund.

David Burton, IMF director for Asia-Pacific, told a news conference in Singapore yesterday that the IMF has been encouraged by the Philippines' recent robust economic performance.

The IMF official told members of the Foreign Correspondents Association of Singapore and the Singapore Press Club that he was also encouraged by recent signs of improving tax revenues in the Philippines.

Reviewing the entire region, Burton said most Asian economies were well placed to ride out any turbulence caused by a global economic slowdown.

"The immediate outlook is for continued solid growth in the Asian region, although sizeable downside risks related to uncertainties about the strength of the global recovery and to Iraq exist," the IMF official said.

Burton added, however, that Asian governments must be prepared to ease monetary and fiscal policies if a potential war in Iraq does more damage to the global economy than expected.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) also said the Asia-Pacific region offers the greatest opportunities for growth in the next three years.

The EIU said that in a survey of the world's top corporate executives, 66 percent chose the region as offering the biggest growth prospects for their businesses, followed by Eastern Europe, which was chosen by 40 percent.

The Middle East was voted as the region posing the biggest risks to business in the next three years.

The survey, titled CEO Agenda, was carried out in the last three months of 2002 and covered 681 chief executives, board chairmen, chief financial officers and regional managers.

Palace renews commitment to work for lasting peace in Mindanao

Malacañang today renewed its commitment to work for a lasting peace in Mindanao as it appealed to unscrupulous groups to stop resorting to black propaganda and dirty tactics in furthering their evil designs.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye earlier disowned a supposed memorandum of instruction from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordering the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to capture Hashim Salamat dead or alive.

Bunye categorically denied that the document came from the Palace, adding that it could be the handiwork of people who want to sabotage government efforts in reviving talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

“We’d like to state that this document is spurious. It is not true. This document is fake and it’s been circulated probably to agitate the Muslim population in Mindanao,” Bunye said in his regular press briefing.

Bunye said it is very difficult to pinpoint the source of these documents. “Obviously it emanated from a group that doesn’t want peace between MILF and the government,” Bunye said.

The spokesman said Presidential Assistant on Mindanao Jesus Dureza presented the fake document, which has been widely circulated in the region, during last week’s meeting in Malacañang of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS).

“We don’t know and we don’t want to point any fingers at any particular group. It’s enough that we belie this statement, that we correct the impression that this emanated from Malacañang,” Bunye said.

The false memo, dated February 11, orders the AFP to undertake a so-called Operation Greenbase, whereby the Armed Forces must also “capture and occupy” simultaneously within one week the Buliok Complex fronting the Liguasan Marsh area comprising Kabalsalan Island Complex, Rajamuda Complex and Buliok Complex where Hashim Salamat’s headquarters or Islamic Center is located.

The so-called memo from the President further orders the AFP to serve the warrants of arrest against Salamat, Samier Hashim, Al Haj Murad and Eid Kabalu by various courts two years ago.

“The AFP must bear in mind that the high-value target of the plan is to capture Salamat Hashim dead or alive,” the fake memo said.

GMA names new MTRCB chair, vice chair, executive director, board member

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo appointed today former board member Ma. Consoliza P. Laguardia as the new chairman of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) replacing Mari-Len Y. Dinglasan for a term expiring Sept. 30 this year.

Mrs. Arroyo also appointed a new vice chairman, executive director and board member.

Named to replace June Keithley-Castro as vice chair was Jacqueline Suzanne Aquino-Gavino for a term also expiring on Sept. 30.

Appointed executive director was Editha G. Demetria vice Gabriel Ma. J. Lopez while Orlando S. Olgado was named member to fill up the slot vacated by Laguardia at the board.

Demetria and Olgado will likewise serve the unexpired terms of their predecessors.

Laguardia, whose duty as board member from March 2001 to March 2002 was to review and classify films, is a Commerce graduate, major in economics, from the College of the Holy Spirit in 1981.

She once served as supervisor in the billing division of Aboitiz-One (Air) and administrative assistant/executive secretary to the administrator of the Arcadian Retirement Hotel in California.

Prior to these, she served the Philippine National Bank in various capacities from 1983 to 1999.

Her tour of duty in the bank included stints as senior trader, senior management specialist, assistant trader, and EDP teller.

GMA okays creation of '*Maralitang Tagamasid*' to help railway youths get jobs, be productive

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today approved the creation of *Maralitang Tagamasid*, a group of social workers who will help out-of-school youth living along railways find jobs and eventually lead productive and socially relevant lives.

The President issued her approval during a meeting with several urban poor groups at the State Dining Room in Malacanang. Among those the President met were urban poor groups from Caloocan, Taguig, Navotas, Payatas and Tala Leprosarium.

The proposal to set up a group to transform indolent youths into hardworking citizens was made by Secretary Michael Defensor, chairman of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council.

“Marami kasing tigas-ulo na kailangan magkaroon ng trabaho (there are many idle youths who should be working instead of just looking bored),” Defensor said.

Defensor also reported to the President that the relocation and resettlement programs of the government are now under way for those living along the railways.

He noted that the program beneficiaries along the North Railway have been relocated to medium-rise resettlement areas in Camarin in Caloocan City, while those along the South Railway have been offered resettlement areas in Tanay, Batangas and Montalban, Rizal.

Aside from Defensor, among the officials who attended the meeting were National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) lead convenor Teresita Quintos-Deles and Metro Manila Development Authority and Public Works Secretary Bayani Fernando and Commission on the Urban Poor Chairman Percy Chavez.

Meanwhile, the President ordered the immediate sale of 12 hectares of idle government land to long-time settlers in Taguig.

The President issued the order after being informed that the government is not inclined to sell its land because it is considered prime property with P30,000 per square meter. This, despite an earlier law declaring the long-time residents as priority beneficiaries.

“What’s 12 hectares compared to 120 hectares. The issue here is socialized housing...I am telling you, sell it to them,” the President said.

GMA asks beneficiaries of housing programs to report abusive, illegal occupants

The government today asked rightful state housing beneficiaries to immediately report to proper authorities abusive occupants and squatter syndicates who illegally occupy lands set for presidential proclamation.

The appeal was made by government officials, led by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, during a meeting with urban poor groups at the State Dining Room in Malacañang.

At the same time, the President approved the appointment of Percy Chavez, the chairman of the Commission on the Urban Poor, as the head of the Presidential Task Force Payatas. The task force has been assigned the task of identifying the proper government land recipients in the Payatas area.

The task force will also provide rightful beneficiaries with an ad-interim relocation site while the Supreme Court is tackling the land title dispute in the said area.

Secretary Michael Defensor, chairman of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, who also attended the meeting, noted the problems that arise in an area set for presidential proclamation.

“Once a presidential proclamation is announced, the number of residents always increase, even multiply,” Defensor said. “*Nilulusob ng mga tao* (People come in droves),” he added.

“We are asking your cooperation and vigilance to watch over the property because it is your land that is getting smaller because of these illegal occupants,” Defensor said.

Defensor noted the case of long-time settlers in Sitio Masagana in Bicutan, Taguig who are entitled to their land but have to contend now with occupants who only settled in the area after 1992, the cut-off year set by the government.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 6, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20090813104707/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar06.htm>

The President's Day: March 7, 2003

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- **GMA lauds members of Congress for passage of AMLA amendments**
- **GMA orders new tack in anti-terror war**
- **GMA calls on Congress to pass more anti-poverty, anti-terrorism laws**
- **BSP taking measures to ensure RP's financial system won't be affected by U.S.-Iraq crisis**
- **GMA bats for ASEAN curriculum on religious studies**
- **Gov't assures adequate supply of rice, vital commodities**
- **Gov't assures oil security in event of Gulf war**
- **GMA to lead women's day rites tomorrow**

GMA lauds members of Congress for passage of AMLA amendments

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the members of the two houses of Congress for their wisdom, patience, perseverance and patriotic sense of duty in finally approving vital amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA).

In her remarks at the signing of Republic Act No. 9194, which is an amendment to Republic Act 9160, the President said that what Congress has done was to balance the country's legal, psychological, cultural and political biases with the need to comply with the rules of the international community.

"Many of our legislators refer to this piece of legislation as probably one of the most difficult we have had to pass," the President said.

She said that the debates, even the blame-tossing that attended the passage of the AMLA amendments, were fierce and as emotional as any discussion on a national issue could get.

The President said she understood the anxiety of some of our leaders who feared that some of the country's fundamental democratic precepts were being threatened by international prescriptions on anti-money laundering.

But the President said she also realized the resolute convergence of will, resources and laws among the civilized nations in combating domestic and transnational criminality.

The President said that with the enactment of RA No. 9194, the nation had a collective sigh of relief, obviously referring to the passionate debate between the proponents and oppositionists to the proposed changes in AMLA.

"The anti-money laundering legislation is about reform and the strengthening of democracy. And getting hard earned money seamlessly into the hands of Filipino families at home," the President said.

According to the President, the issue of anti-money laundering was a potent one. But the Philippines had to take control of its destiny and do the right thing, she added.

"The issue here is one of progress, modernization, the protection of our overseas Filipino workers and their families. In summary, the anti-money laundering legislation is central to reform," the President said.

With the amended AMLA, the President said, the country can now move closer to a banking regime that will inspire greater confidence, trustworthiness and reliability and, therefore, greater economic activity, investment and resiliency.

“In this sense, we shouldn’t consider the passage of AMLA II, if I might call it, as a passive and begrudging compliance of the rules of the global financial system, but rather as an active pursuit of our national interest,” the President said.

Among those who attended the signing ceremony from the Senate were Senate President Franklin Drilon; Sen. Ramon Magsaysay, Jr., principal author and chairman of the Senate committee on banks, financial institutions and currencies; Sen. Edgardo Angara, also a principal author and chairman of the Senate committee on constitutional amendments; Sen. Panfilo Lacson, another principal author; Sen. Ralph Recto, chairman of the Senate committee on ways and means; and Sen. Robert Jaworski.

The House contingent, headed by Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., included Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzales; House Majority Leader Neptali Gonzales III; House Deputy Majority Leader Francis Escudero; Congressman Jaime Lopez, chairman of the House committee on banks and financial intermediaries, and principal author in the House version; and Makati Congressman Teodoro Locsin.

Also present at the signing rites were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Gov. Rafael Buenaventura, and representatives from the business community, insurance sector, financing and investment sector, and OFWs.

GMA orders new tack in anti-terror war

With the advent of a new, bolder form of terrorism, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called for a paradigm shift in the way the country conceptualizes and approaches the problem, saying it is not insurmountable.

Saying that national government measures are no longer sufficient, she asked the cooperation and vigilance of the entire community and all local government units to keep the country safe for both citizens and tourists.

In her speech during the signing into law of the amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA), the President issued immediate and specific measures for the entire community and all local government units to address the problem of terrorism by formulating and undertaking both preventive and remedial measures: to prepare, prevent, mitigate and rehabilitate.

She directed the Department of the Interior and Local Governments, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police and the Department of Tourism to formulate security measures to monitor security threats and prevent terrorist attacks.

She asked all government units, down to the barangay level to organize and conduct comprehensive neighborhood watches to monitor suspicious persons, actions and materials.

Mrs. Arroyo also directed the PNP to organize and deploy nationwide community-based reaction units and, in partnership with LGUs, enhance communication and coordination in order to effectively mobilize and fully utilize all community resources.

Hand in hand with these directives, the President asked the concerned government units to institute an effective reward system and extend security vigilance not just to major, but all public places.

In her speech, President Arroyo cited Davao’s effective local leadership and indispensable community cooperation in the face of the most recent terrorist attack that saw a number of innocent civilians killed in the bombing that rocked the Davao international airport.

“Davao’s example of overcoming its past problems is a model to meet the bolder face of terrorism — an active local government unit, a vigilant citizenry, and cooperation and coordination between the local government unit and the local community,” the President said.

GMA calls on Congress to pass more anti-poverty, anti-terrorism laws

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on members of the two houses of Congress to pass the anti-terrorism act, the judicial reform bill and the legislation on the use of farmlands as collateral.

The President issued her appeal before she signed Republic Act (RA) 9194, also known as an act amending RA 9160 or the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA) of 2001.

In a speech during simple signing rites at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall this morning, the President lauded Congress for its good work, as she batted for more laws that would provide social justice, uplift the lives of the poor and stop terrorism in the country.

"I ask Congress to help me achieve justice and stop terrorism. I ask Congress to help me now to pass the anti-terrorism act. And to achieve justice, I ask Congress to help me in passing the judicial reforms bill," she said.

"And because there is a close relationship between fighting terrorism and fighting poverty, I ask Congress to help me by passing the use of farmlands as collateral," she added.

The President noted that the country's executive and the legislative departments have done a great deal of work by passing landmark legislative measures.

But she admitted that the two government branches have still a lot of work to be done for the sake of the Filipino people.

"And if we continue and even improve on the unity we finally achieved, we would be able to make this Congress remembered as a Congress of great recall," President said.

BSP taking measures to ensure RP's financial system won't be affected by U.S.-Iraq crisis

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) today assured the public that it has taken appropriate measures to ensure that the country's financial institutions would not be affected by the heightening of tension in the Middle East.

In a briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, BSP Deputy Governor Armando Tetangco, Jr. said these measures are being taken to insulate the country's financial system from pressures emanating from a US-Iraq war.

Tetangco said that in cooperation with other government agencies, the BSP has adopted a comprehensive and detailed plan on how to deal with any emergency and to preserve the stability of our financial markets.

One element of this plan is the availability of standby liquidity facilities to assist banks that may encounter liquidity problems arising from a sudden rush of withdrawals through the BSP's Standby Liquidity Facility.

Tetangco said that this will allow eligible banks to avail themselves of liquidity assistance of up to 50 percent of their outstanding deposit liabilities, fully collateralized by government securities or real estate mortgages.

He said that in order to safeguard the interest of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) based in the Middle East, the BSP would open a rediscounting window for personal loans granted by qualified banks to OFWs or their immediate families.

The BSP will also accept currencies of Kuwait, Iraq, Israel and Turkey for conversion into pesos from OFWs returning from these countries to the Philippines, Tetangco said.

According to Tetangco, the BSP has an adequate level of gross international reserves and a healthy balance of payments to cover the country's external obligations.

On top of that, the BSP is also capable of tapping official and commercial external sources of financing to boost reserves, such as several bilateral repurchase agreements with other Asian central banks, Tetangco said.

He said that the BSP is also closely monitoring inflation levels to ensure that the inflation target of 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent for this year is met.

Tetangco said that inflation, which is now averaging close to 3 percent, suggests that the economy can take in price pressures, including the successive oil price increases and the depreciation of the peso.

The BSP is keeping a close watch on domestic liquidity and currency volatility, while other government agencies like the Department of Trade and Industry, are closely watching price levels and supply inventories of basic commodities.

On the interest rates, both the BSP and the Department of Finance, in coordination with the Bureau of Treasury, are implementing a "strategic" borrowing program that would ensure that government borrowing is carried without prejudicing the private sector.

GMA bats for Asean curriculum on religious studies

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today emphasized the need to have a regional curriculum on religious studies that would be distinctly appropriate to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member-countries.

The President made the emphasis during a meeting at the Music Conference Room with ASEAN education ministers, who just capped a congress sponsored by the Department of Education. Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus accompanied the ASEAN ministers during their call on the President.

"We should develop an ASEAN curriculum," the President told the ministers as she noted the need to continue to develop the Philippine Madrasah (Arabic School) system by sending the Filipino Ustadz (Islamic scholars) to Islamic ASEAN neighbors for further studies.

The President told the education ministers that Islam in Southeast Asia is much more modern, unlike in other regions. "These are our neighbors. This is where we should send our teachers," she said.

The President has pushed for the integration of the madrasah into the country's national educational system.

The madrasah (plural, madaris) is the Arabic term for a privately-owned but community-based school that teaches Arabic and the teachings of Islam.

The President earlier said "one of the keys to the future of Mindanao, especially among the youth, is their education." She also said the focus on the madaris would definitely address the root causes of poverty and conflict in predominantly-Muslim areas in Southern Philippines.

During the meeting with the education ministers, the President said she would like to see the Philippine Madrasah to similarly develop like the common Catholic Grade School where not only religious studies, but also the academics, are accentuated.

The President noted that she has always called for inter-faith understanding and the unity of society.

She further noted that it would be much better to have a common curriculum for Asean members as “we have been able to come together and have become successful by reaching consensus in all issues.”

“Our countries have been very close in almost all aspects of governance. We’ve come to think alike,” she said.

Among those who called on the President were Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Director Dr. Arief Sadiman, SEAMEO Deputy Director Dr. Rujay Abhakorn, Education Ministers George Molloy (Canada), Armindo Maia (East Timor), Teo Chee Hean (Singapore), Musa Mohamad (Malaysia), San Min (Myanmar), Nguyen Minh Hiem (Vietnam), Patrick Cremen (Australia), Patrick Quides (France), Abdul Malik Fajar (Indonesia), Im Sethy (Cambodia), Pongpol Andireksarn (Thailand), Pehim Dato Haji Abdul Aziz Uman (Brunei) and Bosengkham Vongdara (Lao People’s Democratic Republic).

The President earlier inaugurated the Education for Peace and Development in Mindanao (EPDM) program, which, she said, “will ensure that the Madrasah education will become part of the country’s national education system.”

The EPDM is designed and targeted to radically uplift the lives of Mindanaons mired in poverty and trapped by armed conflict, terrorism and criminality.

The program has a five-point agenda: information and communications technology, madrasah education, peace education, Mindanao culture and history and teacher training. It will be implemented by the Office of the President, the Presidential Assistant for Education, the Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Education and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

Gov’t assures adequate supply of rice, vital commodities

The government today assured the timely importation of rice and other key commodities as part of its contingency measures to mitigate the negative impact of an expanded conflict in Iraq.

In a press briefing, the country’s economic czars revealed that the National Food Authority (NFA) has a 95-day buffer stock of rice and is seeking authorization from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for an additional importation of 400 metric tons of the commodity.

Importation of non-NFA rice amounting to 150,000 metric tons will come in starting next month, according Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II, speaking on behalf of the economic managers.

The government, Roxas said, is also prioritizing the rehabilitation of existing and the building of new irrigation facilities, extension of agriculture credit and post-harvest support to mitigate the adverse effects of El Niño, one that is already affecting many countries in the world with severe weather conditions.

Aside from ensuring adequate food supply, the government is also implementing an effective monitoring of prices of staple commodities through the National Price Coordinating Council.

Special monitoring teams, Roxas said, will be fielded nationwide in addition to the weekly price monitoring of basic goods and commodities.

“These teams will not only monitor prices and supplies,” said Roxas,” but will also strictly enforce the Price Act against traders and retailers who will try to take advantage of an emergency situation.”

Roxas also issued a stern warning, saying “We are on the lookout for and will crush those that will promote nervousness, speculation, and hoarding – activities that deeply hurt our economy during times of crisis.”

Gov’t assures oil security in event of Gulf war

Advanced import loadings for April and May will boost the country's oil inventory levels and will assure adequate supply of the commodity up to mid-June.

As this developed, the government had also initiated negotiations for bilateral supply agreements with oil-producing countries such as Iran and Russia.

This the Department of Energy (DOE) today assured to assuage fears of a domestic oil crisis in the event that a US-Iraq war breaks out.

In a press briefing, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez said the government had always been ready to meet head-on the far-reaching effects on the Philippines of a conflict in the Persian Gulf.

Perez said that at present, the country has maintained an oil inventory level of 70 days.

He said the agency had also implemented the Minimum Inventory Requirement provided under Executive Order 134.

The order mandated inventory levels of crude end-products of 30 days for oil refineries, 50 days for oil companies with no oil refineries, and seven days for liquefied petroleum gas.

The negotiations for oil from Russia and Iran would serve as additional supply security.

Perez said this was in consonance with an earlier agreement signed under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Petroleum Supply Agreement (APSA).

The DOE had also adopted several efforts to mitigate the effects of a global oil price surge, even as a US-led attack on Iraq looms.

In an earlier briefing, Perez said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the DOE and the Department of Transportation and Communication to come up with measures to avert public transport fare rate increases and avoid its ripple effect on labor wages, prices of basic goods and others.

The government has also activated the Energy Contingency Task Force that has drawn up plans of action to ensure the continuous supply of power.

GMA to lead women's day rites tomorrow

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will lead the celebration of the National Women's Day tomorrow, March 8, at the Marikina Sports Complex.

This year's celebration revolves around the women's agenda of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration embodied in the Framework Plan for Women: human rights, economic empowerment, and gender-responsive governance.

This year's theme is "Babae, May Karapatan Ka."

Aside from women government employees, women advocates from non-government organizations, the academe, and other participants will join the President in commemorating the event in Marikina City.

While the President is expected to spell out her administration's program for women, the occasion will also be an avenue for government entities and other institutions to identify how they can contribute to the women's agenda of the President.

The President will also view the “Woman-ity Affair” that will showcase both government and non-government efforts to support women’s needs, and a bazaar of locally-made women’s products.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 7, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041027/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar07.htm>

The President's Day: March 8, 2003

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- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **DENR, ARMM enforce stiff measures on forest products transport**
- **RP economic performance impresses IMF**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Gov't lauds private sector for initiatives in mitigating adverse effects of oil price hikes**
- **GMA asks for understanding, more time to work on better treatment of domestic helpers in Hong Kong**
- **GMA calls for responsible parenthood among Filipinos**
- **GMA cites women's involvement in micro-financing**

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has a number of options to influence or address any unusual movement in the peso-dollar exchange rate.

This includes provision of liquidity, adjustment in interest rates and/or reserve requirements as well as moral suasion.

At the end of the day, it is the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas which will make the decision as it is an independent institution.

DENR, ARMM enforce stiff measures on forest products transport

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) have agreed to strictly enforce shipment schemes for forest products coming from the ARMM to put a lid on the lucrative illegal logging trade.

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Elisea G. Gozun and DENR-ARMM Regional Cabinet Secretary Kabuntalan P. Emblawa, Al-haj signed last February 26 a memorandum of agreement (MOA) that would stringently monitor transport routes of forest products such as logs, lumber, and plywood from the ARMM to other regions in the country.

In a report to Malacañang, Gozun said the MOA hoped to effectively monitor forest products being transported all over the country, and the ARMM has supported the bid to combat the illegal transport at the source.

“As the agency that implements measures to preserve our natural resources, we must set the tone to seriously regulate the growing number of forest crimes, such as illegal forest products transport, trade, and industrial processing,” she said.

Concern for the environment transcends boundaries and regions. It must not be just a mere resolve but a call to action,” she added.

Secretary Emblawa said “this is a significant start of a more meaningful collaboration between ARMM and the national government in protecting the environment and natural resources.”

“While we need this forestry monitoring agreement, we also hope to have cooperation in other programs such as good environmental governance, technical training of DENR-ARMM personnel and provisions for technical assistance to DENR-ARMM,” Emblawa stressed.

Under the MOA, authorized shipping routes as well as loading and off-loading ports were identified in the National Capital Region (NCR), and Regions 6 to 12.

Guidelines were also issued on shipment procedures, including the submission of a Notice of Shipment and Confirmation, wherein prior communication from DENR-ARMM will be formally sent to DENR-national regional official-recipients at least two days before the actual shipping.

In addition, DENR-ARMM will also require strict compliance on transport documents used for shipment timber in whatever form such as Log or Lumber Supply Contacts, Certificate of Timber/Lumber Origin, Auxiliary Invoice, Sales Invoice, Tally/Scale Sheets, Purchase Orders and Official Receipts.

Most of the documents, Gozun explained, will now be printed on security paper by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), under the DENR-ARMM letterhead.

The MOA also outlined the procedure of transporting forest products. It calls on the DENR-ARMM to provide all DENR-national office regional directors in other regions with a list of commercial carriers/shippers, their voyage number, schedules, container van identification/serial numbers and the corresponding timber volume it carries.

DENR-ARMM will also furnish DENR-national a list of legitimate wood processing plants/sawmill operators/lumber dealers in ARMM who are authorized to ship out forest products from ARMM, including the location of their processing plants.

Meanwhile, DENR-national regional officials who will be the recipients of the shipments from ARMM will submit to the DENR-ARMM monthly recapitulation reports of all shipments of forest products from ARMM entering their respective regions, which will then be counter-validated for accuracy by DENR-ARMM.

Forestry figures of DENR's Forest Management Bureau (FMB) in 2001 estimated Philippine forest area at around 5.4 million hectares. Production of forest resources such as logs was placed at around 570,890 cubic meters annually, most of which are coming from the logging areas within ARMM.

RP economic performance impresses IMF

A ranking official of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the Asia-Pacific region this week cited the Philippines as one of the nations in Southeast Asia that has weathered domestic and global financial uncertainties to emerge economically strong.

David Burton, IMF director for Asia-Pacific, told a news conference in Singapore Wednesday that the Philippines' recent robust economic performance has encouraged the IMF.

The Philippines gross domestic product (GDP), the amount of goods and services produced at a given period in the country, rose 4.6 percent while its gross national product (GNP), or GDP plus income from abroad, went up 5.2 percent in 2002.

Socio-economic planning secretary Romulo Neri said the 2002 performance, the strongest recorded since the 1997 Asian financial crisis, exceeded the high end of official forecasts.

Burton said "the situation in the Philippines is pretty comfortable."

He told members of the Foreign Correspondents Association of Singapore and the Singapore Press Club that he was also encouraged by recent signs of improving tax revenues in the Philippines.

Reviewing the entire region, Burton said most Asian economies were well placed to ride out any turbulence caused by a global economic slowdown.

“The immediate outlook is for continued solid growth in the Asian region, although sizeable downside risks related to uncertainties about the strength of the global recovery and to Iraq exist,” the IMF official said.

Burton added, however, that Asian governments must be prepared to ease monetary and fiscal policies if a potential war in Iraq does more damage to the global economy than expected.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) also said the Asia-Pacific region offers the greatest opportunities for growth in the next three years.

The EIU said that in a survey of the world’s top corporate executives, 66 percent chose the region as offering the biggest growth prospects for their businesses, followed by Eastern Europe, which was chosen by 40 percent.

The Middle East was voted as the region posing the biggest risks to business in the next three years.

The survey, titled CEO Agenda, was carried out in the last three months of 2002 and covered 681 chief executives, board chairmen, chief financial officers and regional managers.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

On Jinggoy Estrada case:

This proves that under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, justice will be dispensed even handedly.

Gov’t lauds private sector for initiatives in mitigating adverse effects of oil price hikes

Energy Secretary Vicente Perez has lauded the private sector for helping the government alleviate the plight of public transport groups in the face of rising fuel prices brought about by the growing tension in the Middle East.

Earlier, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) to come up with measures to avert public transport fare rate increases and avoid its ripple effect on wages and the prices of basic goods.

In a press briefing in Malacañang Friday, Perez said that early this week, he witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between Eastern Petroleum and Pasang Masda for the construction of two terminals in Mandaluyong and in Pantranco in Quezon City.

Under the agreement, Pasang Masda members will get volume discounts from these terminals when they load diesel fuel for their jeepneys.

The volume discount agreement between Pasang Masda and Eastern Petroleum has a lifespan of five years, Perez said.

“Another jeepney transport operator is discussing a similar arrangement with a new player somewhere in a Makati terminal. Two other jeepney operators are identifying a similar terminal in Manila and Antipolo,” Perez said.

Perez said new players like Seoil, Unioil, Flying V and Total are discussing similar arrangements with public utility associations. “So we are creating a free market initiative for oil players to give volume discounts to the public transportation group, he said.

The special arrangement allows for up to 60-centavo discount to the prevailing pump price for diesel, Perez said.

Perez also assured the public that the government had always been ready to meet head-on the far-reaching effects on the Philippines of a US-Iraq war.

He said that at present, the country has maintained an oil inventory level of 70 days.

The DOE, he said, had also implemented the Minimum Inventory Requirement provided under Executive Order 134.

The order mandated inventory levels of crude end products of 30 days for oil refineries, 50 days for oil companies with no oil refineries, and seven days for liquefied petroleum gas.

The negotiations for oil from Russia and Iran would serve as additional supply security in consonance with an earlier agreement signed under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Petroleum Supply Agreement (APSA), Perez said.

The government has also activated the Energy Contingency Task Force that has drawn up plans of action to ensure the continuous supply of power, Perez said.

GMA asks for understanding, more time to work on better treatment of domestic helpers in Hong Kong

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stood up for the welfare of Filipina domestic helpers and said she would not take sitting down a perceived unjust slash in the minimum pay of foreign workers in Hong Kong.

The President sought for more time to work on countless positive ways to decide on the issues besetting the welfare of domestic helpers in the former British colony.

In her speech on the occasion of International Women's Day at the jampacked Marikina City Sports Complex gym, the President cited reports that neighboring Asian nations and government groups in Hong Kong have been pushing for the suspension of a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) decision to slash the minimum wage for foreign workers.

She asked her critics to better understand the issues before opposing government moves to temporarily suspend the processing of all contracts for domestic helpers bound for Hong Kong and review existing policies on the deployment of OFWs in other problem areas abroad.

"Many of our domestic helpers in Hong Kong expressed support for this move. But many have also asked to lift the suspension of the deployment of domestic helpers to Hong Kong. *Kaya malaking desisyon ang kailangan ko* (I need to work on a major decision on the matter)," she stressed.

She noted that even Indonesia, which also deploys domestic workers to the former crown colony, had opposed the move of the Hong Kong SAR to impose a levy on new foreign labor.

"*At sa Abril, baka ang Sri Lanka ay sasama sa boykot* (And by April, Sri Lanka might stop deploying their workers to Hong Kong)," she added.

The President also informed her all-female audience that "employers in Hong Kong are giving in and joining the domestic helpers" and they are organizing a signature campaign in favor of maintaining the present level of wages.

"The People's Opportunities Commission is speaking against the levy, a recognition that a levy, however disguised, is unfair and discriminatory," she said.

“Kaya duon sa mga tumututol sa suspension, bigyan pa ninyo ako ng kaunti pang pisi, dahil baka umubra ito (I am asking those against our moves to temporarily stop the deployment of domestic helpers to Hong Kong to give me more room to decide on the matter. The boycott might still work),” she added.

The Philippines has Indonesia and Sri Lanka on its side. Foreign domestic helpers also have the sympathy of Hong Kong employers and non-government groups.

“But even if I should need to lift the suspension, and that is still something that I have to make a decision about, I can assure you that we will intensify our lobby to protect the rights of our overseas Filipinas,” the President said.

She said the Philippine government would bring its case before the International Labor Organization, which incidentally is being chaired by Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas.

She added that the same case would be brought before the Hong Kong courts. “After all, Hong Kong is a democracy.”

In the domestic front, the President also ordered Secretary Sto. Tomas “to study how to reduce what our overseas domestic helpers pay their recruiters to make up, at least partially, for the levy that will be imposed for those who will be hired (in Hong Kong) this April.”

GMA calls for responsible parenthood among Filipinos

Presidential Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on mothers to promote responsible parenthood, saying it was not a matter of having unlimited children, but being better prepared for the coming of each child.

Speaking at a program celebrating National Women’s Day at the Marikina City Sports Center, the President explained that responsible parenthood entailed the right spacing between children to allow the mother to recover her health and for her to take care of her newborn.

She said responsible parenthood called for a regular assessment of the couple’s capacity or readiness to have a child.

Citing the economic, psychological, physical, social and other valid reasons for postponing pregnancy, the President said family planning enjoins couples to decide when it is best to have a child.

She stressed that family planning and responsible parenthood were deeply rooted values acceptable to the Catholic Church, to which most Filipinos belong.

The government has also pursued the natural family planning method being practiced by the Church. *“Kaya hindi kailangang maghiwalay ang simbahan at (ang gobyerno) sa family planning,”* she said.

She added that natural family planning referred to the method and planning for child spacing by observing the fertile and infertile phases of the mother’s monthly cycle, with abstinence if pregnancy is to be avoided.

She emphasized that the natural family planning involved very little or no cost.

“You only need to buy a thermometer and recording chart,” she said, adding that natural family planning has been internationally known, scientific, practical and 99 percent effective.

The Chief Executive said that this method is being taught by the Department of Health, in cooperation with non-government organizations, in seven regions in the country, and is expected to reach all the regions on May 11, 2003.

GMA cites women’s involvement in micro-financing

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said micro-financing, being the cornerstone in the fight against poverty, has greatly enhanced the economic rights of women with about 600,000 benefiting from the micro-finance program of the government as of 2002.

Speaking before women delegates attending the “Araw ng Kababaihan” program at the Marikina Sports Complex in Marikina City, the President said this has led women to contribute largely to national progress.

“Nanawagan ako sa kababaihan na lalong ipairal ang ating mga responsibilidad sa ating bansa sa ating pamayanan, sa ating sarili (I call on all women to do their responsibilities towards the nation and to themselves),” the President said.

Earlier, National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Lead Convenor Teresita Deles said about 600,000 poor women have availed themselves of the President’s loan program for micro-business enterprises in 2002.

This, according to Deles, represented an increase of 160 percent from 372,349 women-borrowers registered in 2001.

Deles said the growth in the micro-finance program reflected the people’s acceptance of the President’s commitment to implement activities that would spur national social growth and economic development.

Deles informed the President that as of January 31, 2003, the People’s Credit Finance Corporation, through its micro-finance institutions, had served 79 provinces, 113 out of 114 cities (Cotabato City still unserved) and 1,083 out of 1,496 towns, or 72 percent.

During an en banc meeting in Malacañang last Wednesday (February 26), the President directed the NAPC to give priority to remote areas in their innovative micro-finance scheme called “credit plus five.”

The “credit plus five” refers to credit plus training, product development, market access, new technologies and social insurance.

The President has also instructed the NAPC to set up a mechanism to serve remote and conflict areas, and the basic sectors such as the elderly, disaster victims, and the disabled.

The President also directed the continued rationalization of credit programs in geographic coverage and client targeting to help sustain micro-financing institutions and clients.

The President said the NAPC must continue to be the champion for micro-enterprise development and open access to markets for the poor as the Department of Trade and Industry will focus on the small and medium enterprise program of the government.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 8, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041045/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar08.htm>

The President's Day: March 9, 2003

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- **GMA approves P30 M coco diesel facility in Quezon**
- **CIDA commits CDN\$17M for RP socio-economic priorities**
- **Datumanong to DOJ staff: Shun namedroppers**
- **GMA leads nation in paying tribute to OFWs, families at EDSA Shrine rites**
- **GMA bats for yearlong programs to keep OFWs, families intact**
- **Statement of Presidential Ignacio R. Bunye**

GMA approves P30 M coco diesel facility in Quezon

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has set aside some P30 million for the construction of an integrated coconut oil mill that would produce the two-stroke coconut oil or motor oil for the country's tricycle industry.

"We must build the first plant this month," the President said, after listening to a proposal-presentation on multi-coconut product processing conducted by Presidential Adviser on Food Security and Job Creation Jose Cojuangco.

She said the two-stroke coco oil (motor oil) would help the tricycle industry nationwide comply with the strict requirements of the Clean Air Act.

The plant would be funded from the P20-billion 2003 Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Fund. When completed, it would be capable of processing 3,000 nuts a day, producing 22,700 liters of coconut oil.

The President approved Cojuangco's recommendation that the plant be established in an Agrarian Reform Community (ARC), next to a coconut plantation, in Tiaong, Quezon.

"We can put this plant in the ARC and make this plant owned by the farmers themselves, and it would really add to their income," she said.

In his presentation, Cojuangco said the two-stroke coconut base motor oil would be an ideal mix with gasoline fuel.

This would reduce deposits on valve heads and seats of motor engines, improve seating and heat dissipation, lessen carbon formation, prevent corrosion and metal wastage, and lubricate at high or low temperature.

"As a result air pollution is lessened," Cojuangco explained.

Cojuangco said the Couples for Christ, together with De La Salle University, agreed to tie up with the government and train management staffs for such projects.

"Managing these plants in different localities can be at least safely supervised by trained managers who will be paid," he said.

Cojuangco said at least 80 integrated coconut oil mills have been projected to be established in different provinces, thus creating job opportunities in the countryside.

"Once it is ongoing, we feel that there will be investors that will be interested to put up plants, because we intend to price the oil at P20 per liter," he added.

While decreasing the country's dependency on imported petroleum, the completion of the plants would stabilize coconut farm-gate prices by giving farmers with a direct alternative market.

CIDA commits CDN\$17M for RP socio-economic priorities

The Philippines stands to get some Cdn \$17 million in official development assistance (ODA) from the Government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

In a report to Malacañang, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) said the ODA was committed during the recent Seventh Annual Bilateral Consultations between Canada and the Philippines.

NEDA Assistant Director-General Rolando Tungpalan said the Canadian ODA would support ongoing and pipeline projects in good governance, private sector growth and social development, among others.

Tungpalan represented the government in the bilateral talks

He said the pipeline projects included the E-Governance for Efficiency and Effectiveness Program; the Social Fund for Peace and Development in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao; Observer Mission to Canada on the Survey of Regulatory Practices in the Infrastructure Sector; Business Advisory Project Phase II; and Access to Small and Medium Enterprise Financing.

Among the ongoing projects are the Policy Training and Technical Assistance Facility; Justice Reform Initiative Support Project; and the Private Enterprise Accelerated Resource Linkages.

Tungpalan said that during the consultations, both sides agreed to review the Country Development Policy Framework (CDPF) within the development context defined by the Philippines in its national development plan and poverty reduction strategy.

He said the review would coincide with the preparations of NEDA for the next medium-term plan.

Director-General Sajjad Rahman led the CIDA delegation.

Rahman expressed great satisfaction with the results of the CIDA's partnership with its Filipino counterparts.

Having had a first hand view of CIDA-funded livelihood projects in Cagayan de Oro and Bukidnon, he said the partnership would promote regional development.

Earlier, the CIDA delegation paid a courtesy visit to Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri who emphasized the need to focus on results to achieve sustainable benefits for the CIDA program.

Datumanong to DOJ staff: Shun namedroppers

The days of namedroppers are over in the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong has ordered DOJ officials and employees to refrain from giving special favors to anyone claiming to be his relative while transacting business with the agency.

Datumanong, in a one-page memorandum, said the same treatment should also be made with the relatives of DOJ officials and workers.

Anyone who deals with the DOJ must pass through the legal and standard procedures, he stressed.

He called on undersecretaries, assistant secretaries and heads of bureaus and agencies under the DOJ to immediately report any unscrupulous person trying to get special consideration on a transaction.

Datumanong said he issued the memorandum in line with the call of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to institute good governance and transparency in public offices.

GMA leads nation in paying tribute to OFWs, families at EDSA Shrine rites

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the nation in paying tribute to the more than 8 million overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and their families in the commemoration of the 17th National Migrants Sunday at the EDSA Shrine.

The President also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (ECMI-CBCP), reaffirming commitment to further enhance services and assistance to better promote the well-being of the OFWs and their families.

OWWA Administrator Virgilio Angelo and CMI-CBCP chairman Bishop Ramon Arguelles signed the MOA.

Under the MOA, the two parties agree to jointly conduct intensive research and services geared towards enriching OFW family life.

They also resolved to provide programs in the areas of OFW community organization, counseling services, crisis preparedness and information dissemination to these families.

They would likewise enhance cooperation in support of reintegration programs for them.

The MOA likewise stipulates that a special action team, composed of volunteers from both the OWWA and the ECMI, will be formed initially in key cities and towns whose main tasks are to respond to every crisis situations involving OFW families.

The special action team is also envisioned to provide counseling and attend to public inquiries and other welfare services to OFWs.

The theme of this year's celebration of National Migrants Sunday is "Reaching Out." Bishop Arguelles, Manila Auxiliary Bishop Socrates Villegas and Father Paulo Prigol, executive secretary of the ECMI-CBCP, concelebrated the Eucharistic Mass at the EDSA Shrine.

Aside from the President, those who attended the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer and Solidarity with the OFWs and their Families were Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, OWWA Administrator Angelo, Administrator Rosalinda Baldoz of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Foreign Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Jose Brillantes, and Presidential Adviser on Media and Ecclesiastical Affairs Conrado Limcaoco.

The rites were put together by OWWA and the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI) of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

Bishop Arguelles, in his homily, said the Catholic has valid reasons to be concerned as 70 percent of Filipino families have OFWs in their members.

"Our OFWs are living examples of self-denial. They are admired for thinking first of others," Arguelles said.

The President has declared the period from March 2003 to February 2004 as the year of the Families of OFWs in recognition of the need to manage the effects of migration on family relations, particularly between couples or between parents and their children.

Following the Mass at the EDSA Shrine, the President listened to song “Let There Be Peace on Earth,” rendered by 25 children, who held flags of countries where most OFWs are based.

GMA bats for yearlong programs to keep OFWs, families intact

In recognition of the need to uphold and strengthen the ties between overseas Filipino workers (OFW) and their families, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has declared March 2003 to February 2004 as the Year of the Families of OFWs.

The President, in signing Proclamation No. 338, has ordered the Department of Labor and Employment, through the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), to spearhead yearlong activities that would give substance to the proclamation.

She said the activities should be coordinated with other government institutions, the private sector, church-based organizations and non-government groups.

The President said that while the Philippines is one of the major sources of migrant labor in the international market, the Filipino family remains the basic unit of the society, and “thus, any effect of labor migration on the Filipino family will affect the Filipino society.”

She noted that the present migration phenomenon may involve one or both parents and that the government is concerned with managing the effects of migration on family relations, particularly between couples or between parents and their children.

Acknowledging that migration decisions always take place in the Filipino households, she said the temporary separation of family members should not break family ties but, instead, strengthen it in view of the sacrifices each member has to make for the common good.

“It is a national responsibility to help provide the external support needed by both migrants and the families they leave behind to cope with temporary separation,” she said.

Meanwhile, the President led the nation today in paying tribute to the more than 8 million OFWs and their families in the commemoration of the 17th National Migrants Sunday at the EDSA Shrine.

The President also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the OWWA and the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI) of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

The MOA reaffirmed the commitment of government and the Church to further enhance services and assistance to better promote the well-being of OFWs and their families.

Statement of Presidential Ignacio R. Bunye

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as Commander-in-Chief takes full responsibility for the conduct of military operations in Mindanao and all over the country.

The President would like to dispel the notion reflected in news and editorial reports that the Department of National Defense or the Armed Forces of the Philippines has made tactical decisions outside the purview of established national policy.

All actions of the DND-AFP have been above board in terms of strict adherence to policy and the President sees no need either to curtail any existing lines of authority within the AFP chain of command, or to sanction any commanders for violations of policy.

The standing policy for the Mindanao situation is to give full rein to the imperatives of peace, development and justice. This means that:

- Peace negotiations shall be pursued with the facilitation and assistance of third-party nations in order to achieve a comprehensive and durable settlement of the conflict in line with the Constitution.
- Development will be pursued in line with overall national economic plans, with priority on programs and projects that have a close bearing to the peace process and the alleviation of poverty—cutting across all communities of Muslims, Christians and Lumads.
- Justice will be pursued against those engaged in terrorism and organized crime, separate from the pursuit of peace and development processes. The law will spare no one, but due process will be observed at all times without resort to vigilantism against any community or religious group.

The AFP and the PNP are well aware of these policy thrusts. All police and military commanders have been apprised of the need to be sensitive to the socio-economic, political and cultural implications of their actions; and to enforce the law with equal force against anyone, regardless of creed, political persuasion or social station.

The Cabinet is behind the President on all policy decisions impinging upon the Mindanao situation. In this regard, the perceived division between hawks and doves in the Cabinet is a matter of individual sentiment, and does not reflect irreconcilable disagreements on any fundamental issue of governance, leadership and authority.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 9, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041055/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar09.htm>

The President's Day: March 10, 2003

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- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye on AMLA**
- **Gov't to talk peace with any group that renounces violence, terrorism**
- **AFP, police to respond to any criminal acts of MILF, other armed groups in Mindanao**
- **Gov't asks for vigilance in fight vs professional squatters**
- **GMA to meet with Duterte, Muslim leaders**
- **GMA lauds this year's outstanding policemen, cites their gallantry in war vs crime**
- **GMA orders setting up of 'sanctuaries of peace'**
- **Gov't to wait for U.N. final resolution on Iraq issue**
- **CBCP expresses appreciation to GMA for stand on responsible parenthood**

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye on AMLA

The AMLA needs no further amendments. The amendments, which were signed into law recently by the President, are deemed sufficient as they were the result of consultations between our legislators and representatives of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) countries who visited the Philippines. The amendments also conform to the standards of FATF as set forth in the letter of the FATF president dated February 27.

Note that even President George W. Bush has already congratulated the Philippine government for its sincere efforts to address the concern of the international financial community.

Just to clarify: What needs to be done by way of fine-tuning the process leading to our eventual removal from the list of non-complying countries is the formulation by the Anti-Money Laundering Council of implementing rules and regulations (IRR). Thereafter, FATF will be monitoring our compliance thereto and if satisfactory, the Philippines will be delisted. The process for delisting could take a little time.

The timely passage of the AMLA amendments has spared the Philippines from sanctions which would have taken effect on March 15.

Gov't to talk peace with any group that renounces violence, terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that the government will continue to talk peace with anybody or any group that would reject violence and terrorism.

“On the national level, the hand of peace is there for anybody who wants and who is willing to renounce violence and terrorism,” the President said in a press conference in Malacañang.

The President said the government has already presented a draft peace agreement to both the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

“So, to anybody who wants to renounce terrorism and violence, there is the peace agreement for them to consider,” the President said.

She also said she has authorized individual governors and mayors to do their own peace initiatives with the MILF in their areas.

But the President also warned those who continue to engage in violence and terror activities, the government will apply the full force of the law.

“The important thing is that the military and the police are ready to enforce the law as they have been enforcing the law,” the President said.

The President also said that the government’s policy on armed groups is intended to have the demobilization of forces or the willingness to lay down arms as the end-state of any negotiations or armed confrontation with rebel groups.

“That is always the final aim of how we deal with them (rebels) whether it’s through peace talks or through armed conflict or a combination of both,” the President said.

Aside from the demobilization of forces, another end result of any settlement in an armed struggle is fighting the root causes of the conflict that includes economic exclusion, the President said.

She said that the government has been successful in the economic development in Camp Abubakar, the erstwhile headquarters of the MILF, and now in the Buliok Complex in North Cotabato, which the government has turned into a zone of peace.

The President said that thousands of evacuees have now returned to Buliok and some P100 million worth of construction equipment are now in the former conflict area.

AFP, police to respond to any criminal acts of MILF, other armed groups in Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the people of Mindanao that the police and the military will swiftly respond to thwart any criminal action by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) or any other armed group.

The President made the assurance in the wake of recent MILF attacks and harassment against civilians following the bombing of the Davao International Airport which killed 23 people and wounded more than a hundred.

She then called on the MILF leadership to stop such attacks and harassment, saying such actions, including the sabotage of transmission lines, only bolster the argument that the MILF is not a political organization but a terrorist group.

In an informal conference at the state dining room of Malacañang, the President said that all leads in the Davao bombing will be pursued to a definitive conclusion and that the investigation will be thorough and fair.

“It will be transparent in the sense that nobody will fool anybody,” she assured. “But transparent doesn’t mean that you have to be told about the investigation while it is ongoing. It means it will be done honestly and in accordance with law. “

She said she had ordered the police and military not to telegraph preliminary results of their investigations. But she assured that the results of the thorough and fair investigation will be made public in the end.

“Those who will be found responsible will be prosecuted and put behind bars for murder which is a non-bailable crime,” the President said.

The President then warned against any attempt to turn these events into a religious war, saying it must always be resisted and instead every opportunity must be exhausted to enhance inter-faith understanding.

She also thanked the support of the Filipino Muslim leaders the Ulama when the country joined the international coalition against terrorism.

“They have been very supportive and we will still continue to hope for interfaith understanding as we go through all these difficult times,” she said.

“We, however should not fall into the trap that some would want us to fall, which is to turn this into a religious war, which it is not. It is law enforcement, it is fighting terrorism,” the President said.

Gov’t asks for vigilance in fight vs professional squatters

The days of the professional squatters may soon be over.

This, after the government, over the weekend, asked rightful state housing beneficiaries to immediately report to authorities abusive occupants and squatter syndicates who illegally occupy lands set for presidential proclamation.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo made the appeal in behalf of government officials during a meeting with urban poor groups where she noted a report made by Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Michael Defensor.

In his report, Defensor cited the problems that arise in an area set for presidential proclamation.

“Once a presidential proclamation is announced, the number of residents always increase, even multiply,” Defensor said. “*Nilulusob ng mga tao* (People come in droves),” he added.

He asked legitimate urban poor settlers to cooperate and be vigilant in watching over the property “because it is your land that is getting smaller because of the illegal occupants.”

Defensor noted the case of rightful long-time settlers in Sitio Masagana in Bicutan, Taguig but have to contend now with occupants who only settled in the area after 1992, the cut-off year set by the government.

Relocation of squatters living along the railways is now underway under the resettlement program of the HUDCC.

Those in the North railway, according to Defensor, have been relocated to medium-rise settlement areas in Camarin in Caloocan City while those along the South railway have been offered resettlement areas in Tanay, Rizal, Batangas, and Montalban, Rizal.

During the same meeting, the President approved the appointment of Percy Chavez, chairman of the Commission on Urban Poor, as the new head of the Presidential Task Force Payatas which would identify the proper government land recipients in the Payatas area in Quezon City.

She also approved, upon the recommendation of Defensor, the creation of Maralitang Tagamasid, a group of social workers who will help out-of-school youth living along railways to find jobs and eventually lead productive and socially relevant lives.

GMA to meet with Duterte, Muslim leaders

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is slated to meet with Davao Mayor Rodrigo Duterte and Muslim leaders of Mindanao as soon as Duterte and the officials have threshed out the scope of his role as crisis manager of the Davao bombing incident in a separate meeting today.

Saying she arranged for Duterte’s meeting with the Muslim leaders through Sultan Kudarat Governor Pax Mangudadatu, the President made it clear that the Davao mayor is the crisis manager for solving the dastardly crime that killed 23 people and wounded more than a hundred at the waiting shed of the Davao International Airport.

That means the hard-nosed Duterte will be responsible for identifying and arresting the mastermind, the accomplices, and the co-conspirators in both Regions 11 and 12 and not only in Davao, according to the President.

“Because the mastermind and the conspirators can run anywhere,” the President explained in an informal press conference at the State Dining Room of Malacañang. “So in that area, therefore, Rudy Duterte is crisis manager.”

The President said that the meeting between Duterte and the Muslim leaders today came as a result of the meeting that Duterte, as crisis manager for Regions 11 and 12, conducted with the two regional Peace and Order Councils on Sunday, the day after she left Davao.

“So that is the area. It is the crisis that emanated from the bombing of the shed outside of the Davao airport. But the coverage of his (Duterte) authority is Regions 11 and 12,” she said.

The President noted that for Mindanao as a whole, there is a joint Task Force headed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines under the chairmanship of Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya.

In the press conference, the President warned against attempts to turn recent developments in Mindanao into a religious war, saying this must be resisted and instead use every opportunity to enhance inter-faith understanding.

She expressed gratitude for the support of the Muslim-elected leaders and the support of the Ulama in joining the international coalition against terrorism.

It is expected that these will be the same concerns that the President will bring up in her meeting with Duterte and the Muslim leaders.

GMA lauds this year’s outstanding policemen, cites their gallantry in war vs crime

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded this year’s outstanding members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) for gallantly waging war against criminality and maintaining the peace and order in the community.

In her message at the awarding ceremonies for this year’s search for the Country’s Outstanding Policemen in Service (COPS), the President cited the crucial role of the men and women in the police force in maintaining the peace and order in the country.

“In upholding the law, our police officers do more than just solve crimes, apprehend criminals and fight terrorists. More importantly, they show themselves equal to the task of forging partnerships with the community in an effort to mobilize the different sectors of society in our fight against lawlessness and crime,” the President said.

The President also commended the Rotary Club of New Manila East and the Metrobank Foundation for sponsoring the search for outstanding policemen in active service.

In a simple rites held at the Malacañang’s Heroes Hall this afternoon the President presented the trophies to the ten awardees, four of them commissioned officers and six non-commissioned officers.

Aside from the trophies, each of the awardees received P100,000 cash, courtesy of the Metrobank Foundation.

The commissioned officers who were adjudged and outstanding policemen were Police Superintendent Rhodel O. Sermonia, former chief of police of Cavite City and currently chief of the Intelligence and Investigative Division of the Cavite Provincial Office; Police Superintendent Rey Lyndon T. Lawas, former chief of police of Dumaguete Police Station and currently chief of Firearms, Explosive and Security Agencies and Guards Supervisory Section-Regional Operations and Plans Division of Police Regional Office 7 in Cebu City; Police Superintendent Noli G. Taliño, chief of police of the Dagupan City Police Station; and Police Superintendent Genesis D.F. Molto, chief of police of the Daraga Municipal Police Station in Daraga, Albay

The non-commissioned awardees were SPO1 Edgardo G. Sto. Domingo, chief of the Special Operations Group of the Naga City Police Station in Naga City, Camarines Sur; SPO4 Rommel G. Macatlang of the PNP Traffic Management Group based in Camp Crame, Quezon City; SPO4 Gerry L. Sangalang, deputy chief of police of the Nagcarlan Municipal Police Station in Nagcarlan, Laguna; SPO1 Benigno R. Andamon of the Sto. Tomas Police Station in Davao Del Norte; SPO4 Reynaldo Z. Medina, Jr., precinct commander of the Balintawak PNP Assistance Center, Police Station 1 of the Central Police District in Quezon City; and SPO1 Bernard C. Antolin of the Mapandan Police Station in Mapandan, Pangasinan.

In his statement, PNP Chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. said that the awardees – the real cops – “have done us proud to the police organization.”

“The awardees tell us that it is never enough to wear the police uniform. We all must make a difference,” Ebdane said.

The COPS award started as the search for the Best Community Oriented Policemen by the Rotary Club of New Manila East (RCNME).

The main objective of the search is to recognize commissioned and non-commissioned officers with outstanding achievements not only for implementing the law, but more importantly, in mobilizing the community in maintaining the peace and order

The search also highlights the “One PNP” program of the PNP, especially the neighborhood participation thrust, which encourages involvement of local communities to ensure crime prevention, solution and intervention.

Among those present during the awarding rites were Interior and local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr.; Dr. George S.K. Ty, president of the Metrobank; Danilo V. Fausto, president of the Rotary Club of New Manila East; Placido L. Mapa Jr., president of the Metrobank Foundation, Inc.; and former Interior and Local Government Secretary Rafael Alunan III, chairman board of judges and president of the Maynilad Water Services, Inc.

GMA orders setting up of ‘sanctuaries of peace’

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today authorized the installation of certain affected areas in Mindanao as “sanctuaries of peace” to protect displaced civilians from harassment by criminals and terrorists.

The President revealed her plan during a meeting with the officials of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines at the Music Conference Room in Malacañang.

The President said “sanctuaries of peace” would be a slightly amended version of the zones of peace.

She said at least 42 areas would be initially placed as such.

She said Tabang Mindanaw, assisted by several government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), would spearhead the reintegration of displaced families in the said areas.

The government earlier declared former conflict areas Pikit and the Buliok Complex in North Cotabato as “zones of peace”

The establishment of a “zone of peace,” according to Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, is a step that the government has taken to facilitate and encourage the evacuees to return to their former homes and live normal lives.

Gen. Dionisio Santiago, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), has said that when an area is declared a zone of peace, the military would move out from the population centers and will be just in the periphery.

Santiago said the police and the military would make sure that criminal elements would not enter the zone to ensure the security of the returning evacuees.

In case there will be criminal activities inside the populated areas, the police and the military will have to go there and make sure that the perpetrators of these criminal acts would be apprehended and prosecuted.

According to the Department of Social Welfare and Development, at least 15,604 families have been displaced in Central Mindanao because of conflict.

As of March 2003, exactly 3,642 families have returned to their areas while government has provided at least P10.3 worth of assistance to these families.

Gov't to wait for U.N. final resolution on Iraq issue

The Macapagal-Arroyo administration will wait for the definite and final resolution of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq before making an official stand on the matter.

But the government will continue to abide with the UNSC's earlier Resolution 1441 which urged Iraq to destroy the chemical and biological warheads it reportedly has in its arsenal.

Foreign Secretary Blas Ople today said the Iraqi leadership should immediately and verifiably comply with the mandate of the UNSC so that war could be averted in the Middle East.

Ople said the government would also convene the National Security Council (NSC) within the week to confer on the matter and on further strengthening national preparations in the event that war breaks out in the Persian Gulf.

He said the NSC meeting would include top officials and congressional leaders.

"We will have to wait for the United Nations Security Council to frame an official stand of the Philippine government (on the matter)," Ople stressed.

The government's position on the Iraqi crisis has been consistent from the beginning.

Nevertheless, Ople said the government has made preparations for the impending conflict in that region.

He noted that Ambassador Roy Cimatu, who heads the Middle East Preparedness Team, has finalized the possible and immediate evacuation and relocation programs for Filipinos in the Gulf.

He added that government has enlisted the help of the International Organization of Migration, United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) to help the Philippines in any event.

Ople also noted that the Philippine Embassy in Baghdad, headed by Ambassador Grace Escalante, is open until now.

He assured that the Philippines would not send combat troops abroad. But the country could dispatch doctors, nurses, other medical workers and peacekeeping forces outside of Iraq if the conflict ensues.

Ambassador Cimatu, meanwhile, would like to be the last Filipino to be in Kuwait in case conflict escalates in that country, Ople added.

CBCP expresses appreciation to GMA for stand on responsible parenthood

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines today expressed appreciation for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's emphasis on responsible parenthood as a means of population control.

CBCP President Bishop Orlando Quevedo told the President during their meeting at the Music Conference Room that the bishops are extremely grateful for her stressing responsible parenthood.

"We want to express our collective appreciation on your emphasis on responsible parenthood," Quevedo said.

Quevedo was accompanied at the meeting by Bishops Joel Baylon, Pedro Dean, Honesto Ongtongco and Francisco San Diego and Monsignor Hernando Coronel.

Also in attendance were Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Brig. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, chief of operations of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The President said the government would soon intensify its information campaign on responsible parenthood.

Quevedo told the President that the bishops are contemplating on collaborating with the government on the said campaign.

The President herself expressed appreciation for the bishop's plan, saying she hopes the partnership could be in time for Mother's Day on May 11.

On the occasion of International Women's Day last Saturday, the President called on mothers to promote responsible parenthood, saying it was not a matter of having unlimited children, but being better prepared for the coming of each child.

The President explained that responsible parenthood entailed the right spacing between children to allow the mother to recover her health and for her to take care of her newborn.

She said responsible parenthood called for a regular assessment of the couple's capacity or readiness to have a child.

Citing the economic, psychological, physical, social and other valid reasons for postponing pregnancy, the President said family planning enjoins couples to decide when it is best to have a child.

She stressed that family planning and responsible parenthood were deeply-rooted values acceptable to the Catholic Church, to which most Filipinos belong.

The government has also pursued the natural family planning method being practiced by the Church. "*Kaya hindi kailangang maghiwalay ang simbahan at (ang gobyerno) sa family planning,*" she said.

She added that natural family planning referred to the method and planning for child spacing by observing the fertile and infertile phases of the mother's monthly cycle, with abstinence if pregnancy is to be avoided.

She emphasized that the natural family planning involved very little or no cost.

"You only need to buy a thermometer and recording chart," she said, adding that natural family planning has been internationally known, scientific, practical and 99 percent effective.

The Chief Executive said that this method is being taught by the Department of Health, in cooperation with non-government organizations, in seven regions in the country, and is expected to reach all the regions on May 11, 2003.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 10, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041109/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar10.htm>

The President's Day: March 11, 2003

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- **BSP declares micro-financing as flagship program in poverty alleviation**
- **Technology transfer program for SMEs presented to GMA by DOST, NEDA**
- **ADB report on RP performance more of a historical account, says Neri**

GMA finds alert policemen in surprise visit to Caloocan substation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo expressed satisfaction over the readiness of the police force to address criminality following Monday night's unscheduled visit to the police substation 1 along Malolos Ave. corner G. de Jesus St. in Barangay Bagong Barrio, Caloocan City.

The President said she wanted to personally inspect members of the police force if the men in uniform were doing their job, that time of the night.

The President arrived at the police station at about 10 p.m. from her Forbes Park, Makati residence, where she had dinner with 2002 bar topnotcher Atty. Arlene Maneja of the University of Santo Tomas.

At the station, the President surprised Inspector Arturo Paras, substation officer-in-charge.

Paras said the substation had only four police personnel in the night shift and 17 police officers during the day.

Substation head Chief Inspector Daniel Mayoni arrived later to brief the President. Mayoni arrived from the Polytechnic College where he is taking up his masteral studies.

In an interview, the President said she came to inspect the substation to see the conditions of the police stations, which covered the second highest crime rate in Metro Manila.

"If you remember the first one I visited, it has the highest crime rate. This one has the second highest crime rate. So the impact, to me, the bottom line is: has the crime rate gone down? What have they done since I told them what they should do? That's what I'm checking," she said.

Caloocan City police chief Senior Superintendent Berjardi Mantele arrived shortly after the President arrived, and handed to her a briefing paper on the crime statistics and police efforts in the city.

The President expressed surprise with the readiness of Mantele. She asked him if he knew she was coming and Mantele said no.

But Mantele said that after the President visited the police station in Tondo, he made preparations for a surprise visit.

The President inquired on the police efforts against drugs pushers, loose firearms and possible terrorist infiltration in the area.

In his briefing, Mantele bared police efforts to use out-of-school youth as car washers, utility crew and cleaners in the area.

So far, 20 youths have been given jobs by the city and more will soon follow, he added.

Bagong Barrio barangay captain Letty Maturan also gave the President an informal briefing on the peace and order situation in the area.

Maturan said that in cooperation with the police, local officials have instituted a 10 p.m. curfew for those aged 17 years old and below to curb youth and drug-related crimes.

She assured the President that officials and the police would keep track of strangers entering their areas.

Later in the night, Senior Superintendent Marcelino Franco, district director of the Northern Police District, also arrived.

The President said that earlier in the day, she went to a barangay in Makati and was able to talk with the barangay captain.

“I asked her: Has the station chief started to work out a formal arrangement with you and your barangay tanods? And she said yes. At least, that means they’re complying with my instructions,” she said.

The President also indicated that she might not undertake surprise visits to police stations anymore.

“I do my job as I see the need. I don’t know. Maybe at the most, one more,” she said.

Last February 26, the President made a surprise visit to police station 2 in Moriones, Tondo, the station covering the area of highest crime rate in the metropolis.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Law and Order

The military and police shall continue to enforce our laws, secure the civilian population, keep the highways of commerce open, and check movements of armed groups posing a direct threat to peace and order. The AFP shall maintain a posture of active defense.

Peace Initiatives

But our end objective will be peace. Without peace, there can be no development. The President wants a two-tiered peace approach. At the national level, negotiations shall be pursued with the facilitation and assistance of third party nations in order to achieve a comprehensive and durable settlement of the conflict in line with Constitution. Malaysia, even Libya and Bahrain, would like to pitch in.

The President is also encouraging local government executives to conduct their own peace initiatives at the LGU level. Local peace talks are a way of bringing the scattered MILF militias that have lost faith in their leaders, back to the community. Several initiatives are already underway. The government shall welcome back those who renounce armed struggle, disarm and are willing rejoin the mainstream.

As we speak, religious leaders are meeting in Mindanao today at the urging of the President. It is important to stress, through the religious forum, that the AFP-police operations have nothing to do with religion. It has everything to do with law and order.

This is no time for political grandstanding. We ask our political leaders to pull with the government in the same direction – peace, development and justice.

Budget

We thank Congress for passing the budget after a careful and review. Essential services will be given utmost priority as we strive to build up the strength of our economy to meet crisis in several fronts.

IRAQ Situation

The President continues to hope for the best but gives assurances that we have prepared for the worst. Preparations to keep our OFWs out of harms way started as early as last year with the sending of our Middle East preparedness team. We continue to pray for a peaceful solution, even as we must steel ourselves for the possibility of war and its consequences.

BSP declares micro-financing as flagship program in poverty alleviation

In compliance with the directive of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has declared micro-finance as its flagship program for poverty alleviation and has undertaken specific measures in promoting the program within the banking sector.

In a report, the BSP said that it has also achieved significant gains in training and capacity building for the micro-finance program within the BSP.

The BSP said their efforts have shown remarkable results. To date, there are two micro-finance oriented rural banks, namely Vision and Banco ng Masa, and two micro-finance oriented thrift banks, Opportunity Bank and Microenterprise Bank, both created under Circular 273, with 100 percent micro-finance portfolios.

In addition, the BSP said, there are now 27 cooperative rural banks and 85 rural banks throughout the country that have micro-finance operations.

These banks are currently reaching over 300,000 micro-finance clients, the BSP said, adding that more formal financial institutions are moving to engage in micro-finance while informal, and unregulated institutions are moving toward formalization and venturing into activities that they did not previously undertake such as deposit taking and savings mobilization.

On training, the BSP conducted another micro-finance seminar in La Union last March 10, 2003.

The La Union seminar was part of the BSP micro-finance regional advocacy program, which was launched last January in Cebu City.

The regional advocacy program is a series of information seminars that will be held in the strategic regions of the country to promote the development of sustainable micro-finance.

According to the BSP, the end goal of this program is to catalyze the development of sustainable micro-finance institutions in the country to be able to reach a larger number of entrepreneurial poor.

Earlier, National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Lead Convenor Teresita Deles reported to the President that some 600,000 poor women have availed themselves of the small loan program in 2002.

This represented an increase of 160 percent from the 372,349 women-borrowers registered in 2001, Deles said.

Deles said that the growth of micro-financing program reflected the people's acceptance of the President's commitment to implement activities that would spur national social growth and economic development.

Technology transfer program for SMEs presented to GMA by DOST, NEDA

A technology transfer program that would respond to the needs of small and medium enterprises was presented today by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the National Economic and Development Authority.

Dubbed Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program or SETUP, the program is aimed at strengthening the SMEs, one of the first items in the President's eight-point agenda.

DOST Secretary Estrella Alabastro said the program integrates all the efforts of the department's agencies and responds to certain articulated needs of small enterprises.

"This is really a response to the President's call that we should refocus our efforts on SMEs," Alabastro said during a press briefing that followed the NEDA board executive meeting in Malacañang.

Alabastro enumerated five areas considered critical in the performance of the SME sector. These are appropriate technologies, technical manpower training, need for information, product standards and testing facilities and appropriate packaging.

She said the DOST is implementing the program through its regional offices.

The allotted DOST budget for the program for 2003 is more than P100 million. They spent P100 million for this program last year.

"What we are doing now is we are linking up with other government financial institutions and seeing what additional funds can be accessed," she added.

Saying they will help SMEs access these funds from the GFIs, Alabastro said they are now doing a monthly road show to particular regions and look at the projects being implemented through their SETUP projects.

ADB report on RP performance more of a historical account, says Neri

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri today said that the report of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) that the Philippines was the worst performer among the ASEAN nations on ADB-funded projects is more of a historical account rather than an indictment of the present administration.

In a press statement he issued in a briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, Neri said that most of the unsuccessful projects cited by the ADB were completed before the end of the 1980s.

This involved some 36 completed projects, which were mostly approved before 1986, Neri said.

In a report, the ADB said that it had lent the Philippines a total of \$5.9 billion for 86 projects during the 1986-2001 review period and out of this number, only 36 were completed.

ADB country director Thomas Crouch said that the Philippine performance "comes out rather less" than its neighbors in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Neri, who is also the director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), said that the problem projects were mostly in agriculture and in the natural resources sector.

He said that the ADB report had acknowledged that there have been signs of improvement in the 1990s.

According to Neri, the assessment of the ADB showed that as of December 2001, none of the 45 ongoing projects funded by the ADB would likely be unsatisfactory.

Neri said that the government has actually sought these types of feedback and evaluation from the ADB so that it can get lessons from its past performance.

“So, I’m happy that this project evaluation has come out, because it will serve as information for us on how we can improve future projects and how to avoid mistakes that had been done way back in the past,” Neri said.

Even if our performance has improved, the government is still looking for ways on how to improve this further, Neri said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 11, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20060427123035/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar11.htm>

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Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Re Allegations of Noel Sanchez

These allegations are the product of a fertile but confused mind. By his own admission, there was nothing irregular with the release of the funds to representatives since the money would be used for the electrification of the barangays in their district. So how could this constitute bribery? The checks were issued in the name of electric cooperatives and not in the name of individual members of Congress.

Further, these allegations are a rehash of charges which have already been investigated and dismissed by the Ombudsman in a resolution dated July 26, 2002.

For quick reference, let me quote the pertinent findings of the Ombudsman on the matter:

“The allegation that the fastbreak release of P470 million was part of the lobby money doled out to some Congressman is devoid of truth. There is no evidence unearthed to substantiate the allegation. The allegation is purely speculative.

“It clearly appears from the foregoing that the release of P470 million fund for the O' Ilaw Program have (sic) been aboveboard. The release of P470 million to NEA, four days after Congress approved the Electric Industry Power Reform Act, belied the claimed that it was used to bribe the Legislator (sic).”

For the record, Mr. Sanchez is now facing charges before the Ombudsman for alleged irregularities in the bidding for the purchase of electric posts used by NEA.

Mr. Sanchez is obviously using this gimmick to solicit public sympathy.

GMA calls on all the people to do their share in these times of crisis

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on all the people to do their share – and not merely rely on the government – in these times of crisis not only in the Philippines but throughout the world.

“Dito sa mga mahirap na panahon – ito ay mahirap na panahon hindi lamang dito sa ating bansa kundi sa buong mundo – ang kailangan siguro ay bawat isa sa atin, hanapin natin kung ano ang puede nating magawa para sa ating bansa (In these times of crisis – these are, indeed, times of crisis not only in our country but throughout the world –

what is expected of each of us is to find out what we can do for the country),” said the President during a morning interview on television.

Paraphrasing the words of United States President John F. Kennedy during his inaugural address on January 20, 1961, the President said: “Huwag nating isipin lamang parati – ano ang dapat gawin ng bansa para sa atin (Let us not always ask what the country for do for us).”

Rather, the President said, “Let’s ask ourselves: ano ang dapat magawa para sa bansa para sa panahon na ito (What must we do for our country in these difficult times).”

During the same TV interview, the President reiterated her offer of peace to rebels who will renounce violence and terrorism.

The President said she was not merely opening to door to peace. “Inaalok ang kapayapaan sa kanino man o sino man na tatanggi sa karahasan (We are offering peace and will negotiate peace with anyone who renounces violence and terrorism),” the President added.

The President pointed out that she has urged local government executives, including provincial governors and city and town mayors, to talk peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in their localities.

During an informal meeting with the members of the Malacañang Press Corps last Monday, the President said the government has already presented a draft peace agreement to both the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) and the MILF.

“So, to anybody who wants to renounce terrorism and violence, there is the peace agreement for them to consider,” the President said.

The President, however, also warned those who will continue to engage in violence and terror activities that the government will apply the full force of the law against them.

“The important thing is that the military and the police are ready to enforce the law as they have been enforcing the law,” the President said.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye also stressed in a statement issued earlier that the government’s end objective is peace, adding that without peace, there can be no development.

Bunye said that at the national level, peace negotiations would be pursued with the facilitation and assistance of third-party nations in order to achieve a comprehensive and durable settlement of the conflict and in line with the Constitution.

“Local peace talks are a way of bringing the scattered MILF militias that have lost faith in their leaders back to the community,” Bunye said.

GMA says Reyes one of ‘most obedient Cabinet members’

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she continues to have full trust and confidence in Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes amidst calls for his resignation.

“In fact, Secretary Reyes is one of my most obedient Cabinet members,” the President said in an interview with *Magandang Umaga Bayan*, a morning television talk show.

The President said that almost without question, Reyes followed all her instructions.

The President's reaction was made in the wake of allegations that on several occasions, Reyes has disobeyed her orders, including the military assault on the Buliok Complex in Pikit, North Cotabato that was supposedly undertaken without the go-signal from the President.

According to the President, there are times when Reyes does not agree with her decision but after discussions between the two of them, in the end it was her decision that Reyes would follow.

"He has not indicated or given any hint that we did not agree on a certain issue," the President said.

GMA bares her human side in TV interview

It's not all war and terrorist threats for the lady that keeps the nation going.

Like any other school kid who had crushes, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo bared her human side to the public this morning, recalling her days as a student at Georgetown University where she had former US President Bill Clinton as classmate to those *lambada* sessions with First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo that served as her social life prior to her ascent to the Presidency.

The President appeared relaxed and unperturbed by the recent developments in the South when she gamely answered all questions thrown at her by *Magandang Umaga Bayan* hosts Edu Manzano and Erwin Tulfo who broadcast their early-morning show live from the Malacañang gardens.

Resplendent in her all-red dress, Mrs. Arroyo also touched on her "apo," first grandson by Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo.

As a 16-year-old daughter to then President Diosdado Macapagal, the President said she learned to count her blessings, adding that she had not dreamed of becoming another person other than her present position because she believes in fate.

She also explained why she allowed Mikey to run for vice governor of Pampanga while she did not sign the appointment papers of her daughter Luli who was a topnotcher of the Foreign Service Officers exams.

"*Yung kay Mikey, hindi ko hawak ang pagiging bise gobernador niya, samantalang ang kay Luli, nasa kamay ko ang appointment niya. Ayokong may masabi sa akin ang mga tao*" (On Mikey's case, I was not responsible for his being governor but in Luli's case, her appointment has to passed through me. I don't want people to say anything), the President said.

But while the President presented her other side, she also gave justice to her tag as a firm lady when she warned those who will continue to use violent means in achieving their goals that they will meet the full force of the law.

"The negotiating table is open to those who will renounce violence," the President said.

Take clear moves to work for peace in Mindanao, GMA urges MILF

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to take clear and specific moves to step out of the boundaries of terrorism and truly work for peace in Mindanao.

"So it must stop all terrorist acts," the President said in a press briefing this afternoon at the State Dining Room of Malacañang.

The President said the MILF leaders must issue "unequivocal statement proscribing terrorism as a means to attain its objectives.

The MILF must also cooperate in bringing terrorist justice, the President said, pointing out that after all, the MILF is committed under several accords to bring criminals and terrorists to justice and to support development initiatives in poor Muslim communities.

The President, however, expressed sadness that the MILF does not have much to show for these commitments in front of its followers and the whole Islamic community.

As far as the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is concerned, the President said, it is in a posture of “active defense.” “That is my instructions,” she said.

The President, who is the commander in chief of the AFP, said that while a line of communication for peace negotiation is being opened or being made available to the MILF to spare more civilians from dislocation and suffering, the military and police shall secure the civilian population, keep highways of commerce open and check movements of armed groups posing a direct threat to peace and order.

She said peace negotiations are still an option with the facilitation and assistance of third parties aimed at achieving a comprehensive and durable settlement of the conflict in Mindanao in line with the Constitution.

Local peace talks are a way of bringing the scattered MILF militia, who have lost faith in their leaders, back to the community, the President said.

According to the President, several initiatives are already underway.

The Chief Executive said she likewise welcomes back those who renounce armed struggle, those who are willing to disarm and want to join the mainstream of peace and development and justice.

She also thanked the political leaders who have expressed support for her policy, “because after all this is no time for political grandstanding.”

The President said she had a meeting in Malacañang this morning with the Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. and the chairmen of defense committees of both houses, the chairmen of the foreign relations committees of both houses and two congressmen from Mindanao.

GMA cites Malaysia’s role in GRP-MILF peace talks

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that the Philippines would continue to avail itself of the “role of Malaysia as a third party facilitator” in peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

This had been what Malaysia has “really been doing with great success all this time,” the President told a press conference in Malacañang this afternoon.

“We would want them to continue to help us in that way,” she said.

The President said she had instructed Special Envoy Roberto Romulo to apprise acting Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi on the situation in southern Philippines and government efforts to push for peaceful initiatives to solve the Mindanao conflict.

Romulo was expected to meet with Badawi in Kuala Lumpur this week.

“Romulo knows Badawi very well. They were foreign ministers together at the same time,” the President said.

Malaysia had been hosting peace negotiations between the government and the MILF.

The talks have led to the signing of a ceasefire agreement and several protocols, one of them committing the MILF to helping government fight against criminals, particularly kidnap-for-ransom groups.

The President also stressed that she does not want to deal with the MILF “through the media.”

“The administration is making available that option of peace with the facilitation and assistance of a third party,” she added, referring to Malaysia.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, in bilateral talks with President Macapagal-Arroyo during the 13th Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Kuala Lumpur late last month, offered to facilitate and play an active role in the talks with the MILF.

Balikatan can be held in places where they are welcomed — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that personally, she would not mind holding the Balikatan exercises in North Cotabato, saying the war exercise can be held in any other place “where it is wanted, where it is invited.”

The President revealed that all offers for the holding of the exercises in various areas are being considered but that it will be just an operational decision on the part of the Department of Defense on whether to transfer the Balikatan 03-1 from Jolo, Sulu to another venue.

“I gave Secretary (Angelo) Reyes the instruction that if they are not wanted in Sulu, the exercises can be put in any other place where they are wanted, where they are invited,” she said. “And actually, there are many provinces that have already invited us to put the exercises there,” the President added.

North Cotabato cropped up as an alternate venue for the joint Philippines-US military exercises when its Governor, Emmanuel Pinol, appealed to the President and Reyes to consider the province for the exercises, saying the provincial board had already passed a resolution affirming his request.

Pinol was quoted to have said that the development projects undertaken in Basilan during last year’s Balikatan could be replicated in his province.

For his part, Reyes said he had asked Defense and AFP officials to study Pinol’s proposal, saying it is encouraging that governors like Pinol are volunteering to host the Balikatan 03-1.

Thwarting attempts to link the holding of the exercises in places where there are armed enemy groups, the President said: “You know we have exercises going on in Zamboanga and there are no enemies in Zamboanga. We have been conducting exercises in Nueva Ecija, in Cavite and there are no armed groups there. So we don’t have to tie up putting the exercises where there are armed enemy groups.”

She also cleared the notion that the military is on an all-out offensive against the enemies in the South, saying the instructions to them are clear – to run after lawless elements and enforce the law.

“So the position of active defense is something that is understandable to them. It’s different from all-out war and its different from just parrying off those who try to attack their positions,” the President said.

Gov’t looking for ways on how to reduce the PPA of First Gas in MERALCO bill

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she has directed Energy Secretary Vince Perez to look for ways on how the Manila Electric Co. (MERALCO) can reduce its purchased power adjustment (PPA) and lower the cost of electricity to the general public.

In a press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, the President said one of the components of the PPA being collected by MERALCO are the deferred charges now being billed to the power firm by First Gas Corporation, which is also owned by the Lopez group of companies.

The President said that last year, she had ordered the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) to reduce its PPA by P0.40 per kilowatt hour by lengthening the payment period of NAPOCOR's financial obligations.

She said that Perez is now having a dialogue with First Gas to look for a way on how to lengthen the putting of its deferred charges on the bill.

"If that is successful, then we will be able to have another source of reducing the PPA to mitigate the other sources of increase," the President said.

The President said that what the government is proposing is not an intervention in the market forces nor a price control mechanism.

"It is working through the market because in the interest of the market, it is helping technically to look for a way for First Gas to do what NAPOCOR did last year because NAPOCOR sells power to MERALCO and so does First Gas," she said.

The President assured the people that the government is "trying to do everything it can" to alleviate the plight of the consumers.

GMA lauds trinity works, wise holdings for \$5-M cargo, aviation investments in Batangas

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited executives of Trinity Works of Texas and Wise Holdings, Inc. for believing in the Philippines as a business haven and for seeking to invest some \$5 million in two big-ticket projects in Batangas province.

The President congratulated Trinity Works president Isaac Manning, Wise Holdings Inc. chairman Rene Francisco and other company officials.

She also wished them "good luck" during a courtesy call at Malacañang's Music Room.

Trinity Works and Wise Holdings are ready to construct and operate the Phase 3 cargo project of the Batangas Port.

The same companies are also proposing to convert the Fernando Air Base in Lipa City as a general aviation and alternate airport of Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

The President also ordered Batangas Governor Hermilando Mandanas and Undersecretary Noel Quintanar of the Department of Trade and Industry to complete all necessary documentary requirements for Trinity Works before April 4.

She wanted business signing for the memorandum of agreement for the Trinity Works projects to be made in New York or Washington during her visit to the United States next month.

Governor Mandanas assured the President that the requirements to start the project would be made before the deadline.

Mandanas added that the two firms have completed studies on improving the transportation system in Batangas ports. He said the studies started in 2001.

RP to wait for UN Security Council vote before making stand on U.S.-led attack on Iraq — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the Philippines would wait for the vote in the United Nations Security Council before making an official stand on a United States-led attack on Iraq.

“We should give a chance for the UN process to work and I’m sure it will,” the President said during a press briefing at the State Dining Room of Malacañang. “We should not declare our position on a hypothetical situation lest we be a laughing stock.”

The President was reacting to questions on when she would convene the National Security Council given the worsening situation in the Persian Gulf.

The President said that in her earlier statements, including the one she made at 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in Kuala Lumpur last month, she had called on Iraq to comply with the UN directive for him to fully disarm to avert war in the Middle East.

In that summit, the President urged Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to “urgently negotiate a win-win settlement that will spare the heroic Iraqi people the agonies of a devastating war.”

She also called on Saddam to “take the initiative and invite the UN Secretary General, the UN inspectors, representatives of doubting countries and of the international media to see for themselves if Iraq really possessed weapons of mass destruction.”

The President said that only broad statements of principles were made in her meeting with congressmen and senators this morning, and that she would rather wait for the UN decision before convening the National Security Council.

She added that anytime the UN Security Council makes a vote, automatically, the National Security Council will be convened to make our own official stand on the matter.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 12, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041132/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar12.htm>

The President's Day: March 13, 2003

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- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Bush expresses deep appreciation to GMA for strong, consistent leadership on Iraq issue**
- **GMA spells out do's and don'ts for field commanders in military operations**
- **GMA to harness military, police, local gov'ts, community in fight against armed criminals**
- **Short Gulf war would have less adverse effect on RP, says GMA**
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- **Not running in 2004 affords her to make even unpopular decisions, says GMA**
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Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and President Bush spoke by phone (last night) and mutually agreed to postpone the state visit planned for April. Given the press of events concerning Iraq, the state visit will be re-scheduled for later in the spring.

The postponement was agreed to for very practical considerations. Both leaders will have added responsibilities should hostilities occur, and they need to bring to bear the full weight of their attention on these matters. President Macapagal-Arroyo will need to stay focused on the safety of all overseas Philippine workers as well as domestic peace and order.

Postponing will allow both sides to deal with issues of the day and be able to focus more clearly on the bi-lateral relationships between both nations during a well-structured state visit.

Bush expresses deep appreciation to GMA for strong, consistent leadership on Iraq issue

United States President George W. Bush spoke with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night as part of the US leader's telephone diplomacy in connection with the Iraq situation and expressed deep appreciation for the Filipino Chief Executive's "strong, consistent moral leadership in demanding immediate and complete disarmament by the Baghdad government."

White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer announced in Washington, D. C. Wednesday (Thursday in Manila) that the two leaders discussed the security situation in the Philippines and President Bush expressed strong support for President Macapagal-Arroyo's efforts to defeat terror and bring prosperity to the Philippines and in Mindanao.

"The two leaders agreed to continue to consult closely on how the United States can support the Philippines further in the war against terror," Fleischer told White House reporters during his regular briefing.

Fleischer also said President Bush was looking forward to the state visit of President Macapagal-Arroyo to the US late this spring.

"The President looks forward to celebrating our excellent bilateral relationships with the Republic of the Philippines on that occasion," the White House spokesman said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo was among the world leaders President Bush called during what Fleischer called "a busy day of telephone diplomacy" on the Iraq situation.

That same day, the US President also called Russian President Vladimir Putin, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Sheik Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, leader of the United Arab Emirates.

GMA spells out do's and don'ts for field commanders in military operations

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today authorized all field commanders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to make tactical decisions within their areas of responsibility but at the same time reminded them of the strategic implications of their actions.

In a joint AFP-PNP command conference this morning at the Heroes Hall of Malacañang, the President, who is the Commander in Chief of the AFP, stressed that a tactical operation acquires strategic implications when it involves public perceptions beyond the immediate area of military operations.

Field commanders, according to the President, must learn to take into consideration the adverse consequences of their decisions to the general state of law and order, socio-economic activity and political stability within or beyond their immediate areas of operation.

In a memorandum to Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, the President enumerated several points that field commanders should consider whenever they make tactical decisions and conduct operations.

These are:

1. The least possible impact of such operations on the larger community of non-combatants, especially on their livelihood and normal conduct of everyday life;
2. Minimum evacuation from homes and/or areas of food production;
3. Close coordination with pertinent agencies of government within his or her area of responsibility when socio-economic dislocations are expected or become imminent as a result of such operations;
4. Full public safety assessments, in coordination with the Philippine National Police, for areas prone to conflict spillover or collateral acts of terrorism;
5. Strategic sensitivity to peace processes and/or negotiations with affected armed groups; and
6. Overall adherence to national policies and public interest.

GMA to harness military, police, local gov'ts, community in fight against armed criminals

Taking into consideration the fact that armed criminal groups are now operating like armies, the government is planning to implement a holistic approach in law enforcement which would harness the joint efforts of the military, the police, the local governments and the communities.

In a joint command conference of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police at the Heroes Hall of Malacañang today, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, as Commander in Chief, advocated a new revolution in military thinking which seeks to neutralize criminal elements who have become bolder and more aggressive because they have the weapons and methods that characterize armies.

“If you remember from all my speeches in the frequent changes of command in the AFP and even in the less frequent occasion in the PNP, I have been invoking the new revolution in military thinking that this traditional division of labor is more blurred now because many of the criminal groups operate like armies,” the President said.

Reacting to peace advocates questioning the use of the military in running after lawless elements, the Commander in Chief said the Philippines is not alone in this aspect because all over the world, countries fighting the challenge of terrorism have also used their respective militaries.

She cited the case of Colombia which has long used its military in fighting the drug lords who have their own respective armies.

“And now we have all these networks that are existing all over the world especially in Southeast Asia,” she said.

The holistic approach to armed threats is embedded in the Internal Security Plan under the paradigm of clear, hold, consolidate, and develop. Clearing, she said is the job of the military, holding is the job of the police and the CAFGU, while consolidation and development are joint tasks of the local and national governments.

The President stressed that there must be a tight interweave between the Internal Security Plan and the Criminal Justice System under which all law enforcement agencies, the prosecution, the courts, the correctionals and the community operate.

“We need synergy and seamless interaction, like the gears in a machine,” Mrs. Arroyo said. “Intelligence, operations and media approaches must be effectively fused so that the public will see a single, integrated, smooth operation, not a multiplicity of diverse actions.”

During the command conference, the President reiterated the standing policy for the Mindanao peace and order problem which is to give full rein to the imperatives of peace, development and justice.

This means, she said, that peace negotiations will be pursued with the facilitation and assistance of third-party nations; development will be pursued in line with overall national economic plans; and justice will be pursued against those engaged in terrorism and organized crime separate from the pursuit of peace and development process.

“The law will spare no one, but due process will be observed at all times without resorting to vigilantism against any community or religious group,” she said.

Short Gulf war would have less adverse effect on RP, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said last night that if war breaks out in the Middle East, she hopes it would be short so that its adverse effect on the Philippines could be minimized.

In an interview with Channel 7’s Jessica Sojo Wednesday evening, the President said the direct impact on the Philippines of a war in Iraq would be on the price of oil and the price of basic commodities.

“*Kaya kung sakaling magkaroon ng giyera, mas mabilis matapos, mas mabuti* (So, if there is war, the sooner it will be over, the better),” the President said.

The President said that the government has sounded out thousands of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Middle East if they would like to come home because of the impending war in the Gulf.

She said only about 10 percent has indicated that they would like to come home but not because they are afraid but because their families back home fear for their safety in case of war.

The President said that being the leader of the country, who has been keenly observing the developments abroad, she “hopes for the best but prepares for the worst.”

“*Kaya habang nagdarasal tayo para sa kapayapaan ay naghahanda rin tayo* (That’s why while we are praying for peace, we must also be prepared for any eventuality),” the President said.

When asked what position will she take if the United States unilaterally attacks Iraq, the President said this is a hypothetical question.

“*Hintayin natin na iyong proseso ng United Nations ay lumakad* (Let’s just wait for the UN process to move),” the President said.

GMA notes PNP efforts to combat street crimes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today took note of the efforts of the Philippine National Police to institutionalize links with the barangay tanod in the administration's campaign against street crimes, pressing the PNP officers and men to work harder for law and order and the long-term strategy of the administration for justice, peace and development.

During a joint command conference of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the PNP in Malacañang, the President expressed satisfaction for the positive action being taken by the police on her recommendations on the campaign against street crimes.

"The fact that you are catching would-be saboteurs, or would be-bombers shows how well you are carrying out these preparations," the President said.

During their last command conference on February 21, the President ordered the PNP officers and personnel to link up with the barangay chairmen and tanods and mobilize them in the fight against street crimes.

The President said that in the different barangays she visited, she was informed that the barangay tanods, or neighborhood watchmen/law enforcers, have started their training under the supervision of the chiefs of the police stations.

"You can see that the institutionalized links really help to reduce the crime rates," the President said.

Stating that times have been difficult for the last three years and times may become even more difficult in the next three months, the President urged the PNP officers and men to continue to continue their good work.

PNP Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco, giving a status report on the campaign against street crimes, said that in the three weeks after the President's conference with the PNP field and station commanders, street crimes have been reduced to 152 cases, compared to the 264 cases during the three weeks immediately preceding the February 21 meeting.

Velasco said that 23,00 barangay tanods in 1,600 barangays have also been mobilized, in coordination with the mayors and barangay captains, for the campaign against street crimes.

The police chiefs and stations have already conducted 346 seminars and installed police supervisors in the frontlines, "in order that the tanods will be supervised properly and remove the impression that there might be some violations that would be committed by the tanods," Velasco said.

"We have just completed the trainor seminars for all our chiefs of police and our precinct commanders, in order that we can enhance the training of all barangay tanods," Velasco informed the President.

Not running in 2004 affords her to make even unpopular decisions, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reiterated that she has not budged from her earlier decision not to run in next year's elections as she said that she can now make even unpopular decisions for as long as they are right and good for the people.

In a late night interview with Channel 7's Jessica Sojo Wednesday, the President said that because of her announcement last Dec. 30, 2002 that she is not running in 2004, she was able to accomplish more.

The President said that she does not have to think now of the support or the reaction of the various groups or sectors on her decisions.

“Basta ano ang tama iyan ang pinakaimportanting basehan ng aking desisyon (What I think is right is the number one consideration in making my decisions),” the President said.

In the same interview, the President also touched on the state of her health, saying that her bill of health “is almost 100 percent.”

The President said that what makes her health less than 100 percent is that her cholesterol count is a little high.

She added however, that this is being remedied by doing some aerobics along with her aides and some female staff in Malacañang.

She also said that her grandchild, daughter of Pampanga Vice Governor Mikey Arroyo, usually visits her in the evening.

The President said that she talks to her granddaughter in Spanish, “so that she will learn Spanish.”

GMA hails Kuala Lumpur role in peace process in Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed appreciation for Malaysia’s contribution to the government’s peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The President relayed her appreciation during a courtesy call of Malaysia’s Minister of Transport Dato Seri Dr. Ling Liong Sik at the Music Room in Malacañang.

The President noted that she sent Senior Adviser on International Competitiveness Roberto Romulo to Kuala Lumpur specifically to confer with acting Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi on how Malaysia could continue helping the Philippines in its peace process with the MILF.

“We still are relying on Malaysia to be the third party facilitator for the peace process with the MILF,” the President said.

Romulo, the President noted, was the Philippine foreign secretary when Badawi was likewise Malaysia’s foreign minister.

The President noted that Romulo would convey to Badawi that the Philippines continues to pursue the peace process with the MILF.

“We consider Malaysia a very dear and close friend,” the President said.

Malaysia had hosted negotiations between the Philippines and the MILF, which led to a ceasefire agreement in 2001.

Meanwhile, the President noted the development programs of the government in bringing the Clark Special Economic Zone and the Subic Bay Freeport as one unit with the construction of a major road linking the two, bringing travel time to one-half hour.

The President likewise discussed the advantage of having the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport in Clark as an alternate airport for overseas Filipinos who will be proceeding further to Northern Luzon.

Malaysian Ambassador to Manila Mohammad Taufik accompanied the Malaysian Minister during the call. Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza was also present.

Palace says Europe trip postponement still not official

Malacañang today said that the visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to Europe has not been officially postponed yet as the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is awaiting word from the three host governments on their reaction to a possible postponement of her European trip next week.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said that the President asked the DFA to sound out the governments of Spain, Italy, Germany and the Vatican on a possible postponement of her trip.

“However, at this time we don’t have any confirmation yet. We don’t have any word yet from the governments involved,” Bunye said in a regular press briefing this afternoon.

Earlier, Bunye confirmed that the visit of the President to the United States this coming April was postponed right after her telephone conversation with US President George W. Bush Wednesday night.

The two leaders, Bunye said, mutually agreed to the postponement of the President’s visit to the United States due to “practical considerations” with the impending conflict in Iraq.

He also said that there is a need for the President to focus her attention on the government’s preparation for the welfare of the overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East and to attend to the immediate domestic concerns in the country.

“So it will be better if the visit will be rescheduled for a time when both leaders could concentrate and they could talk more and address the issues of the day,” Bunye explained.

Gov’t to employ all legal means to save Filipino sentenced to death in Malaysia

Malacañang today assured the family of Andy Baguindah that the government is employing all legal means to help and save him from the death penalty imposed by the Malaysian government.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye confirmed reports that Baguindah was granted a reprieve for 30 days and his scheduled execution this coming Friday (March 14) has been suspended.

Bunye said the Malaysian government is now conducting a thorough review of Baguindah’s case after acting Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi ordered the reevaluation of the charges brought up against him.

“The reprieve was for 30 days and I believe the (Malaysian) government is really reviewing the case of this Filipino prisoner,” Bunye said in a press briefing this afternoon.

Bunye said Badawi granted the reprieve after Presidential Adviser on Foreign Affairs Roberto Romulo, who was in Malaysia, relayed the government’s request to suspend the execution and review the case of Baguindah.

He also said that the acting Prime Minister assured the Philippine government that Baguindah would be given due process and Manila will be informed on the development of the review of his case.

Baguindah, 25, a carpenter from Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, was convicted of drug trafficking and illegal possession of firearms.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

The President's Day: March 14, 2003

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- **Anti-Smuggling Task Force intercepts P5M in frozen chicken, garlic, garments**
- **GMA monitoring developments in Gulf**
- **GMA restates 4 components of gov't policy on Mindanao**
- **GMA warns economic saboteurs**
- **Gov't committed to bring back normalcy to Pikit and environs**
- **GMA accepts resignation of Liban as TESDA Head**
- **Gov't to hit hard on dollar speculators and hoarders**
- **RP expects U.S. technical assistance in implementing AMLA, says GMA**

Anti-Smuggling Task Force intercepts P5M in frozen chicken, garlic, garments

The government scored anew in its campaign against smuggling as elements of the Anti-Smuggling Task Force intercepted four refrigerated vans containing some P5 million worth of frozen chicken and garlic as well as garments.

Brig. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Deputy Chief of Staff of Operations, said the confiscated goods lacked the necessary documents and will be condemned by burying as specified in their memorandum of agreement with the Bureau of Customs and the Department of Agriculture.

"This is a continuation of what we are doing," said Esperon during a press briefing yesterday. "Even if I have moved to GHQ, I still head the Task Force Blue Collar directed by the President."

Esperon said he has the permission of Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Dionisio Santiago to deploy forces to join the anti-smuggling elements from the Customs, the police and other agencies that are involved in the Anti-Smuggling Task Force.

He added that the possibility of donating the goods has been explored, but cautioned on the chances of their being shifted or ending up in the hands of other recipients.

"We don't want to see a repeat of previous instances where smuggled goods ended up in the 'ukay-ukay' or commercial stalls," Esperon said.

The President ordered Esperon last December to intensify the monitoring and subsequent confiscation of illegally imported products.

The President also gave Esperon and the task force full authority to inspect all incoming refrigerated vans in all ports of entry in the country.

The task force operations were aimed at arresting the smuggling of imported meat and vegetable products which has been hurting local farmers and growers.

"The improvement of the economy is the President's number one priority, and this is our way of helping the President realize that priority goal," Esperon said.

GMA monitoring developments in Gulf

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is monitoring developments in the Persian Gulf in a bid to consolidate all efforts to ensure the safety and welfare of Filipino expatriates in the area.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye today said the President wants all concerned government operatives to be ready in carrying out well laid out preparations for Filipinos in the Middle East in case war breaks out in Iraq.

Besides her concern on Filipinos expatriates, the President has been reminding government agencies to come up with viable programs that would help mitigate the negative effects of a US-Iraq conflict on the socio-economic growth of the country, Bunye said.

In a radio interview, he said the President has been in close contact with Philippine embassy officials in Iraq and the Middle East.

He added that the Chief Executive has “real time information” on developments in the Gulf and regular reports are being relayed to her by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

She also gets information from other sources, like foreign governments, Bunye said.

He added that while everyone is praying for a peaceful solution to the US-Iraq crisis so that war will be averted, the President intends to call a meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) as soon as the United Nations Security Council issues its final resolution on the Iraq case.

The NSC will discuss further government moves to keep the country and the people safe and secured from the perceived temporary setbacks the US-Iraq war may bring.

GMA restates 4 components of gov't policy on Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today restated the four major components of the government's Mindanao policy in the midst of renewed threats to the island's peace and stability.

In an interview with *Radio Veritas* this morning, the President said on top of this policy is to ensure both peace and development in the region because, according to her, the two should go hand in hand if Mindanao is to progress.

Secondly, the President said, any peace and stability in Mindanao should be based on the principle of territorial integrity and on the Philippine Constitution.

The President said that the third component is to realize that the Philippines has various cultural and ethnic groups that should be respected and given due recognition.

She said that even before the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in the United States, the Philippines already had a fourth component to its Mindanao policy, and that is the fight against local terrorists, notably the Abu Sayyaf.

The President also explained that the “active defense” posture that she has ordered the military to observe in Mindanao needs the cooperation of the community and not just police or military vigilance.

“*Kailangan iyong community mismo ay alerto at kailangang may preemptive diplomacy* (The community itself should be alert and there is a need for preemptive diplomacy),” the President said.

GMA warns economic saboteurs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today warned economic saboteurs that they will risk the wrath of the government if they don't stop their currency speculations.

Three foreign banks are reportedly being investigated by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) for allegedly engaging in illegal currency speculations involving \$640 million that may have led to the sharp fall of the peso against the dollar.

In a radio interview, the President underscored the need to return as soon as possible to what is called “financial normalcy.”

The President also stressed that the holistic approach to peace should be widely communicated so that the nervousness being experienced can be reduced.

While everything is being done until a semblance of normalcy is returned, the interests and well being of the citizenry is uppermost in our minds and hearts, the President said.

In these difficult times, with the impending war in the Middle East, the President emphasized the need for cooperation and support of government from everyone, “so that immediately, the world and the Philippines can return to stability and normalcy, which is our wish for our country.”

Gov't committed to bring back normalcy to Pikit and environs

The sooner normalcy returns to Liguasan Marsh and the surrounding areas, the better it would be for the people affected by the recent skirmishes between the military and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

This, in a way, summed up President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's determined efforts to rehabilitate Liguasan and the people who evacuated the nearby Buliok Complex at the height of renewed fighting between government soldiers and the MILF.

In an early morning radio interview with *Radio Veritas* today, the President bared government plans to put up programs, in coordination with the non-government organizations (NGOs), that would restore normalcy to the affected areas and attain sustainable peace and development.

“Nais nang ating pamahalaan na makabalik sila doon sa tinitirhan nila dati, at yung lugar na iyon na kasama na rin nila sa pagpapalano ay maglalagay tayo nang mga program na nakabatay sa kanilang mga sariling pamayanan (The government wants the people there to go back to their respective homes and in these places, we'll put up programs based on their respective communities),” she said.

The Chief Executive congratulated the men and women in uniform involved in the fight against terrorism, saying their vigilance has contributed a lot to the ongoing peace operations.

“Dahil sa kanilang vigilance ay nahuli nila yung ilang merong balak magtanim ng terorismo dito sa Metro Manila, (Because of their vigilance, we were able to catch those who have tried to sow terrorism in Metro Manila)” the President said. *“At laban sa mga krimen sa lansangan ay naging matagumpay rin sila (And against street crimes, they were also successful),”* she added.

The President took the occasion to explain that the government's active defense posture with regard to armed threats is in answer to the public's request for peace.

Along with a vigilant police, an alert citizenry and a pre-emptive diplomacy, the President said she sees no reason why the peace efforts would fail.

She said that the military's active defense posture would continue until the MILF is forced to go back to the negotiating table.

In the same interview, the President cited the support expressed by the Association of Generals and Flag Officers (AGFO), urging the people, cause oriented groups, civic leaders and members of Congress including the Commission on Human Rights to rally behind the government and the AFP in the fight against terrorism.

“Ako ay nagpapasalamat sa kanila, kasi yan hindi lang collateral damage, talagang tinarget diyan ang sibilyan. At yan ang pinakakilos ng terorismo (I thank them for their support because really what happened was not just collateral damage. They really targetted the civilians and that’s the way of terrorism),” the President said.

GMA accepts resignation of Liban as TESDA Head

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today accepted the resignation Dante Liban as Director General of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

In a press briefing this afternoon with the members of the Malacañang Press Corps, the President said she will be selecting soon Liban’s replacement from a short list of nominees submitted to her.

“I have a short list, so I will announce it (replacement) soon,” the President said.

The President confirmed that Liban has submitted his resignation letter through Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo.

Liban, a former congressman from Quezon City, has been at odds with the TESDA board in connection with the issuance of artist record books (ARBs).

On the reported graft cases filed against Liban, the President said it would be up to the adjudicating power or branch of government that is hearing the cases.

Gov’t to hit hard on dollar speculators and hoarders

Malacañang fully supports *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP) in its hard-line campaign to run after dollar speculators and hoarders as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo branded them as economic saboteurs.

In an impromptu press briefing this afternoon at the State Dining Room in Malacañang, the President noted that what some banks and their officers are doing is tantamount to economic sabotage.

She said the full force of the law should be meted out against them.

“In this type of crisis and public anxiety, we can’t afford to allow unscrupulous institutions or persons to run roughshod over the public interest,” the President said.

The President noted that when BSP cracked down on dollar speculation, the exchange rate improved.

She noted that in times like these, every citizen must ask himself what he could do to improve the situation, not what he could take advantage of.

“Everybody should be thinking what can one do so that things could go back to normalcy instead of what one could profit from the crisis,” the President said.

In a related development, former Central Bank Governor and now Philamlife Insurance Company president and CEO Jose L. Cuisia, Jr. has expressed optimism on the peso’s eventual recovery.

“I don’t think that the peso breach of P55 to a dollar level is a scary thing,” Mr. Cuisia said. “I believe that once the impending war with Iraq is over, the peso will recover quickly. Our economic fundamentals are sound and we have over \$16 billion in gross international reserves.”

Cuisia added that measures must be taken to curb speculation on the local currency.

“I believe what we are seeing now is an undue depreciation of the peso. The problem is not just the impending war with Iraq. If you look at the other Asian currencies, they have not been as affected as much as the peso. In our case, there has been an unusually high demand for dollars, particularly from corporations who are purchasing dollars now to cover their requirements for the whole year.”

Cuisia said that overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are also hesitant to remit their dollars, hoping that they would get more pesos once the currency depreciates. “This has exacerbated the situation,” he said.

RP expects U.S. technical assistance in implementing AMLA, says GMA

Now that the amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA) have been accepted by the Financial Action Task Force, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she expects the United States to provide technical assistance to the Philippines on how to fully implement the law.

In a press conference at the State Dining Room in Malacañang, the President said she is glad to hear the news that the Philippines would not receive sanctions in its international financial transactions.

“The law is already good as it is,” the President said of the amended AMLA.

The Chief Executive noted that the US has been the most concerned about money-laundering issues. As such, the President said, she expects the US to provide technical assistance to the Philippines.

“Dapat magbigay sila ngayon ng technical assistance sa pag-implement ng batas na ito (They should provide technical assistance to us in the implementation of the law),” the President said.

The President earlier said the enactment of Republic Act No. 9194, or amendments to AMLA, is about reform and the strengthening of democracy “and getting hard-earned money seamlessly into the hands of Filipino families at home.”

“The issue here is one of progress, modernization, the protection of our overseas Filipino workers and their families. In summary, the anti-money laundering legislation is central to reform,” the President has said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 14, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041204/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar14.htm>

The President's Day: March 15, 2003

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- **DOLE, DILG agree to cooperate in promoting industrial peace**
- **GMA's anti-smuggling moves get raves from hog farmers**
- **Deployment of workers to Saudi Arabia continues as DOLE reviews overseas job policies**
- **President's radio address to the nation**
- **GMA calls for calm, unity in meeting head-on domestic, global concerns**
- **Stepped up fight vs. corruption paying off, says GMA**
- **Don't sleep with the enemy, GMA warns local execs**
- **GMA orders full honors in burial of slain Makati policeman**
- **GMA urges local execs to be anti-crime czars, crisis managers in their localities**
- **GMA cites role of tanods in peacekeeping**
- **Magsaysay offers Zambales, Bataan, Pampanga as site for Balikatan**

DOLE, DILG agree to cooperate in promoting industrial peace

The Departments of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and Interior and Local Government (DILG) have signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) defining the terms of cooperation between the two departments in maintaining industrial peace and harmony and in promoting workers' protection and welfare in all work places.

Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas and Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina signed the MOA at the DOLE offices in Intramuros.

"This agreement is part of our continuing program to institutionalize pro-active approaches in resolving labor disputes," Sto. Tomas said after the signing.

"I am pleased to have the DILG, under the leadership of Secretary Lina, as an active partner of the DOLE in its efforts to maintain and foster industrial peace and harmony and promote workers' welfare and protection," she added.

The DOLE is the primary agency of the national government tasked to maintain industrial peace and promote workers' welfare.

However, labor disputes occur within the geographical jurisdiction of local government units (LGUs) which, in the exercise of their own powers, are in the best position to assist DOLE in the maintenance of industrial peace and harmony, Sto. Tomas said.

Lina said the DOLE-DILG cooperation agreement is in response to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's call for the need to address the problem of overly confrontational labor-management relations systems which work as an obstacle to a more productive and harmonious work relations.

Under the agreement, the DILG will actively encourage LGUs to maintain a corps of qualified personnel who will render conciliation and mediation services not yet filed with the DOLE.

The DILG also agrees to assist the DOLE in maintaining industrial peace by directing its attached agencies and offices such as the Philippine National Police (PNP) and urging the LGUs to cooperate in the enforcement of DOLE's orders and decisions.

On its part, the DOLE will provide technical and training assistance to personnel of the different LGUs and conduct advocacy and information and education activities, such as seminars and the dissemination of flyers and pamphlets to workers within the LGUs' specific areas of jurisdiction.

Sto. Tomas stressed that the agreement is one way of building on the accomplishments of the DOLE in the area of industrial peace and harmony, which in 2002 was generally stable and peaceful.

There were only 36 strikes last year, the lowest strike incidence in the country in the last 21 years, Sto. Tomas said.

GMA's anti-smuggling moves get raves from hog farmers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has drawn accolades for her untiring campaign against the smuggling of pork, vegetables and other agricultural products through the Anti-Smuggling Task Force.

In a letter to the President, the National Federation of Hog Farmers, Inc. (NFHF) cited the government's "unrelenting campaign against smuggling and continued work of the task force in apprehending the smuggled items."

The NFHF said the campaign has resulted in the "price recovery in farm gate prices of hogs."

"Ever since the task force undertook its job, we have noted a marked improvement in the farm gate prices of hogs compared to the last quarter of last year," the group said.

"We are confident that prices will still improve as smuggled pork and meat is minimized in the domestic market," they added.

NFHF Chairman Gabriel Uy also informed the President that the group has launched the "Boteng Bobby Program," a radio program aired over 92.7 FM in San Fernando, Pampanga, to promote local pork and meat trading in Central Luzon.

Uy said the NFHF has been working closely with Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo on the clustering of corn and livestock. An initial project is in the pipeline in San Rafael, Bulacan.

Member-raisers of NFHF have also set aside a dedicated supply line to meat processors to reduce the latter's dependency on importation.

"We look forward in maintaining our vigilance in insuring that smuggling can be completely wiped out," Uy told the President.

The NFHF also thanked task force chief Brig. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho and Lorenzo and their staff.

Deployment of workers to Saudi Arabia continues as DOLE reviews overseas job policies

Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas today said "there is no compelling reason, at the moment, to halt the deployment of domestic helpers to Saudi Arabia."

Sto. Tomas said the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has continued to review the agency's overseas employment policies and the review covered other countries besides Hong Kong.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the review after she placed a temporary ban in the deployment of domestic helpers to Hong Kong.

Sto. Tomas said the review included the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

She said the position of the Philippine government is clear on the unified contract, “a proposed agreement between the recruiters in the Philippines and recruiters in Saudi Arabia.”

“The Philippine government is not a party to it and it should not be expected to negotiate with the recruiters in Saudi Arabia relative to the business arrangements between them and Filipino recruiters,” she added.

Sto. Tomas stressed that the Philippines has a standard employment contract processed by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and which is the basis of the terms and conditions of work of every Filipino worker who goes to Saudi Arabia or anywhere in the world.

“This is being enforced worldwide and is the basis for resolving disputes about wages, working conditions, including money claims being filed at the POEA of the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC),” she said.

“I have communicated to the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that a unified contract signed by recruiters cannot prevail over the Philippine standard employment contract,” she added.

This means that there can be no diminution of existing benefits, no imposition of additional fees and no impairment of the rights of workers as contained in the standard employment contract.

“Relative to this matter, I have ordered the POEA and the NLRC, two attached agencies of the DOLE, to strictly enforce the POEA standard employment contract in their adjudication of claims by workers.

Sto. Tomas added that she had created a committee headed by National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) chairman Roy Señeres, who had volunteered to solve the problems that may be created by a conflict between the Philippine standard employment contract and the recruitment agreement between Saudi and Philippine recruiters.

“Our employment contract will always have primacy insofar as money claims and recruitment violations are concerned and the government stands four-square behind the integrity of its standard employment contract. We have clearly told the Saudi embassy and the recruiters this,” she said.

President’s radio address to the nation

Magandang araw sa lahat ng ating mga kababayan.

Alam kong maraming alalahanin ang nasa inyong mga isipan, tulad ng napipintong digmaan sa Iraq, ang di-matiyak na pagtaas ng presyo ng langis, mga pangamba kaugnay ng terorismo at ng lokal na ekonomiya.

Pero, nalampasan natin ang mas matinding krisis noon at malalampasan din natin ito. Maging mahinahon tayo. Huwag tayong padadala sa takot o *panic*. Lilipas din ang krisis na ito at magbabalik ang lahat sa normal matapos maayos ang mga kaguluhang pandaigdigang at ang sitwasyon sa Mindanao ay maging matatag. May mas matindi pang krisis tayong naranasan at lagi tayong nakakabangong muli.

Lubos nating sinusuportahan ang Bangko Sentral sa kampanya nitong habulin ang *dollar speculators* at *hoarders*. Ang ginagawa ng ilang bangko at kanilang mga opisyal ay para na ring *economic sabotage*; kaya ang buong higpit ng batas ay dapat ilapat laban sa kanila. Sa panahong ito ng krisis at malawakang pag-aalala ng publiko, hindi natin papayagan ang mga walang-konsensiyang institusyon o tao na mangibabaw sa interes ng publiko.

Ngayong araw, pupulungin ko ang mga *local leaders* ng Central Luzon, Metro Manila at Southern Tagalog. Aatasan ko silang maging *crisis managers* sa kanilang mga komunidad. Sila ang mangangasiwa sa pagmamatyag sa lahat ng klase ng problemang sosyal at ekonomikal na kaugnay sa kasalukuyang krisis, tulad ng presyo ng mga pangunahing

bilihin at para tiyakin na ang komunidad ay listo laban sa lahat ng uri ng terorismo. Dapat nating laging tulungan at suportahan ang ating mga pinunong lokal.

Ang mga *local leaders* din ay dapat maging *information champions* para sa katatagan ng ekonomiya at kagalingan ng publiko. Sila ay may tungkuling ipaalam sa mga mamamayan ang mahahalagang pangyayari sa ating paligid, harapin ang mga maling balita at espekulasyon at ipalagay ang loob ng komunidad sa pamamagitan ng pagsasabi sa mga mamamayan ng katotohanan.

Ang mga *local leaders* ay dapat ding maging *anti-street crime czars*. Dapat nilang protektahan ang taumbayan laban sa mga kriminal na bumibiktima sa mga mahihina at laban doon sa mga may-kagagawan ng *scams* o panloloko at iba pang masasamang gawain.

Dapat nating gawing halimbawa ang Davao City, General Santos City at Zamboanga City. Ang mga lungsod na ito ay may mga malalakas na lider, mga plano at programa para sa lahat ng uri ng kagipitan at mga listo at handa ng tumulong na mamamayan.

Bagama't tayo ay magiging maingat, hindi natin dapat kalimutan ang kahalagahan ng kapayapaan.

Ang mga mamamayan ngayon ay malakas na nagpapahiwatig ng kapayapaan at ito ay ating sinasang-ayunan. Ang ating aktibong pagtatanggol sa Mindanao ay tugon sa kanilang kagustuhan ng kapayapaan. Aktibong pagtatanggol, pagiging listo ng mga pulis, mataas na antas ng alerto ng komunidad at mahusay na diplomasiya. Ito ang mga elemento ng ating *peace operations*, at may napakalakas na pagkakaisang pulitikal, mula sa hanay ng nasyonal at lokal, na sumusuporta sa mga hakbanging ito.

Ang kapayapaan ay isang polisiya para sa ating panloob at panlabas na seguridad.

Sa situwasyon sa Iraq, kapayapaan pa rin ang pinakamabuting opsiyon at ang lider nito ay dapat tuparin ang kanyang mga obligasyon sa sangkatauhan para magkaroon ng kapayapaang pangmatagalan. Habang isinasa-ayos ng mga bansa ng ating mundo ang krisis na ito, ang ating mga kababayan naman ay dapat manatiling kalmado. Kailangan tayong magtulungan para sa katatagann at kagalingan ng ating bansa. Ang ating mga manggagawa sa *Middle East* ay ligtas sa anumang kapahamakan. Handa ang inyong gobyerno na harapin ang epekto nng krisis na ito sa ating pambansang seguridad at sa ating ekonomiya.

Kapayapaan at seguridad. Panatag na isipan at pagtitiwala. Ang mga ito ang ating higit na kailangan sa panahong ito ng krisis. Ang mga ito ang tutulong sa atin upang malampasan ang ating mga pangamba at mamuhay nang mapayapa.

Maraming salamat po at patnubayan nawa tayo ng Diyos.

GMA calls for calm, unity in meeting head-on domestic, global concerns

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the people to stay calm and stay united amid domestic and global crisis situations, as she expressed confidence that the nation would pull through the challenges of the times.

In her weekly regular radio message, the President said it was normal for people to think about current issues — the impending war in Iraq, uncertainties in oil prices, fears spawned by terrorism and apprehensions on the economy, among others.

“Pero nalampasan natin ang mas matinding krisis noon at malalampasan di natin ito. Maging mahinahon tayo. Huwag tayong padadala sa takot o panic (But we have weathered a worse crisis before and we can do so too this time. Let us stay calm and not be hostages of fear and panic,” she said.

“Lilipas din ang krisis na ito at magbabalik ang lahat sa normal matapos maayos ang mga kaguluhang pandaigdigang at ang sitwasyon sa Mindanao ay maging matatag (The global crisis will also end and so will the instability in Mindanao. When this happened, everything will return to normalcy),” she added.

The President took time to condemn dollar speculators and hoarders, calling them economic saboteurs.

She said she fully supported the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas’ campaign to go after those who take advantage of the crisis to cause the peso to slide against the American dollar.

“Hindi natin papayagan ang mga walang-konsensiyang institusyon o tao na mangibabaw sa interes ng publiko (We will not allow the interests of unscrupulous institutions or persons to go above public interest),” she said.

She added that she would meet today with local leaders in Central Luzon, Metro Manila and Southern Tagalog, to appoint the latter as crisis managers who would oversee social and economic concerns that might crop up in their respective communities in these times of crisis.

Local leaders, she stressed, should be the country’s “information champions” and “anti-street crime czars” to stabilize the economy and strengthen the society.

The President cited the persistence of local officials in the cities of Davao, General Santos and Zamboanga, saying that they have stood up always prepared to help their constituents in times of crisis.

The President likewise reminded the nation to adhere to peace.

“Ang mga mamamayan ngayon ay malakas na nagpapahiwatig ng kapayapaan at ito ay ating sinasang-ayunan (The government is one with the Filipino people in the call for peace),” she said.

She noted that the active defense position of government in Mindanao corresponded to the call for peace.

She said the elements of the country’s peace operations included active defense, alertness of the police force, high level of community alertness, and effective diplomacy.

“Ang kapayapaan ay isang polisiya para sa ating panloob at panlabas na seguridad (Peace is a policy for our internal and external security),” she added.

The President also said that there were peaceful solutions to the Iraq situation.

Iraqi leaders should ably perform their obligations to mankind so that lasting peace in the world could be achieved, she said.

As this developed, she reiterated her assurance that Filipino expatriates in the Middle East would be safe from harm, if and when war breaks out in the Gulf.

“Handa ang inyong gobyerno na harapin ang epekto ng krisis na ito sa ating pambansang seguridad at sa ating ekonomiya (The government is ready to meet head-on the negative effects of the Gulf crisis on our national security and economy),” she stressed.

Peace and security, stable minds and trust. These the president said were imperative for the people to have in times of crisis. These, she added, would help the country and the people overcome their fears and the crisis.

Stepped up fight vs. corruption paying off, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that her administration's stepped up campaign against graft and corruption is paying off as evidenced by the latest finding of a Hong Kong-based risk consultancy firm.

In a meeting this morning with the local officials of Metro Manila, and Regions 3 and 4, the President said that the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy, Ltd. (PERC) has classified the Philippines as among those countries in Asia where "corruption is becoming less serious" as against countries that are "most corrupt."

According to the President, the latest report of PERC has classified the Philippines, along with Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand as countries where corruption cases are no longer serious.

PERC, which was established in Hong Kong in 1957, coordinates a team of researchers and analysts in the ASEAN countries, Greater China and South Korea

Some of the world's leading corporations and financial institutions regularly use PERC's services to assess key trends and critical issues shaping the region, to identify growth opportunities, and to develop effective strategies for capitalizing on these opportunities.

The President paid tribute to the local executives of Regions 3 and 4 for their role in eradicating red tape in particular and in the fight against corruption in general.

She said that during her first year as president, a lot of businessmen told her that red tape and corruption have been contained in the national government agencies but not in the local level.

Now that PERC has said that corruption is now less serious and that investors are flocking not only to Metro Manila but also to Regions 3 and 4, then it means that there is an improvement in the fight against corruption in these three regions.

The provinces of Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, and Zambales comprise Region 3 while Region 4 includes the industrialized CALABARZON provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon.

"Malaki ang inaasahan ng taong bayan mula sa atin. At hindi natin sila puwedeng mabigo (The people have great expectations from us. And we are not going to fail them)," the President said.

The President then called on the local executives to do more in the drive to rid the government of corruption and irregularities.

Don't sleep with the enemy, GMA warns local execs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today warned local government officials who have cultivated cordial ties with the enemies of the state that their units would not be prioritized in the appropriation of government funds.

In her meeting with local government executives from Regions 3 and 4 and the National Capital Region at the Heroes' Hall in Malacanang, the President said she knows "more or less" these LGU officials who are "sleeping with the enemy."

"Alam ko na rin kung sino yung sleeping with the enemy kaya huwag kayong aasa ng dagdag na tulong. In fact, kung nagigipit ang national budget at kailangang i-phase-in ang releases, huli kayo sarelease (I know who are sleeping with the enemy. That's why you should not expect assistance from the national government. In fact, if the national budget is restrained, they would be the last to obtain funds)," the President said.

"Those sleeping with the enemy, you have to draw the line, during this time of crisis, you are with the government on peace and order or you are not," she added.

The President said the LGUs can use their intelligence funds but they have to account for these if they would ask for more from the national government.

The President noted that the community is the most important part of the criminal justice system.

She further noted the importance of the community's cooperation in the fight against terrorism so that citizens and foreigners would be safe from harm.

GMA orders full honors in burial of slain Makati policeman

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she has ordered the full honors in the burial of slain policeman PO1 Aristotle Tacata, who died in a shootout with robbers at a convenience store in Makati City after killing two of five armed men.

The President, who visited the remains of Tacata last night, said she also ordered the promotion of the policeman to Police Officer 2.

"That would be the template for those killed in the line of duty," the President said.

Tacata, 26, was at the LPC Minimart on Kalayaan Ave. in Makati City Wednesday when three robbers entered the store, drawing their handguns and announcing a robbery.

Police said that as the suspects were scooping cash from the register, they noticed handcuffs on the belt of one of the customers. Tacata, who was assigned at the Police Community Precinct 8 area as an intelligence detective, was in civilian clothes.

A shootout ensued, leaving the cop and another suspect dead.

The President, who paid her respects on the remains of Tacata last night, said she is gratified that the police in the National Capital Region "are back on the beat."

She said she always notice policemen in the beat during her surprise visits to parts of Metro Manila.

GMA urges local execs to be anti-crime czars, crisis managers in their localities

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged local government officials to be the crisis managers, anti-crime czars and information champions in their communities.

The President made the call during a meeting with local officials of the National Capital Region and Regions 3 and 4 at the Heroes' Hall in Malacañang.

The President said that as crisis managers, the local executives would be responsible for the public safety of their communities.

"Kaya tuwing may krisis, kayo ang may kakayahan na manguna (everytime there is a crisis, you are the ones who should lead) through the crisis and out of the crisis," the President said.

The President said local officials should get the cooperation of everyone concerned in ensuring public safety as well as in sharing intelligence with the police and other authorities.

"Siguro kung tumataas ang presyo ng bilihan, galit ang taong bayan, pero kung hindi sila ligtas sa kalsada at sa tahanan ay napakalaking problema talaga yun para sa ating national security maging sa ating survival (if the prices

of goods rise, the people would not be pleased but if they are not safe from the streets and in their homes, it would be a bigger problem for our national security, even survival),” she said.

The President said she expects the officials to follow the examples set by local officials after the Davao City Airport bombing and in other incidents in Mindanao as models of crisis management control, which have become a seamless teamwork of police, military and the LGUs.

The President said as anti-crime czars, the local officials should lead the fight against crime, including street crimes as well as anomalies like the pyramiding scams.

The President noted that pyramiding scams, although these cases do not land on the headlines, affect a lot of hapless victims.

As “information champions,” the President said she expects the officials to be the “spokespersons of prudence and sobriety.”

“Kapag kayo ay makarinig ng tsismis o spekulasyon, iyong taong bayan dapat ang pag-iisip nila ay pwede nilang tanungin sa inyo kung ano ba ang katotohanan (The people must be able to get the truth from you),” she said.

GMA cites role of tanods in peacekeeping

A total of 23,000 tanods from 1,600 barangays have been mobilized as force multipliers by the police, contributing greatly to the reduction of street crimes in the metropolis.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo disclosed this today during a meeting with local executives of Metro Manila and Regions 3 and 4.

“Sa terorismo talagang importante ang kooperasyon, pagkamulat at pagkahanda ng buong pamayanan at ng local government (In terrorism, what is important is cooperation, alertness and vigilance of the entire community and local government),” she said.

The President cited a report made by Gen. Reynaldo Velasco, PNP Deputy Director, indicating that street crimes in the metropolis have gone down from 264 cases to 152 in the six-week period after Feb. 21, when she ordered a crackdown on lawlessness in Metro Manila.

The report also stated that a total of 346 seminars for barangay tanods have been conducted by the National Capital Region (NCR) since that date, indicating the readiness of the police in Metro Manila to carry out her orders.

“Kaya binabati ko ang mga pulis sa Metro Manila at iyon din ang inaasahan ko sa mga pulis sa Regions 3 and 4 kung saan ang threat ay mas maliit (That’s why I am congratulating the Metro Manila police for their enthusiasm and that’s what I also expect from those in Regions 3 and 4),” she said.

The President also batted for the institutionalization of the tanods as force multipliers in order to curb the incidence of crimes in the urban areas, adding that the percentage in reduction because of this arrangement far exceeded expectations.

“This is really important if we want our country and our communities to be safe for both the citizens and the tourists,” she said.

Magsaysay offers Zambales, Bataan, Pampanga as site for Balikatan

Zambales Gov. Vicente Magsaysay today asked President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to hold the Balikatan exercises in the provinces of Zambales, Bataan and Pampanga.

Magsaysay made the suggestion during the Chief Executive's meeting with local government officials of the National Capital Region, and Regions 3 and 4 at the Heroes' Hall in Malacañang.

Magsaysay represented the Central Luzon Regional Peace and Order Council during the meeting.

"Yun pong Balikatan, napapansin natin, nababasa natin, nagkakaroon ng problem. Ayaw ng mga ibang probinsya sa kanilang lugar, ibalik na po ninyo sa Bataan, Zambales at Pampanga yan (We hear and read in newspapers that some provinces don't want Balikatan exercises. Why don't you bring the exercises to Bataan, Zambales and Pampanga)," Magsaysay said.

The President pointed out that Sulu was the only province that did not want to host the Balikatan. "Sulu lang ang ayaw, lahat ng iba gusto (Sulu does not want it but everyone wants it)," she said.

Magsaysay said the three Central Luzon provinces welcome the Balikatan exercises. *"Sa Bataan, Zambales at Pampanga, diyan po ay walang problema. Welcome na welcome po sa lugar natin yan."*

He noted that the provinces have become familiar with the presence of United States troops in the past four decades, referring to the previous presence of U.S. facilities in the region. *"Sapagkat apatnapung taon na kasama natin yang mga Amerikano* (We were alongside American soldiers for four decades)," Magsaysay said.

"Ang problema po kasi kung nakakakita sila ng Amerikano sa ibang lugar, akala nila, giyera na (the problem with the others is when they see Americans, they think there's already a war)," he added.

The President, on the other hand, thanked the Zambales governor for the offer.

Aside from the three, other provinces have signified willingness to host Balikatan exercises. Among these are North Cotabato, Quezon, Oriental and Occidental Mindoro.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 15, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20090814124324/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar15.htm>

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Nikkei Weekly cites Subic Bay's competitive edge as a safer investment site in Asia

Leading Japanese newspaper *Nikkei Weekly* has cited the Subic Bay industrial zone as the Philippines' alternative to China where foreign investors could set up industrial operations for overseas production.

A report from Senior Deputy Executive Secretary Joaquin Lagonera said Nikkei's article noted that the Subic Bay zone offered investors a safer operational site in Asia.

The report said that over 500 multinational companies have relocated to Subic Bay and that more were on the way.

It added that approved foreign investments in the area grew by 770 percent year-on-year in the January to June, 2002 period.

Nikkei stressed that Subic Bay's competitive edge is prescribed by the area's abundance of college graduates, the proficiency of its skilled labor in the English language, the quality of labor in quantity, its convenient access, infrastructure depth and low crime rate.

The article said another industrial park might take off in Subic Bay since the Techno Park is nearly full to meet the demands of foreign companies.

The Japanese magazine also disclosed the concern about foreign investment flow into China whose economic future was termed difficult to read.

Foreign companies have increasingly expressed the concern in Taiwan, and they fear the day when something happens to the Chinese economy.

Nikkei cited the fluctuation of the yuan that could blunt Japan's export edge and the political risks present in China.

Gov't inter-agency group acts to stop video piracy

The anti-piracy inter-agency group has come out with three measures to ensure the success of the government's campaign against video piracy and the thrust to protect intellectual property rights (IPR).

In a report, Undersecretary Benjamin de Guzman of the Office of the Executive Secretary (OES) said the group sought to:

- Designate state prosecutors who are seasoned in intellectual property laws to specifically handle IPR cases;

- Institutionalize a system of coordination among the OES, the Videogram Regulatory Board (VRB) and the Department of Justice (DOJ);
- Conduct a series of lecture-seminars to equip law enforcers in the preparation of complaints, affidavits and other legal forms for the filing of cases against criminal syndicates and violators of IPR laws.

De Guzman said the measures were agreed on in a recent meeting attended by VRB Vice Chairperson Lualhati Buenafe and DOJ Undersecretary Jose Calida.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had designated De Guzman to oversee and monitor the filing, prosecution and status of video piracy cases and other violations of IPR laws.

De Guzman said the group saw it imperative to speed up and strengthen the President's drive to arrest and eradicate video piracy rings operating in the country.

He said the group would not succumb to political and economic pressures and other obstacles in the performance of its tasks.

Kuwait pardons, sets free 9 OFWs as promised during GMA visit

Nine Filipino overseas workers imprisoned in Kuwait for various offenses have been granted pardon by authorities as part of their government's promise to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during her visit there last month.

In a report to Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) Administrator Virgilio Angelo, Kuwait-based Welfare Officer Mario Antonio said the nine prisoners have been set free and are awaiting repatriation pending completion of the processing of their exit papers.

The OWWA has withheld the identity of the workers but their families have been advised to look up their names at the labor agency.

The nine OFWs form part of the 20 Filipino prisoners the Emir of Kuwait had pledged to pardon when the President visited Kuwait last February to look into the conditions of some 60,000 OFWs there in the wake of the brewing Iraqi conflict.

No word, however, has been given on when the remaining 11 Filipino prisoners would be absolved by Kuwaiti authorities.

OFWs in Taiwan elated over GMA message

Overseas Filipino workers in Taiwan expressed delight over the personal message sent by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo recently commending them for making significant contributions to their families and the nation as a whole.

In a letter to the President, Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) Managing Director and Resident Representative Edgardo V. Espinosa said leaders of the Filipino communities in Taiwan were particularly pleased with the personal message sent through the Philippine Labor Center in Taipei.

He also informed the President that her message was published in the *China Post* and the *Taiwan News*, the two leading newspapers in the island, to reach the greater majority of the OFWs spread all over Taiwan.

"We extend our warmest greetings to you, together with our prayers for more strength, more wisdom and more power as you continue to lead our beloved country in these difficult times," Espinosa told the President.

In her message to the more than seven-million migrant Filipino workers who work as professionals, home managers, caregivers, sea farers, nurses and entertainers, the President said their remittances amounting to P350 billion every year have helped prop up the Philippine economy.

The amount, she said, is five times what the government can spend on capital expenditure and is half of the country's national budget.

"It is true that we are going through difficult times. But we are not alone in this. Even the biggest economies in the world are experiencing a slowdown," the President said in her three-page letter.

"It is clear to me that the reason why we are in such great demand overseas is because we are excellent workers who are educated, well-trained and possess the work ethic necessary to the development of your host countries," she also said.

Pilar town leaders thank GMA for restoring peace

The people in the town of Pilar, Sorsogon have thanked President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the police for the speedy neutralization of Jolito Leosala alias Kumander Awa, Pilar's most-wanted criminal, and for reinstating peace and economic growth in the area.

In a letter to the President, local leaders of Pilar said that Leosala's capture and subsequent death "came as good news to all of us."

"It would mean a big improvement in the peace and order situation in our municipality. With this, we are strongly confident that business will improve and get back to normal again," they said.

The Pilar leaders told the President that Leosala had taken the town hostage and in the grips of fear as he sowed terror with his "despicable acts."

"Trade and investment opportunities in our community were adversely affected and greatly suffered. This had caused a major drawback in the community's efforts to achieve economic growth and development," they added.

The officials extended to the President their "sincerest and heartfelt gratitude for the laudable action you have taken on our plea for Leosala's capture."

"We will never forget this praiseworthy achievement you have done for us. We believe this will not only benefit us, but the other business communities in the nearby towns and provinces as well," they told the President.

The officials included Lydia de las Alas, Elena Sy-Reyes, Therese Rose Sia, Antonio Tee, Jose Sy, David Victoria and Efren Lozares.

Baliuag flyover most economically viable to ease traffic, says DPWH study

The construction of the Baliuag flyover in Central Luzon is the most economically viable project to implement to ease the traffic congestion in the area, according to a study conducted by the Department of Public Works and Highways.

In a report to Metro Manila Development Authority chair and Public Works Secretary Bayani Fernando, DPWH Region 3 Director Alfredo G. Tolentino said constructing the Baliuag flyover is the most cost-effective project to implement as it addresses the immediate need to decongest traffic in the areas.

Tolentino said several alternative schemes have already been introduced to solve congestion along the Cagayan Valley road in Baliuag, including the widening of the Daang Maharlika.

However, evaluation of the planned widening revealed that it would not be able to reduce the 12 conflicting flows in the intersection, according to Tolentino.

“Implementing widening works along Daang Maharlika as alternative solution to the traffic problem will also require acquisition of road right-of-way that is very expensive and unacceptable to lot owners,” Tolentino said.

The DPWH has also considered the construction of the Plaridel Bypass road as a sub-project of the proposed upgrading of the Inter-Urban Highway System along the Pan-Philippine Highway that will be realized not earlier than year 2010 as the source of fund of the project has yet to be finalized.

Tolentino said that any delays in the approval of its foreign funding would further extend the utilization of the bypass beyond 2010 wherein the traffic situation in the Baliuag area may no longer be within tolerable level.

Earlier, former DPWH Secretary Simeon A. Datumanong terminated the contract for the construction of the Baliuag flyover due to spurious advertisements for invitations to bid.

Invitations to bid for the construction of the P 71,367 million Baliuag flyover and approaches along Cagayan Valley road over Candaba Baliwag and Cagayan valley intersection were again published in national newspapers last January and February 2003.

Balikatan Exercises results in more U.S. aid for socio-economic development projects

The previous joint RP-US *Balikatan* military exercises brought with it counterpart fund assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) intended for socio-economic development projects, besides the exercises’ “civic component” for the same purpose.

In an interview with Sen. Noli de Castro in his program *Magandang Gabi Bayan*, the President said that for instance, the military aid the Philippines obtained following her 2001 trip to the US totaled \$100 million.

And the USAID also provided the same amount to fund priority programs and projects for socio-economic growth, she said.

The President said that on top of the USAID funds, the US military aid likewise provided for a “civic component” that had been translated into development projects as well.

The President noted that the *Balikatan* exercises in Basilan introduced a lot of development projects in the province.

During the exercises, two hospitals were built, the provincial airport was rehabilitated and the province’s circumferential road was completed, she added.

“*Hindi lamang training ang naiwan sa ating mga sundalo (kundi) dalawang hospital, tapos na yung airport, yung circumferential road na matagal nang panaginip ng mga taga-Basilan* (Not only did the exercises train our soldiers but it also brought about the building of two hospitals, the rehabilitation of the provincial airport and the completion of the circumferential road, a long-time dream of Basileños),” she said.

The President noted that all in all, socio-economic development projects comprised a big extent of the US government assistance to the Philippines.

“*Mas malaki talaga ang non-military assistance ng Amerika sa Pilipinas kaysa sa military assistance* (indeed, the non-military aid of the U.S. is bigger than its military assistance),” she said.

The President noted that the ongoing joint military exercises between Filipino and American troops in Zamboanga City alone brought \$25 million worth of ground training modules.

“*Hindi pa kasama yun dun sa Basilan, hindi pa kasama yung ordinary na ginagawa sa Luzon* (that does not include the exercises in Basilan and the joint exercises ordinarily done in Luzon),” the President said.

The President further noted that Sen. Daniel Inouye of Hawaii was able to insert a supplementary budget bill that would provide \$30 million worth of aid to the Philippines, but which was unfortunately vetoed by President George W. Bush.

But President Macapagal-Arroyo said that when Bush learned that the bill included an aid package to the Philippines, he promised to have it restored.

“*Hindi ko pa binibilang ang lahat. Halimbawa yung sinasabing civic portion. Ito ay partial lang itong enumeration kong ito. Makikita mo na sulit na sulit* (I haven’t counted all of it. This is only partial. You can see that it’s very much worth everything),” she added.

In the same interview, the President ruled out the possibility of having the *Balikatan* exercises in Sulu.

She also noted that officials of several provinces have signified their willingness to host the *Balikatan*.

Among these provinces are Cotabato, Quezon, Oriental and Occidental Mindoro, Zambales, Bataan and Pampanga.

GMA reassures welfare, safety of OFWs in Middle East

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Saturday night reiterated her concern over the safety and welfare of Filipino expatriates in the Middle East as she shrugged off claims that the Philippines, as against other countries with workers in the Gulf, would be most affected by a war in Iraq.

She also reassured families of overseas Filipino workers (OFW) that the government is doing everything to ease the effects of a probable US-Iraq war on the OFWs, the Filipino people and the nation.

The President, in a television interview with Senator Noli de Castro, said the Philippines ranked sixth only among the nations exporting labor to the Middle East, hinting that other nations would likely be hurt the most when the US-Iraq war breaks out.

Expressing her deep concern on the situation of OFWs, the President said most of the 1.5 million OFWs in the Gulf are safely situated in areas far from Iraq.

She cited Saudi Arabia, where some one million Filipino expatriates are sited, and Jordan where there is a lesser number.

She said that at least 850,000 OFWs in Saudi Arabia are located in areas far from any probable US-Iraq flashpoint. “*Mga 850,000 ay napakalayo sa harm’s way.*”

The remaining 150,000, though within Saudi Arabia soil near the Iraqi border, are safe and secured too.

The President recalled that during the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq’s Scud missiles tried to penetrate but failed to hit Dhahran, a Saudi Arabia province near Iraq where Filipinos worked in commercial centers.

“Kampanteng-kampante nga sila (They are very calm) ... at normal pa rin ang ginagawa nila (and they have been attending to their work and lives normally),” she said, referring to the OFWs.

Even if the US, in the event that Turkey refuses to lend them bases, uses Jordan as launching pad to attack Iraq, Filipinos in Jordan would still be far from harm, the Chief Executive told Senator De Castro.

‘Do not worry.’ The President said this was the message OFWs in Kuwait, which is nearest Iraq, would want to relay to their relatives in the Philippines.

On top of all these, she added that the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT) under Ambassador Roy Cimatu is ready to cope with any eventuality.

The team has made preparations for “the worst-case scenario, the best-case scenario, the probable scenario” and has set up relocation centers for Filipino workers along the borders of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, she said.

“Meron tayong nireserbang resort at mayroon pang tent sa labas ng resort. Meron nang tubig, meron nang mga kasilyas. Handang-handa na ‘yun (We have reserved a resort for relocates. There are tents, water, confort rooms there. Everything is ready),” she noted.

The President disclosed that when other countries saw the Philippine MEPT’s preparations, they followed suit and *“ginaya nila tayo (they replicated us).”*

GMA to lead sea-road caravan thru Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao

To demonstrate the “nautical highway” available to travelers, including foreign and local tourists, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is embarking next month on a caravan that would bring her to Mindanao, Visayas and Luzon using ferry and road rides.

The President, who made the announcement during the TV program *Magandang Gabi Bayan* hosted by Sen. Noli de Castro, said she is taking on such a journey precisely to promote travelling in the countryside using the ferry system.

She said she would fly to Davao City and proceed to Dapitan, Zamboanga del Sur to kick off the sea and road caravan.

She said many have signified willingness to join her. She said Mindanao would host a lot of visitors during that time.

The President noted that despite the negative travel advisories issued by foreign governments, particularly on trips to Mindanao since last year, tourism was still able to post a 16 percent growth.

“Sa kabila ng travel advisories na natanggap ng ating bansa nung nakaraang tao, 16 percent pa rin ang growth rate ng ating tourism,” the President said.

The President further noted that her administration has purposely directed most of its overseas development assistance towards Mindanao.

She noted that right after the bombing incident in Davao City, she immediately flew to the province to check the situation.

“Kaya Davao, huwag kayong mawawalan ng ispirito. Talagang ang Davao ay isa sa mga top 8 favorite destination ng mga turista (That’s why, Davao, don’t lose your spirit, because you are one of the top eight destinations of tourists),” she said.

She noted that former Cebu Mayor Tommy Osmeña brought 50 potential investors to Davao City “precisely to show that Davaoenos are resilient people who could get back on their feet and maintain the peace in their city.”

The President early this year presented her administration’s master plan for a “nautical highway” as part of efforts to improve the country’s infrastructure and reduce transportation costs.

The proposed nautical highway will connect all major islands of the archipelago through a network of roll-on and roll-off (RORO) ferryboats.

She said the “ambitious but definitely vital program” would link 48 roll-on/roll-off ports across the country funded by the Official Development Assistance (ODA) with support from the private sector and the Development Bank of the Philippines.

It will include the modernization of ports and the construction of road roll-on/roll-off ferry terminal system from Mindanao to the Visayas and Luzon. “Traveling and transporting goods from or to these ports will soon be made easier, safer and cheaper,” she added.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 16, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20050610074541/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar16.htm>

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Gov't is mulling temporary suspension of oil deregulation law, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the government is mulling over the temporary suspension of the Oil Deregulation Law if the increase in the price of oil could seriously affect the prices of basic commodities.

In back-to-back radio interviews this morning, the President said that if it is found that oil companies are taking advantage of the crisis in the Middle East by jacking up the prices of their products, then the government might impose price control on oil.

When asked if she would be amenable to the temporary suspension of the law that deregulates the oil industry, the President said, "*Kung kailangan, kung masyadong nakakaapekto sa presyo ng bilihan* (If necessary, if it [oil price hike would greatly affect the prices of essential commodities].")

The President also said that in the case of Petron, one of the three major players in the oil industry, the government would not sell its 40 percent stake in the company but would ask the Petron management to be a price leader.

She explained that being a price leader, Petron should be the last to increase its prices. "*At kung maiiwasan, dapat iwasan pa nga* (And if they can avoid it, they should)," the President added.

As a price leader, Petron should also be the first to reduce its prices if the price of crude oil abroad goes down, the President said.

The President also asked the Filipino people to be patient as she explained that the price of crude oil usually goes up if there is a crisis in the Middle East because of what she described as "the spirit of suspense, the spirit of speculation."

But the President stressed that if the war is short-lived and there is a sure victor, the price of crude oil will also immediately go down as what happened during the first Gulf War.

The Philippines imports most of its crude oil requirements from the Middle East.

The President said the government is doing all it can to mitigate the effects of the oil price increase, especially on the prices of basic goods and transport fares.

She said that in the transport industry, the government has initiated several measures, including the setting up in strategic areas of fuel terminals with discounted rates for diesel fuel.

The President also called on the people not to engage in panic buying, hoarding or speculating, so as not to aggravate the situation.

Over the weekend, the President said, she has designated local executives to be the “crisis managers” in their respective localities to monitor the prices of essential commodities and to report hoarders and panic buyers.

Gov’t finding ways to ease burden on power consumers, says GMA

The government is finding ways, no matter how complicated, to ease the burden on the consumers of the impending hike in Power Purchase Adjustment (PPA).

This was revealed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today as she assured the citizenry that her administration would leave no stone unturned to alleviate the plight of the consuming public with regard to power usage and rates.

In back-to-back radio interviews, the President said the government would try to renegotiate with Malampaya to lower its charges and absorb some losses so that the National Power Corporation which buys gas from Malampaya would be able to transfer the benefits to the public through lower unit cost.

According to her, NAPOCOR, in return, will try to purchase more from Malampaya even if it means closing down several of its power plants.

The President, however, asked the public to be patient, saying finding ways and implementing them cannot be achieved overnight.

“Lahat nang ito ay sinisikap nating gawin, ginagamit natin ang lahat ng ating kaalaman at karanasan para sa ganoon ay makahanap tayo ng kahit kaunting ginhawa (We are trying to do all of these using every available resources and experience so that we could find ways to offer relief for all of us),” she said. “Pero hindi yan ibig sabihin ‘sinasabi natin ngayon, mai-implement yan bukas’ (But it doesn’t mean we could implement all these by tomorrow).”

She added that the Supreme Court ruling on the PPA, if finally realized, could also help offset whatever increases there might be in the PPA rates.

During the same interview, the President explained that there has not been any increase in basic consumption rates since 1994. It has in fact gone down by 30 centavos when the power law took into effect.

She said that during her term, she was able to bring down the price of electricity twice in the past two years by bringing down the price of debt servicing through the restructuring of NAPOCOR’s loans.

Media blitz not a sign that she has changed her mind on 2004, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reassured the nation that she is definitely not running in next year’s elections as she brushed off speculations that she is going to change her mind because of the so-called media blitz that she had undertaken lately.

In a radio interview this morning, the President said she has decided to be available to the media during the last few days because of the many uncertainties that the country is facing, among them the crisis in the Middle East and the renewed fighting in Mindanao.

The President said that if she would not talk to the people themselves through the media about what the government is doing, there would be a lot of speculations.

“At pag maraming ispekulasyon, humihina yong confidence at mas lalong nagpapanic ang taong bayan (And if there are a lot of speculations, there would be a loss of confidence and the people would panic,” the President said.

That is the reason why, the President said, that she decided to be available to the media, adding that just one or two weeks ago, she has banned even ambush interviews in Malacañang.

She said that if the situation normalizes, she would lessen her exposure to the media so that she can concentrate on attending to her official functions and meeting with government officials.

“Pero sa ngayon, ang pinakakailangang ipulong din ay ang taong bayan mismo. At magagawa ito sa pamamagitan ng media (But now the most urgent thing to do is also to meet with our countrymen and this can only be done through the media,” the President said.

Lately, the President has guested in several radio and television talk shows where she fielded questions not only from the program hosts but also from callers from all over the country.

GMA confident MILF will return to peace negotiating table

Chances are the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) will return to the negotiating table and talk peace and development in Mindanao.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today disclosed that MILF leaders have even facilitated contacts and started talking with the government’s back channel officials.

In back-to-back radio interviews, the President noted that the MILF has even called for meetings, *“kaya inaasahan ko na mayroon pang pagkakataon (which is why I expect the best out of the talks).”*

Besides this, the Philippine government has the support of Malaysia, which had hosted previous Government-MILF peace talks that led to the signing of several protocols.

Malaysia had promised to continue being the third-party facilitator so that the government and MILF peace panels could reach a final pact that would assure peace and socio-economic development in Mindanao.

“Ako ay nasisisyahan at handa na silang makipag-usap. Inaasahan nila at may mas kumpiyansa sila na hindi sila agrabiyado kung may third-party facilitator (I am glad that the MILF is ready to talk peace. They expect as they are confident that they will not be underdogs if there is a third-party facilitator),” the President earlier noted.

But she urged the MILF to shun terrorism and to surrender to authorities the criminals and terrorists they have been harboring in their lairs.

She stressed that while the government’s hands of peace are open to those who would renounce violence and terrorism, its hands of steel would continue to pursue those who wish the nation and its people ill.

She had earlier authorized local government executives to set up their own ground-level peace initiatives with the MILF.

The President likewise clarified that the conflict in Mindanao is not an all-out war, saying that the government is on an “active defense” mode in the region.

“Kung ang MILF ay hindi gagawa ng violence, hindi (aatake ang military); hindi sila magte-terrorista ay hindi rin sila hahabulin ng sundalo (If the MILF will not sow violence, the military will not attack; if the MILF does not terrorize, soldiers will not go after them),” she stressed.

The President also shrugged off claims that the fighting in Mindanao provided justification to transfer the conduct of the Balikatan military exercises in Central Mindanao.

She said it was the local government of (North) Cotabato, under Governor Emmanuel Pinol, that volunteered and asked that the Balikatan be conducted in their area.

Even when the Balikatan was conducted in Basilan, Cotabato officials had been very vocal about having the exercise in the province, she added.

She noted that the provinces of Quezon, Occidental and Oriental Mindoro, Zambales, Bataan and Pampanga have also sought the conduct of the Balikatan in their areas.

The Chief Executive categorically said the Balikatan would no longer be conducted in Sulu, because Sulu officials and the people did not want it.

The decision on where to conduct the Balikatan would be decided on by the operational units of the Philippines and the US, she said.

She stressed that the Balikatan is a regular undertaking of Philippine and American soldiers, part of the military and civic help the United States had vowed to give the Philippines.

On another note, the President called on politicians to stop saying things that would not help resolve the Mindanao issue.

“This is not the time for political grandstanding,” she said.

The government would always be for peace, but everyone would have to maintain alertness to protect the people against terrorism and criminality, she stressed.

“Ang gobyerno ay hindi titigil sa paghahanap ng kapayapaan. Ngunit hindi rin niya papayagan ang kahit na kaninong grupo na mang-istorbo sa kapayapaan at katiwasayan sa Mindanao (The government will leave no stone unturned in its search for peace. But it will not allow any group to mire the peace and growth obtaining in Mindanao),” she said.

The President earlier said the government has prepared a comprehensive plan for Mindanao.

The plan is focused on the island’s peace and development which shall go together and on the premises that peace will be obtained under the framework of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the Constitution; that there is a realization that the nation is a multi-ethnic society; and that there is no place for terrorism in the Philippines.

GMA says ‘nautical highway’ will lead to more investments, open new routes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the “nautical highway” connecting Mindanao, Visayas and Luzon will not only lower the transportation cost of goods but will also spur private initiatives to open up new routes connecting the three main islands of the country.

In a radio interview, the President said the sea-road caravan she will be lead next month will showcase how fun and enjoyable traveling in the countryside can be using the ferry and road rides.

The President explained that the sea-road caravan will use Dapitan City, Zamboanga del Norte as the jumping point for a travel that would take the participants all the way to Manila.

The President said all the participants will ride in cars and will be transported by ferry boats from Dapitan City all the way to Dumaguete City.

“From Dumaguete City to Bacolod will travel by land. From Bacolod to Iloilo we will take a ferry boat. From Iloilo to Caticlan in Aklan, we will be on the road again. Then from Caticlan to Roxas in Oriental Mindoro it will be by boat again,” the President said.

The President said that from Roxas to Calapan, Oriental Mindoro, it will be by land. Then from Calapan to Batangas City, it will be by ferry boat again. “And, finally, from Batangas City to Manila, it will be by land all the way,” the President said.

The President said that this “nautical highway” will be very helpful to merchants from Mindanao and the Visayas since once they load their cargo or goods from their point of origin to Luzon, they do not have to unload their produce or wares anymore.

“Masyadong mahal ang pasahe dahil sa loading and unloading sa mga barko sa mga pantalan. Ito, wala ng loading and unloading. Isang truck na lang ang magbibiyaha all the way from Mindanao up to Luzon (Transportation cost is high because of loading and unloading in wharfs. By using the ferry, there will be no more loading and unloading. One truck can travel all the way from Mindanao to Luzon without loading and unloading in every wharf),” the President said.

The President said she hopes that with the sea-road caravan, private investors will move into investments in wharfs and roll-on/roll-off (RO-RO) operations. She said these private investors can avail themselves of the P20-billion standby credit for such investments offered by the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP).

GMA satisfied with B.I.R. Customs performance so far

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today convened in Malacañang the Third Revenue Performance Command Conference and was satisfied with the results, confident that the government would be able to meet its revenue targets for this year.

The President listened to the performance reports of both Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs at the State Dining Room in Malacañang precisely to make sure the agencies do not have any slippage in collections.

Particularly, the President was pleased with the performance of BOC as its revenue performance exceeded all targets by about P3.4 billion or 19 percent. All major ports (Manila, Batangas, Cebu and Ninoy Aquino International Airport) exceeded their targets.

The BIR, on the other hand, lost some ground in its January targets but was able to recover in February as it was able to meet its mark.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said the government expects the slight shortfall in the BIR collection to be temporary. “On a combined basis, the overperformance of Bureau of Customs has more than compensated for the underperformance of the BIR in the month of January,” Camacho said.

Camacho said that given all the measures that were presented to the President, “we’re very confident that we’ll be able to meet the revenue targets for this year both at the BIR and the BOC.”

The BIR and the BOC are both undertaking a series of reforms in order to improve their collection performance.

The BIR reform agenda covers four major elements, namely, addressing of tax structure issues, streamlining of operations, addressing the people’s issues and improving enforcement.

Regarding tax structure issues, the government has several proposed bills pending in Congress, including the proposal for gross income taxation and the rationalization of excise tax. The other tax structure issues the government has been able to do by administrative measures include the continuing review of all tax rulings that have granted tax exemptions.

“We are doing this for all BIR rulings and to date, we have been successful in a number of measures. You may know that we have already revoked the tax exemptions of domestic airlines on their jet fuel consumption because the original basis of the grant of exemptions is no longer in place. This is the lack of availability of domestically refined jet fuel,” Camacho said.

The finance chief also noted the prevention of waiver (or exemptions) of value-added tax (VAT) on professionals. He said the BIR has been very successful in implementing this law, by working with those covered and making it as easy and convenient as possible for them to file their VAT returns.

“You may know that the BIR has launched the BIR-on-wheels program, which has gone to not only hospitals but also studios. Some of you may have been able to register using the BIR-on-wheels concept,” he added.

The government also continues to work on streamlining or making the BIR effective in its operations with the launching of the VAT relief system, computerization projects such as e-payments, e-filing, and now e-confirmation.

The third item is on people’s issues such as the proposed National Revenue Administration or Authority legislation.

“We are hoping that this will see passage in Congress. Internally, we are also implementing Executive Order 114, which will transform the BIR, in the meantime, to a more taxpayer-focused organization,” Camacho said.

Camacho also noted that there is an ongoing review of performance of BIR officials and he expects certain movements, transfer and promotions of BIR personnel based on actual performance.

“This will now become the guiding principle of people decision within the BIR,” Camacho said.

On enforcement, Camacho said the BIR has now a fifth deputy commissioner in charge of legal issues whose only job is enforcement of BIR rules and regulations.

With the Bureau of Customs, Camacho noted that the agency has been successful in fighting smuggling not only of rice but vegetables and meat products as well.

“We continue to have a 100 percent examination policy on all refrigerated vans and this has allowed us to reduce, if not totally eliminate, the influx or inflow of smuggled food and other agricultural products,” Camacho said.

“Overall, we’re happy to say that our administrative measures are making a lot of improvements both at the BIR and the Bureau of Customs and we continue to push for some of the legislative measures that we now have in front of Congress,” Camacho said.

GMA stands firm in decision not to run in 2004

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today she remains firm in her decision not to run in the 2004 election.

In back-to-back interviews with two radio stations this morning, the President said she has more peace of mind now and can make decisions and actions based on what is right and best for the greater majority.

“Noong araw, ginagawa ko rin iyon. Kahit hindi popular, gagawin ko. Pero siyempre malungkot ako, kasi nababawasan ako ng suporta. Pero ngayon, yong peace of mind naroroon. Dahil ang nalalabing criteria ay yong

ano ba ang tama (I did the same thing before. No matter how unpopular my decision or action would be, I would take it. But now, I have peace of mind. Because the only criterion left is doing what is right),” she said.

The President added that with her decision not to run for election in 2004, she need not fear politicians and political parties shunning or abandoning her or not giving her their support.

The same goes for other groups who she hopes would understand her and continue to support her administration’s programs for the remainder of her term, the President said.

The President then reiterated her agenda for the next 13 months or so: to strengthen the economy, create more jobs and encourage business activity that is unhampered by corruption and red tape in government; heal the deep wounds within society; and work for clean and honest elections in 2004.

GMA reveals moves to rid bureaucracy of graft of corruption

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said government efforts to fight corruption in the last two years have started paying off, as she revealed moves to rid some agencies of graft and corruption.

In a radio interview, the President cited the latest finding of the Hong Kong-based Political & Economic and Risk Consultancy (PERC) that showed that corruption in the Philippines had become “less serious.”

“*May ibang bansang nag-overtake na sa atin sa ranking ng corruption* (Other nations have overtaken us in the corruption rankings),” she said.

She added that mechanisms are being put in place to further strengthen the campaign to rid the bureaucracy of corrupt people and corrupt practices.

She said the government would put up at least two units — one that would have wide-ranging tasks and the other, a smaller one — to carry out anti-corrupt practices programs.

“*Sisimulan natin doon sa mga ahensiya na gusto nating maging showcase ng fight against graft and corruption* (We will start with agencies we want to be showcases of our anti-corruption campaign),” she stressed, referring to the Bureau of Internal Revenue, among others.

Earlier, the PERC classified the Philippines as among the countries in Asia — along with Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand —where “corruption is becoming less serious” as against countries that are “most corrupt.”

PERC coordinates a team of researchers and analysts in the ASEAN countries, Greater China and South Korea. Some of the world’s leading corporations and financial institutions regularly use PERC’s services to assess key trends and critical issues shaping the region, to identify growth opportunities, and to develop effective strategies for capitalizing on these opportunities.

GMA discloses near opening of high-impact transport projects

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said a number of government high-impact transport projects are expected to be completed soon, thus facilitating the speedy and cheaper movement of people and goods.

In a radio interview, the President said she was excited over the near launching of the nation’s “nautical highway” that is on its final stages and would subsequently introduce the creation of many sea routes between Luzon and Mindanao.

She said the government's roll-on roll-off (RO-RO) program in the nautical highway is expected to lessen cargo costs, spawning lesser costs of agricultural and industrial goods being traded throughout the country.

A RO-RO caravan covering key ports in Mindanao and the Visayas would showcase the efficacy and efficiency of the nautical highway, she added.

The President also disclosed the near completion and opening of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) No. 2.

The rail system would run from Claro M. Recto in Manila to Santolan in Pasig City connecting through Aurora Blvd. and Marcos Highway.

"Yun ay isang malaking makakabigay ng ginhawa sa ating mga commuters (The rail system will greatly ease the burdens of our commuters)," she said.

"Kung maraming makakasakay duon, mababawasan yung kailangang magkotse. At mababawasan ang ating traffic (If many people take the LRT, the number of those who drive cars will decrease and it will help ease traffic)," she added.

The President likewise said that she has directed transport officials to prioritize the interconnection of existing and proposed mass rail transit and LRT lines to provide for one rail system in Metro Manila.

She disclosed plans to create a Mega Manila to include the areas of Clark and Subic to the north and the CALABARZON (Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon) area and Batangas Port to the south.

This entails the construction of separate rail systems to Clark and Subic and to the CALABARZON area. *"Gusto nating simulan (We want to start)"* the projects, she said.

The Chief Executive added that another big-ticket transport project in the works is the opening of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3.

She said there are positive developments on the legal issues surrounding the airport terminal.

Once the issues have been resolved, the airport terminal would be opened, she added.

"In the meantime, yung mga physical requirements ay ginagawa dahil hindi pa lahat ng physical requirements pata magbukas ay nariyan na (We are attending to the completion of the physical requirements)," she said.

Cimatu reassures safety of OFWs in Middle East

Ambassador Roy Cimatu, head of the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT), today assured the nation that preparations to ensure the welfare and safety of the 1.4 million Filipinos in the Persian Gulf are in place, as tell tale signs of a US-led attack on Iraq becomes clear.

At the same time, Cimatu said the government would still maintain diplomatic relations with all Middle East countries, including Iraq, hosting the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Cimatu said the Philippine ambassadors and charge d'affaires in 14 countries in the Middle East have reported daily and assured the President and the MEPT that "all their plans are in place."

"I join you and other Filipinos for prayers and a miracle for a last-minute diplomatic solution that should avert war. Nevertheless, if war happens in the next several days or so, the Philippine government assures the Filipino people that all our preparations in the Middle East for our 1.4 million Filipinos are in place," Cimatu said.

Cimatu said he is leaving for Kuwait Tuesday (March 18) to personally oversee the preparations and implementation of the plans “to put out of harm’s way all the 1.4 million Filipinos in the Middle East.”

Cimatu would be flying to Riyadh and motor to the Kuwaiti border (at Nuwaiseeb) where the relocation site for Filipinos in Kuwait is located. From there, Cimatu said he would proceed further to Kuwait City.

“We just hope that nobody gets hurt and no unnecessary dislocation of their (OFWs) employment will take place and at the same time, we will still maintain all the diplomatic relations with all of those countries hosting these 1.4 million Filipinos,” he said.

Cimatu admitted that such mission would not be easy as there are risks and uncertainties. “But I would like to assure you, as the chairman of the Committee, I will do my best and make a report to the Filipino people that we have done our best in putting out of harms, way all these 1.4 million Filipinos in the Middle East,” he said.

Cimatu noted that the Philippine embassy officials in Baghdad have already moved out and that only four Filipino embassy caretakers have remained.

He noted that there are still at least seven Filipinas married to Iraqi nationals who opted to stay in the Iraqi capital.

Cimatu noted that Kuwait earlier pardoned nine OFWs as part of the 20 Filipino prisoners the Emir of Kuwait had pledged to pardon when President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo visited Kuwait last February.

The relocation site at Nuwaiseeb is complete with all amenities and facilities, including provisions for tents, where OFWs can be relocated in the event of a war in the Gulf.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 17, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20080517151127/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar17.htm>

The President's Day: March 18, 2003

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- **Gov't ready to keep stability and safety of OFWs, GMA reassures nation**
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GMA allays fears of outbreak of killer pneumonia in RP

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today allayed fears over the possible outbreak of the killer pneumonia, known as severe acute respiratory syndrome or SARS, in the country, saying the Department of Health is on the alert and is taking all the necessary preventive measures.

In a radio interview this morning, the President said it is good to note that the situation in the Philippines is not as serious compared to other Southeast Asian countries.

“Ganun pa man ang Department of Health ay nakita n’yo alerto na para sa ano mang suspetyosong kaso and it will not relax its guard (The Department of Health, though, as you can see, is on the alert for any suspicious case and it will not relax its guard),” the President said.

The President stressed that action plans have been put into place, including an information campaign about the disease itself, particularly its symptoms, and precautionary measures against it.

“Ang publiko ay dapat hindi na mi-mislead o natatakot sa tsismis. Kaalaman ang ating pinakamabuting sandata (The public should not be misled by rumors. Information is our best weapon against it),” the President said.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit declared Monday that the only known Filipino contact is not a SARS case and was already discharged from hospital confinement.

Dayrit said the DOH had located last March 15 a contact of a known SARS case, a 43 year-old Filipino businessman who came home from Hanoi in March 11.

Up to the time he was discharged yesterday, the Filipino has not manifested any signs of SARS, such as fever of more than 38 degrees Celsius, sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, according to Dayrit. He added that the incubation period is from 4-6 days.

Dayrit advised the public to remain calm in the face of the potential spread of the mysterious pneumonia-type disease. He said DOH is working closely with international agencies like the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control.

The DOH is also working with the country’s labor attaches abroad to prevent the spread of the infection and to identify, isolate and treat possible cases, Dayrit said.

He said that persons who do not have a history of travel to China and Hong Kong in February and March or who were not exposed (meaning lived with, cared for, or worked closely with) to known SARS cases need not worry.

“If you had contact with a known case or visited hospitals in the above places but did not develop respiratory signs and symptoms like fever, body weakness, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath within two weeks, you do not have to worry,” Dayrit said.

GMA calls for moratorium in politics in the midst of uncertainties here and abroad

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today renewed her call for a moratorium in politics and for the people to be united in the midst of uncertainties both here and abroad.

In her remarks at the signing of the memorandum of agreement (MOA) setting up the P500 million Mindanao Peace and Development Fund (MPDF) in Malacañang this morning, the President said the government will undertake all options practicable “to alleviate the transient difficulties and anxieties of our people.”

Saying that Filipinos here and abroad are safe, the President, nevertheless, asked everyone to be calm and vigilant.

“Let every citizen be each other’s keeper. And let’s have unity in crisis. Let there be a moratorium on partisan politics as we all focus our hearts and energies to the tasks at hand,” the President said.

This is something that the Mindanao congressmen have done in setting up the MPDF, the President said. “And I hope all our political leaders will do this for the country in this time of world crisis,” she added.

The President also thanked the Mindanao congressmen, particularly their leader, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., for initiating the setting up of the MPDF and for “sharing the responsibility of restoring peace and confidence, and reawakening our conflict-affected communities to a new era of hope.”

“Mindanao cries out for peace and development, and security from terrorism. Today, we are taking a big step forward in answer to that cry,” the President said.

The President said that on top of the P500 million set aside for the development and security of Mindanao, what is more important is the determination to see the end of the Filipinos fighting Filipinos.

She said that the MPDF would be jointly funded by the House of Representatives and the Executive Department. One half of the fund, or P250 million, will come from the congressional allocation for fiscal year 2003 of the 50 congressmen from Mindanao or P5 million from each one of them.

The other half, or P250 million, will come from the Executive Department.

Under the MOA, each of the 50 congressional districts in Mindanao will receive P10 million from the MPDF to be used solely for peace and order, security and development of their districts.

The MOA on the fund was signed by Speaker de Venecia and Congressman J. Mayo Almario, chairman of the House committee for Mindanao affairs, on behalf of the House of Representatives.

Those who signed on behalf of the Executive Department were Secretary Emilia Boncodin of the Department of Budget and Management, Secretary Angelo Reyes of the Department of National Defense, Secretary Jose Lina of the Department of Interior and Local Government, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), and Gen. Dionisio Santiago, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

In signing the MOA, officials said that recent developments in Mindanao necessitate a comprehensive government policy to address the peace and order problem in the area.

In the MOA, the congressmen from Mindanao also expressed “their unconditional support” to the administration in its fight against terrorism and lawlessness in Mindanao.

In her remarks, the President called on the leadership of the PNP and the AFP to recommend to the representatives of each congressional district in Mindanao their plan of action and the kind of assistance that they need to combat lawlessness and terrorism in Mindanao.

Gov’t ready to keep stability and safety of OFWs, GMA reassures nation

As a US-led attack on Iraq looms, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reassured the nation that the government is prepared to keep the stability of the nation as well as protect its overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

At the same time, the President called on all Filipinos to set aside partisanship and focus all energy in overcoming the present crisis.

“We’re prepared. We’ve been preparing for a long time,” the President said in a statement. “We’ve firmed up the security law enforcement and socio-economic contingency measures to protect the public interest. Most of these are already on stream.”

The President said the nation has enough oil, rice and essential public needs.

She said that she has mobilized the whole government machinery, including the local governments, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

The President also called on the private sector, civil society and indeed, all citizens to cooperate and coordinate with the AFP and PNP in safeguarding communities.

“We must be pro-active against collateral terrorist attacks,” she said.

The President also announced that she would meet the National Security Council this afternoon “to firm up political consensus to meet a possible outbreak of hostilities” in the Middle East.

While the government does not see a serious threat to OFWs, the President said she has nevertheless ordered the Department of Foreign Affairs to take necessary measures, along with the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT) “to ensure the safety of our nationals, and at the same time, preserve diplomatic normalcy as much as possible.”

“I’m assuring all Filipino families and their loved ones that your government will take care of our overseas Filipinos,” the President said.

The President called on the OFWs in Middle East to keep in touch with the Philippine embassies, which will help them and provide them with the information they need.

“Let’s be calm but vigilant and alert. Every Filipino must be responsible for his or her fellow human being. Setting aside partisanship, let’s focus our hands and energies to the task at hand. Together and united, we shall overcome this crisis,” the President said.

Statement of the President on the Iraqi crisis

Up to this time, peace remains the best option.

We keep our hopes high that the precarious situation can be resolved by a consensus of the international community; and I pray that Saddam Hussein will take all steps to avert war and pave the way for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

While the nations of the world are sorting out the present crisis, we must join hands in working for the stability and well-being of our nation.

We are prepared. We have been preparing for a long time. I met with the Cabinet this morning. We firmed up the security, law enforcement and socioeconomic contingency measures to protect the public interest. Most of these are already on stream. We have more than enough oil, rice and essential public needs.

We have mobilized the whole machinery, including the local governments, the AFP and the PNP. I call on the private sector, civil society, and indeed all our citizens to cooperate and coordinate with them in safeguarding our communities. We must be proactive against collateral terrorist attacks.

I will meet the National Security Council this afternoon to firm up our political consensus to meet a possible outbreak of hostilities.

While we do not see a serious threat to our overseas workers, I have directed the Department of Foreign Affairs to take the necessary measures together with the Middle East Preparedness Team to ensure the safety of our nationals and at the same time, preserve diplomatic normalcy as much as possible. I am assuring all Filipino families and their loved ones that your government will take care of them.

To our countrymen in the Middle East, keep in touch with our embassies, they are there to help you and provide you the information you need.

Let us be calm but vigilant and alert. Every Filipino must be responsible for his fellow human being.

Setting aside partisanship, let us focus our hearts and energies to the tasks at hand. Together and united, we shall overcome this crisis.

GMA outlines peace policy components for Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today outlined the components of her administration's peace policy for Mindanao, namely, active defense, police vigilance, a high level of community alertness and pre-emptive diplomacy.

In remarks during the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement for Mindanao Peace and Development Fund (MPDF) this morning, the President thanked Congress for its very strong national and local political consensus to support measures incorporated in the peace policy for Southern Philippines.

The President said active defense would hopefully open a window of safety that would encourage the people to go home to their places of origin where they could have free reign on their livelihood and daily chores.

"The AFP is in a posture of active defense while a line for peace negotiations remains open," the President said.

The President said the military and police would continue to secure the civilian population to keep the highways of trade open and to check movements of armed groups posing a direct threat to law and order.

In terms of pre-emptive diplomacy, the President said peace negotiations should be pursued with the facilitation and assistance of a third party facilitator in order to achieve a comprehensive and durable settlement of the conflict in line with the Constitution.

“I thank the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) for their offer to participate in a ceasefire mechanism backed up by local peace initiatives which I have encouraged on the part of local government executives to bring the scatter dissident militias back to the fold of the community,” the President said.

She said there should be a confluence of peace driven by the entire government in partnership with the people. “Peace for the farmers and the workers so that they can produce their sustenance and earn their keep, peace for the teachers and pupils in the hinterlands, peace for the fisherfolk and seafarers who ply their trade across our waters,” the President said.

The President stressed, however, that it must be peace that “respects our nation’s sovereignty and territory and a peace that respects the right of civilians to feeling secure.”

GMA urges multi-ethnic unity to gain national peace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called for a “deep sense of ethnic neighborhood” and for unity in diversity, saying this is a virtue that can instill peaceful co-existence among Filipinos and peace in the nation.

In a speech during the signing of the memorandum of agreement for Mindanao Peace and Development Fund (MDPF) in Malacañang, the President stressed that every Filipino must realize that he belongs to a society that is a multi-ethnic society.

“(This multi-ethnic society) should be founded on social justice for all and the institutionalized accommodation of cultural traditions,” she said.

She noted the “rich and varied heritage” of Filipinos.

But she stressed that “we must come to terms with Mindanaons as a people of the Philippines.”

“Otherwise, we will never attain our full promise as a nation. We will never attain the strong Republic that we desire to be,” the President said.

In an earlier interview, the President said the attainment of peace and development in Mindanao remained her government’s priority.

But peace with any armed group should fall under the framework of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and the Constitution of the country, she said.

Further, peace would prevail when communities say “no to terrorism” and continue to be alert to thwart, if not crush, terrorists and those who commit criminality and violence.

She stressed that the government maintained a policy of peace in Mindanao. “But we also have to enforce the law,” she added.

GMA orders NBI to pursue without letup its probe on pyramiding schemes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to relentlessly pursue its investigation of the pyramid scam cases and assist their victims.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco, in a briefing right after a Cabinet meeting in Malacañang, said that the President issued the order to the NBI to ease the pain of hapless victims, including soldiers and policemen, who had invested their meager savings, including retirement benefits, in the pyramiding schemes.

“Awang-awa siya doon sa mga nabiktima lalo dun sa mga members of the military in the schemes and police na nag-loan pa sa Armed Forces of the Philippines Savings and Loan Association Inc. (AFPSLAI),” she said.

“We take inspiration from the instruction of the President to pursue these cases relentlessly because the victims are mostly poor people who were duped to part with their hard-earned money,” Wycoco said.

Wycoco said the NBI is currently investigating 12 to 13 companies that are suspected of “get-rich-quick, too-good-to-be-true” schemes. He declined to name these companies as the NBI is still undertaking surveillance on them.

He said aside from Multitel, there are still eight companies facing cases of estafa, violations of Securities and Exchange Regulations Code and bouncing checks law.

Among these companies are Mateo Management Group (MMG), Ma. Teresa Santos Trading, Tibayan Group Investment Co. Inc., Asia-Pacific Alliance Management, Kimberly Management/Eurocom Business Center, Philsuisse Financial Services and Consultancy and ICS Export, Inc.

Wycoco said filing of cases against these companies might not be enough. “The whole machinery of government must work together: law enforcement, prosecution, the courts, the financial arm, so that appropriate remedies can be applied,” he said.

Wycoco also called on the media to inform the people about the activities of these groups so that they will not fall prey to their schemes.

NSC supports continued efforts at diplomatic solution to the U.S.-Iraq standoff

The National Security Council (NSC) today adopted three recommendations of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in connection with the inevitable US-led attack on Iraq within the next few hours.

In a three-hour meeting that started at 3 p.m. in Malacañang, the NSC agreed to:

- Express support for continued efforts at one last chance for diplomatic resolution to the Iraqi crisis;
- Give political and moral support to these efforts; and
- Contribute to the humanitarian response in a post-conflict scenario. This includes the provision of medical, civic and peacekeeping forces.

The NSC also called for the further review by the DFA of the question on the use of Philippine air space and seaports by the US forces, to see whether this is consistent with the Constitution and the country’s national interest.

During the meeting, the NSC noted the preparations made by the executive branch to meet any eventuality of a conflict in the Middle East.

The NSC cited the offices of primary responsibility and the agencies under the Iraq crisis management committee.

The council also noted efforts of the Philippine National Police (PNP) to prevent weapons of mass destructions from finding its way to the hands of local terrorists, and the bid of authorities to secure vital installations.

The NSC likewise cited the mobilization of local government units, down to the barangay level, for anti-crime and anti-terrorist action, and the setting up of local crisis management teams under the local executives.

Meanwhile, the Department of Energy reported that the Dubai oil price fell by about a dollar from \$29.80 to a little above \$28.

This was almost the same situation that happened in the last Gulf war where prices rose during the times of tension and then decreased when the resolution of the conflict became clear.

The NSC noted that the country has a 62-day in-country inventory of oil and petroleum products, the highest level in ten years.

On the report of the Department of Agriculture, the NSC noted the 95-day inventory of rice, and the stable food supply in terms of palay, meat eggs, fish, cooking oil and sugar.

The Department of Trade and Industry reported that the prices have remained very stable, and that the inventory level of primary goods has remained comfortable amid calls for the prompt prosecution of hoarders, price manipulators and profiteers.

The Department of Finance reported about the foreign exchange volatility and the order to the DOJ to begin investigating foreign exchange speculators.

During the meeting, the NSC also noted the official statement by the President on the Iraqi crisis issued this morning and adopted it as among the consensus items agreed by the NSC.

Among those who attended the NSC meeting were former President Corazon Aquino, Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr., Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Senators Ramon Magsaysay, Manuel Villar, Loren Legarda, Tito Sotto and Robert Barbers, Congressmen Nephthali Gonzales, Apolinario Lozada, Prospero Pichay, Gerry Salappudin, Agapito Aquino and Raul Gonzales.

Cabinet members who attended the NSC meeting included Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Energy Secretary Vince Perez, Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, and Ambassador Roy Cimatu, head of the Middle East Preparedness Team.

Statement of National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez on the NSC meeting

The National Security Council has determined that it is in the national interest of the Philippines to provide political and moral support to efforts to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.

The NSC adopted the call of former President Corazon Aquino for all national leaders to unite on this issue.

The NSC expressed satisfaction over the preparations of the government to ensure the safety and welfare of Filipinos here and overseas.

The NSC was reassured by the Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that the nation is prepared, and has been prepared for a long time, to meet the security, law enforcement and socioeconomic challenges attendant to the crisis. The Council noted with satisfaction the contingency plans of the Iraq Crisis Management Team and the Middle East Preparedness Team.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 18, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041415/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar18.htm>

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- **NSC okays use of emergency powers by GMA if price of oil would affect prices of basic items**
- **Gov't to charge dollar hoarders, speculators with economic sabotage, says GMA**
- **PNP gives tips on how to counter terrorism, what to do in case of bomb threats**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA lauds OWWA-PNB-Globe linkage to put up Tele-Ugnayan for Mideast-based OFWs, families**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **DILG bares program of action to ensure public security**
- **Gov't assures nation of adequate food supply in case of war in Middle East**

GMA urges people, police to be extra vigilant against terrorists

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the nation to be extra vigilant against terrorists, particularly at this time of global crisis over the disarming of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

She also called on the entire police force all over the country to be "very, very visible in possible terrorist target areas."

In a radio interview this morning, the President said the police and the people themselves should exercise internal vigilance against terrorism.

At the same time, the President said, she will continue to pray "until zero hour" that war in the Gulf will be averted and peace will prevail.

Just hours after United States President George W. Bush issued a 48-hour ultimatum to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to go into exile or face war, the President appealed to the people to stay calm but be vigilant and alert.

She also called on the people to close ranks and remain united in the face of the global crisis. Paraphrasing US President John F. Kennedy during his inaugural address on January 20, 1961, the President said: "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

In today's radio interview, the President said terrorism remains the biggest threat all over the world, recalling the terrorist bombing in Bali, Indonesia, which claimed scores of innocent people in that largely Muslim country.

Bali, she added, was the worst terrorist attack after the Sept. 11, 2001 attack in the United States where thousands of people died.

The President stressed, however, that the No. 1 concern of the government are the close to 1.5 million overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East.

She said the efforts of her administration are focused on the safety and welfare of these OFWs.

NSC okays use of emergency powers by GMA if price of oil would affect prices of basic items

The National Security Council (NSC) has allowed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to resort to emergency powers if the price of petroleum products would continue to rise and affect the prices of basic commodities.

“Doon sa bagay na yon walang debate, sang-ayon sila (On that particular issue, there was no debate, they all agreed,” the President replied when asked if the issue of emergency powers was discussed in yesterday’s NSC meeting in Malacañang.

The President said that on other issues, there was no overwhelming consensus among the participants that included former President Corazon Aquino, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. and other leaders of Congress and members of the Cabinet.

Earlier, in a separate interview, the President said that the government would temporarily lift the implementation of the Oil Deregulation Law if the price of oil would adversely affect the prices of basic commodities.

But in this morning’s interview, the President allayed fears of a major economic dislocation that would be brought about by the impending war in the Middle East.

Although she admitted that there would be some adjustments, the President said the war would not result in a permanent damage to the country’s economy “because our economic fundamentals are strong.”

She said that yesterday, after US President George W. Bush issued the 48-hour ultimatum against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, stock markets all over the world perked up and the price of crude oil in the world market actually declined.

But despite these encouraging signs, the President assured the nation that all contingency plans for the Filipino people, here and abroad, have already been in place.

In fact, the President said, the country has now the highest inventory of oil and rice and the price of essential commodities have so far been stable.

“Kaya nanawagan ako sa taong bayan na huwag maniniwala sa mga tsismis tungkol sa pagkukulang(That is why, I call on our people not to believe on rumors of a shortage),” the President said.

Gov’t to charge dollar hoarders, speculators with economic sabotage, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today warned dollar speculators and hoarders that they will be charged with economic sabotage if they would continue with their activities that have resulted in the temporary depreciation of the peso.

In a radio interview, the President said she has already ordered Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong to work on the preliminary investigation against individuals and companies suspected of resorting to speculations and hoarding of US dollars.

The President said that economic sabotage is a criminal offense and individuals found to engage in this kind of criminal activity would be prosecuted.

“Kaya nagbibigay ako sa kanila ng babala, kung ayaw nilang ituloy itong charges sa kanila, ibenta nila yong mga binili nilang dolyar na sobra sa kanilang pangangailangan (That is why I am warning them, if they don’t want us to pursue the charges against them, then they should sell the dollars that they have overbought),” the President stressed.

The President said that for companies or institutions that have engaged in dollar hoarding, their treasurers or other officials would be charged with economic sabotage.

According to the President, the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP) has a list of individuals or firms that have been engaged in overbuying of US dollars.

But the BSP, the President said, can only impose administrative sanctions against those suspected of hoarding dollars but it is the Department of Justice that can charge them in courts.

So, whatever initial findings of the BSP can be used by the DOJ in pursuing the charges of economic sabotage against dollar speculators and hoarders, the President said.

PNP gives tips on how to counter terrorism, what to do in case of bomb threats

The Philippine National Police (PNP), in response to instructions from Malacañang, released to the public today leaflets calling on the people to be vigilant against terrorism.

The leaflets, produced by the Directorate for Police Community Relations of the PNP headquarters in Camp Crame, gives advice on what the citizens can do in case of bombing attacks and bomb threats.

The PNP handout gives the citizenry tips on bomb detection and gives advice on what objects to watch out for. It also lists down security measures to be implemented and observed in public places and business establishments.

The PNP urges the people to stay calm and take proper precautions at home and at work. It urges them to report bomb threats and bombing incidents by calling 117 on the telephone.

“Organize monitoring groups in your neighborhood and in your workplace,” the PNP says, pointing out that as responsible citizens “we need to build a united front against criminality and terrorism.”

Neutralize rumors or unverified reports through text messages by deleting them, not sending them forward to other people, the PNP advises owners of cellular phones.

Get back to normal routine as soon as possible, the PNP further advises, adding that “we should not allow ourselves to be cowed into fear but instead lead our lives normally.”

The PNP also gives tips on what to watch out for: strange, unusual, unattended baggage, bags, boxes or parcels; a ticking sound inside bags or packages; presence of electric wires and batteries where they should not be.

Business establishments are advised to strictly implement the inspection procedures. When suspected bombs are noted, security personnel or employees should immediately contact the proper authorities.

Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye

The President has decided to postpone her state visit to Spain and official visits to Germany and the Holy See.

The host governments has been informed of the President’s decision and consultations with the host governments will be held to make arrangements for the President to visit the three countries at a later date.

Developments in the world compel the President to make this decision. These developments require the President to remain in the Philippines for the time being.

The President deeply appreciates the invitations of Spain, Germany and the Holy See to visit and looks forward to pushing through with these visits at a later date.

GMA lauds OWWA-PNB-Globe linkage to put up Tele-Ugnayan for Mideast-based OFWs, families

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today took another step to assure the welfare and safety of Filipino expatriates in the Middle East as she inspected communication facilities set up to provide free phone calls between overseas Filipino workers (OFW) in the Gulf and their families.

The President cited the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Philippine National Bank (PNB) and Globe Telecommunications for joining hands to carry out the program dubbed "PNB Tele-Ugnayan: Rapid Connect sa Middle East."

After a briefing on the situation of OFWs in the Middle East from OWWA officials, the President made a call to Kuwait and was linked with Ambassador Bayani Mangibin.

She expressed satisfaction over preparations the embassy personnel in Kuwait and all over the Middle East have been doing to see to the well-being of Filipinos in the area, in the event a US-Iraq conflict broke out.

She told Mangibin the welfare of OFWs in Kuwait "*ang ating pangunahing atensiyon ngayon* (is the government's priority focus of attention in these times)."

In an earlier Middle East map review at the OWWA office, the President pointed out Kuwait's proximity to Iraq.

She also appreciated Mangibin's short but positive briefing on the situation of OFWs in Kuwait. "Good... good, so normal pa rin ang buhay diyari (so life there continues normally)," she said over the Tele-Ugnayan line.

She added that Middle East Preparedness Team chief ambassador Roy Cimatu would be "leaving today to go (to Kuwait). He'll be the last man out if ever."

Overheard during the Tele-Ugnayan was Mangibin's response that thanked the President for her full support to the embassy staff and the OFWs in Kuwait.

"Lahat kami, itong mga OFWs dito at mga staff ng Philippine Embassy ay lalong nagkakaroon ng lakas ng loob sa ganitong klaseng pagsuporta ninyo sa amin, Madam," Mangibin said.

During the same visit, the President also talked to a Filipino OFW in Kuwait and took time to confer with relatives of OFWs worldwide, particularly those based in the Gulf, who were transacting business at the OWWA main office in Pasay City.

OWWA chief Virgilio Angelo said the Tele-Ugnayan would facilitate the easy, fast and free phone links between OFWs in the Gulf and their loved ones in the Philippines.

This would provide "a relevant and timely service to our OFWs and their families at this most crucial time," Angelo said.

With PNB and OWWA in the project is Globe which offered cellular phones and computers with Internet capability for video-conferencing.

Angelo said Tele-Ugnayan has made available two communication networks, both local and overseas.

Cellular phone booths have been put in place at the OWWA main office along F.B. Harrison in Pasay City and in 11 of its regional offices nationwide.

Phone links could be made in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and other countries that have large concentrations of Filipinos likely to be affected by the imminent war in Iraq.

The calls, OWWA officials said, may be facilitated through PNB staff here and in the concerned Middle East countries.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Crisis Preparedness

The economy will undergo minor adjustments, but there will be no lingering or permanent damage. Our economic fundamentals are sound. The stock market worldwide is perking up. Oil prices are dropping steadily.

Nevertheless, our contingency plans to protect the interest of the people have been in place for sometime now. We have the highest oil and rice inventories in a decade. Prices of prime commodities are stable. There is no need for grave concern. Do not believe rumors of shortages.

SARS

Action plans are under way. These include an information campaign about the disease itself, its symptoms, and things that should be done to avoid it. The public must not be misled or frightened by rumors. Knowledge is our best weapon.

Peace Talks

We welcome the call of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to push through with the peace negotiations. We are prepared for peace at all times but we are just as prepared to enforce law and order and protect our communities from lawbreakers. We shall open the field for peacemakers, but we shall not yield an inch of ground to terrorists.

DILG bares program of action to ensure public security

Taking a cue from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's call for a total community approach and paradigm shift in fighting lawlessness, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) presented in a Cabinet meeting yesterday a program designed to build a safe Philippines and develop a culture of peace.

Founded on the belief that peace and order, security and safety are public goods that must be developed, promoted and protected by government and the citizenry, the program proposes guides to action to ensure public security.

It exhorts governors, city and municipal mayors and punong barangays to assume the role of anti-crime czars, crisis managers and information czars as discussed during the President's Command Conference last March 15 with the police, the military and LGU officials.

As anti-crime czars, governors, mayors and punong barangays will take the lead in the fight against street crimes, terrorism, and other forms of lawless violence. They will also have to revitalize the Peace and Order Councils, and activate, train and mobilize Barangay Tanods.

The governors, city and municipal mayors, through their respective Peace and Order Councils, shall update and revise their respective Integrated Community Public Safety Plans and ensure that all punong barangays maintain and regularly update the list of barangay residents.

The punong barangays shall organize neighborhood watch groups to assist the police and the military in intelligence gathering, and in monitoring and reporting of suspicious persons, suspicious movements and suspicious materials in all public places and vital installations.

As crisis managers, the same officials shall ensure the safety of food, medicines, and other necessities and establish evacuation centers for victims of terrorism.

They will also have to:

- Direct local health officers to identify, isolate, quarantine and treat victims or carriers of infectious diseases brought about by exposure to any chemical, radiological or biological agent;
- Impose stricter security measures in public places and vital installations;
- Cause the apprehension and aid in the prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators;
- Establish checkpoints in strategic areas when necessary;
- Impose curfew hours and other restrictions on mobility whenever warranted and on a case to case basis; and
- Reach out to all sectors of the community to foster unity and cooperation and force a united front against terrorism and other forms of lawless violence through peace covenants.

As information czars, local government officials will act as spokesperson to inform the constituents of the local and national security situation and immediately dispel rumors and clarify misleading information.

They will also have to assure the public that the government is doing its best to address the crisis, urge them to be vigilant and safety conscious.

As a final duty, the same officials will have to organize barangay assemblies, mobilize NGOs and other sectors of the locality as mechanisms to disseminate information on local and national security situation.

During the same Cabinet meeting, DILG Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. revealed that a total of 800 barangay tanods from 40,000 barangays are slated to be trained this year.

He also said that the Trainer's Training for NCR, Luzon and Mindanao Clusters has already been completed with the Visayas Cluster scheduled for March 21.

Gov't assures nation of adequate food supply in case of war in Middle East

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has assured the Filipino people that the country has adequate food supply even if the war in Iraq would last for months.

During last Tuesday's meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) in Malacañang, Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo unveiled his department's Food Security Plan in the event of a war in Iraq that assures not only food adequacy but also access of the people to food supply.

The DA said the government will maintain at least a 90-day supply of rice for the next six months.

In its projection for the first semester of this year, the DA said that rice inventory as of January 1, 2003 was 2.52 million metric tons (MMT), which is equivalent to 94 days supply.

The DA estimates domestic production for the first semester to be at 3.77 MMT, which is equivalent to 143 days supply.

In addition to rice importations to be made by the National Food Authority (NFA) and food organizations, the total rice supply for the first semester would be about 7.152 MMT, which is good for 271 days supply.

With the expected domestic consumption of 4.778 MMT for the first semester, there would still be a net inventory of 2.38 MMT, which is equivalent to 90 days supply, the DA said.

The DA said that the expected shortfall in corn due to production losses in Mindanao as a result of the recent fighting, would be remedied by the importation of some 459,000 metric tons from abroad, on top of the 600,000 MT of feed wheat importation from India.

The DA food security plan also assured a four to five months supply for meat, eggs, and fish, while fish production would be entering its peak for the next four months.

On cooking oil, the DA has assured a two-months supply, which could be replenished on a monthly basis.

There will be no shortage of sugar, the DA said, adding that the country has the highest production in 30 years, with 2 million metric tons produced as against domestic consumption of only 1.95 MMT.

In its report to the NSC, the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) have pledged to work, on best effort basis, in stabilizing the price of essential commodities, especially food products.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 19, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041427/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar19.htm>

The President's Day: March 20, 2003

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- **GMA orders AFP, PNP, local officials to be prepared for collateral terrorist attacks**
- **RP has joined 'coalition of the willing' but won't send combat troops to war zone, says GMA**
- **GMA sees no need for emergency powers 'at the moment'**
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- **GMA wants special courts to handle pyramid cases**

GMA orders AFP, PNP, local officials to be prepared for collateral terrorist attacks

BAGUIO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night directed the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police and local officials to be prepared for collateral terrorist attacks that may be triggered by the military confrontation in Iraq.

During a command conference here with the AFP, PNP and local government officials of Region 1 (Ilocos) and the Cordillera Administrative Region, the President stressed that the entire government must be prepared with whatever contingency may occur in the country after US President George Bush gave Saddam Hussein a 48-deadline to leave Iraq or face military action.

“The most important thing to prepare for is the welfare of our OFWs in the Middle East, and the second thing that we have to take care of would-be collateral terrorist attacks,” the President said.

“During this time, we need crisis managers, information champions for economic stability and public welfare and we need anti-crime czars,” she said.

The President told the local executives to be especially conscious of these functions and to exercise them especially during these times.

As crisis managers, the President said the local executives are in charge of monitoring all kinds of social and economic problems in this time of crisis.

“For instance, you are in charge of monitoring the prices of prime commodities; you are in charge of accosting hoarders and profiteers,” she said.

“And we expect you to set up, together with the police and sometimes the military, depending on the area, the contingency plans for disaster, all possible terrorist events, including the lines of coordination with the national government agencies,” the President added.

The second function that the local executives must exercise during these difficult times is to be information champions for economic stability and welfare.

“You are expected to disseminate information – helpful and important information on probably unfolding events and developments,” she said.

The President said the local executives are also expected to preempt rumors and disinformation because there will be so much of these even as there is so much of these going on even now.

“And these rumors and disinformation engender a climate of uncertainty and fear,” she said, encouraging the local executives to be the bastion of stability and confidence. “You will be the one to give the truth to our people,” she said.

The President asked the local officials to be not only advocates of government programs but also the spokespersons for prudence and sobriety to keep people sober and prudent at this time.

As anti-crime czars, the President urged the local executives, under the Local Government Code, to spearhead the fight against criminality, including street crimes.

“As deputies of the National Police Commission, the local executives exercise supervision and control over the police,” she said, stressing that they should be vanguards against petty criminals preying on ordinary people.

“And here the police are instructed to work with you, to report to you, take instructions from you in drafting community cooperation for law enforcement,” the President said.

In an ambush interview later, the President told members of the Malacañang Press Corps that she was very, very gratified about the level of preparedness of Region 1 and the Cordilleras.

With the President were Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Presidential Management Staff Chief Silvestre Afable, Jr. and the governors of Region 1 headed by La Union Governor Victor Ortega, who is Region 1 Peace and Order Council Chairman, and the governors of the Cordilleras and the mayors and other local officials of both regions.

Also present were the top military and police officers of the country and the two regions.

RP has joined ‘coalition of the willing’ but won’t send combat troops to war zone, says GMA

BAGUIO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the nation that the government would not be deploying combat troops to the Middle East even as she said that the Philippines has sided with the United States in its efforts to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.

In her speech this morning at the commencement exercises of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), the President said that as part of the US-led “coalition of the willing,” the Philippines is giving political and moral support for actions that would eventually disarm Iraq of her weapons of terror.

“We are part of a long standing security alliance. We are part of the global coalition against terrorism. These relationships are vital to our national interest,” the President said.

The President said that our alliance with the US in the global fight against terrorism “bear a significance to this war and to our combined efforts to fight terrorism in the Philippines as well as in the region.”

She said that the Philippines is committed to extend peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance in Iraq after the conflict is over. “This assistance is a subject of ongoing consultations,” the President added.

The President said that the war in Iraq, which had started a few hours ago, was a reality that the world had expected. But she added that the Philippines expects the war to be “surgical, short and swift.”

According to the President, the moral and political cause that the Philippines has supported in ridding Iraq of the weapons of mass destruction does not pose a mortal threat to Filipino nations in the Middle East.

“They are in the good hands of our embassies, their employers and the host governments,” the President said.

But the President also cautioned that since this is a time of extreme distress among all citizens of the world, including Filipinos, the government is working with the private sector to open the widest lines of communication between our nationals in the Middle East and their families in the Philippines.

Government call centers, the President said, are open in many places and these calls will be free of charge.

We shall spare no effort to keep our nationals out of harm's way. Contingency measures are already in place to safeguard the life and limb of our nationals in the Middle East," the President said.

GMA sees no need for emergency powers 'at the moment'

BAGUIO CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today clarified that she does not see the need for emergency powers "at this moment" although these powers are in reserve.

In her speech this morning at the commencement exercises of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), the President said that these emergency powers would be used only in the midst of extreme economic and security contingency for the sake and welfare of the Filipino people.

She said that the emergency powers, if ever she would use them, would be made in consultation with Congress.

"We must calibrate such measures to emerging critical situations," the President said.

In its meeting in Malacañang last Tuesday, the National Security Council (NSC) approved the use by the President of emergency powers if the price of oil would unduly jack up the prices of prime commodities.

In a radio interview this morning, the President said that the emergency power that she envisioned, if there is a need of it, is not synonymous to martial law or the lifting of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus.

GMA orders all local governments to convene crisis management councils

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo directed today all local governments to convene all crisis management councils and asked local officials to personally and closely supervise the implementation of all contingency plans.

In a speech before the graduating class of the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio City, the President said the country, as in other parts of the world, must be ready for terrorist attacks, cautioning that the Philippines' political situation will only multiply terrorist aggression.

"Ang mga teroristang yan hindi nagtanong kung ano ang politika ng Indonesia noong ginawa nila yung karahasan sa Bali," she said. "So like the rest of the world, we must be ready for terrorist attacks in our own country."

As she addressed the graduates, United States President George W. Bush announced in Washington the launching of the "opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign...to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger."

"I ask for complete and total vigilance," President Macapagal-Arroyo said. "Extremists are likely to attack in desperation, anywhere and in any manner. Let us bond together, Muslims and Christians alike, in the task of vigilance and in preserving the ramparts of peace."

While the military and police forces, she said, are already in a high state of alert, the President still urged the citizens to combine vigilance with calm and help the authorities check terrorist incursions.

Any potential socio-economic dislocations, according to her, shall be dealt with in the highest interest of the public, saying the government will not allow transient instabilities to prejudice the poor and underprivileged.

“A price watch of all prime commodities is being implemented,” she said. “We warn hoarders and profiteers.”

The government, according to the President, will spare no effort to keep Filipino overseas workers out of harms way, saying that contingency measures are already in place to safeguard their life and limb.

Most of them, she added, will stay in place in order to be enveloped by the effective defenses against any attack. The defenses have been put in place by the host nations in cooperation with the coalition forces of which the Philippines is a member.

“The moral and political cause to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction does not pose a mortal threat to our nationals in the Middle East,” she said. “They are in the good hands of our embassies, their employers and the host governments.”

Recognizing the present situation as a time of extreme distress among all citizens of the world including Filipinos, the President said her administration is working with the private sector to open the widest lines of communication between the OFWs in the Middle East and their families in the Philippines.

As a gesture of support, the government has offered their families here free calls to their loved ones.

“It is times like this that we must think about our togetherness as a nation, our sense of belonging to one Republic, and know that we have a government that cares for its people,” the President said.

“This is a historic opportunity to come together in times of crisis, as we have done so many times in the past,” she added.

GMA hails China for help in promoting advance technology in agri, aquaculture

MUÑOZ, Nueva Ecija – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the government of the Republic of China for helping the country in promoting the advance technology in agriculture and aquaculture.

The President arrived here on board a helicopter from Baguio City where she attended the graduation of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) to further sow goodwill and strengthen ties with the Chinese government.

Upon her arrival, the President motored to the Nueva Ecija Fruits and Vegetables Seed Center and led the ribbon-cutting ceremony there.

She also visited the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources – National Freshwater Fisheries Technology Center (BFAR-NFFTC) and led the launching of “Get Excel Tilapia” program.

The program will promote the superior breed of tilapia developed under the Philippine National Tilapia Breeding Program.

The program hopes to raise the country’s annual fish production and increase the gross revenues of fish farmers, especially in Nueva Ecija.

The President also motored to the nearby Philippine-Sino Center for Agricultural Technology (PhilSCAT) and led the unveiling of the building’s marker and inaugurating the newly-built P500-million state-of-the-art center.

China's Ambassador Wang Chungui, Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, Representative Eleuterio Violago, Nueva Ecija Governor Tomas Joson III, and Munoz Mayor Nestor Alvarez, PhilSCAT Director, witnessed the unveiling.

The President also received from Ambassador Chingui agricultural equipments such as generator, water pumps, diesel engines, center windrower, driving disk plough, hand tractor, rotary tiller, paddy-field driving rakes, rice thresher, power sprayer, complete equipment of product line for raising rice seedling for sowing, semi-feed self-propelled combine harvester, and tractors.

The center construction was a result of an agreement on cooperation in agriculture and other related areas the Philippines and the PROC signed in Beijing in September 1999.

The PhilSCAT is the first grant project of the PROC to the Philippines and the technical cooperation program will extend up to 2008. The center, standing on 9.78 hectares within the compound of the Central Luzon State University, hopes to showcase modern agricultural technologies, particularly the Chinese advanced and practical hybrid rice production and related agricultural engineering and mechanization technologies.

This will help Filipino farmers increase rice production and labor productivity to attain sustainable food security.

The center boasts of state-of-the-art facilities such as an integrated mechanical technology-testing laboratory, mechanical service and post harvest workshop designed to enhance Philippine agricultural research development and extension.

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on the military strike initiated by the United States and its coalition partners against Iraq, March 20, 2003

The signals of war ring out on the other side of the world.

We are part of the coalition of the willing in terms of political and moral support for actions to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. We are part of a long standing security alliance as well as the global coalition against terrorism. This relationship is vital to our national security. It bears a significance to this war and to our combined efforts to fight terrorism in the Philippines and in the region.

We shall not deploy Philippine combat troops. But the Philippines is committed to extend peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance after the Iraq conflict. This is the subject of ongoing consultations.

The war is reality we expected. And we expect it to be surgical, short, and swift. But for now we have to face our immediate imperatives.

The moral and political cause to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction does not pose a mortal threat to our nationals in the Middle East, who are in the good hands of our embassies, their employers and the host governments. Nonetheless, it is a time of extreme distress among all citizens of the world, and among all Filipinos. The government is working with the private sector to open the widest lines of communication between our nationals in the Middle East and their families in the Philippines. Government call centers are open in many places. Let me take this opportunity to offer our nationals and their families: we will place your calls to your loved ones at no cost.

We shall spare no effort to keep our nationals out of harm's way. Contingency measures are already in place to safeguard the life and limb of our nationals in the Middle East. Most will stay in place in order to be enveloped by the effective defense against any attack put in place by the host nations in cooperation with the coalition forces.

The world must be ready for terrorist attacks in any country. There is no use to argue that our political position will only multiply terror attacks in our own country. Terrorism knows no boundaries. It has hit many countries regardless of their political positioning. We have already seen the worst—Basilan, General Santos, Zamboanga, Metro Manila, Davao.

Like the rest of the world, we must be ready for terrorist attacks in our own country. Our military and police forces are already in a high state of alert. Our communities must combine vigilance with calm and help the authorities check terrorist incursions.

Any potential socioeconomic dislocations, while remote, shall be dealt with in the higher interest of the public. We will not allow transient instabilities to prejudice the poor and underprivileged. A price watch on prime commodities is being implemented. We warn hoarders or profiteers.

The investigation of six banks is just one of the measures being taken by the government versus opportunist market speculators and dollar hoarders. Coming at a time of crisis, these violations are tantamount to economic sabotage.

The slumping of the peso is not a time for the public to fall prey to those who are taking advantage of the crisis. It is a time for us to close ranks, have prudence, and cooperate to address all challenges.

It is at times like this that we must think about our togetherness as a nation, our sense of belonging to one Republic, and know that we have a government that cares for its citizens.

GMA asks PMA grads to help her turn Mindanao into region of peace, security, development

Instead of sending combat troops to the Middle East and taking part in the war to disarm Iraq, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would rather see the men in uniform engaged in a mission to make Mindanao a region of peace, security and development.

This in a way summed up the President's directive to the graduates of the Philippine Military Academy's Mandarangan Class 2003 in one of the most applauded parts of her speech in the commencement exercises this morning in Baguio City.

"Unless we, as a people come to terms with Mindanao, we will never attain our full promise as a nation, a great democracy, a strong republic," she said. "Thus we must arrive at a national consensus on the principles to guide our search for peace."

The President told the graduates that there will be difficult days ahead of them, particularly in Mindanao where some of them will soon be frontliners to win the peace.

She said that the extremist fringe has distorted the agenda, making it difficult for the average Filipino to gain the balanced understanding of Mindanao.

"The conflict in Mindanao is not a religious or ethnic war between Muslims and Christians. The ongoing campaign in Mindanao is against lawless elements who engage in criminal activities and who flaunt their violation of the laws of our society," she told the graduates.

The different armed groups in Mindanao, she said are not homogenous. "Each of these armed groups is distinct from the other stakeholders," she added.

By the other stakeholders, the President was referring to the far greater number of non-combatants, whether Christian, Muslim or Lumad "who are often forgotten but whose only vested interest is peace."

She also mentioned the Organization of Islamic Conference "whose interest is peace within the framework of our national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

The President, as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, called on the graduates to help her realize her dream of making Mindanao a region of peace, security and development, saying it is their assignment to make her vision come true.

She then enumerated the elements of her dream end state for Mindanao as follows:

- The presence of peace, and the absence of ideologically motivated conflict and the renunciation of the use of force to pursue political ends;
- Development based on political stability, economic strength and good governance;
- The complete acceptance of national sovereignty and territorial integrity based on the constitution and the rule of law, together with the maintenance of external peace with all their neighbors;
- A multi-ethnic society with social justice for all and institutionalized accommodations of ethnic traditions; and
- The total defeat of terrorism.

She awarded the Presidential Saber to Cadet Tara Velazco, a native of Camiling, Tarlac who topped the 120-strong graduating cadets. She also awarded the PGMA achievement award for leadership to Cadet Filemon Tan, Jr. Brigade Commander of the CCAFP.

GMA wants special courts to handle pyramid cases

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong to ask the Supreme Court to set up a special court that would specially take on pyramid scam cases.

The President, who issued the order during a meeting with pyramid scam victims at the Heroes' Hall in Malacañang, also ordered National Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco to likewise follow up allegations that the principal personalities involved who have been arrested are enjoying VIP (very important person) treatment.

Aside from Wycoco, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. has been investigating allegations that Maria Teresa Santos, the sole proprietor of MTS Trading allegedly involved in pyramiding, is enjoying special treatment.

In the open forum, several victims claimed that the police holding her at the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) at the Philippine National Police (PNP) headquarters at Camp Crame, who were also her supposed victims, have allegedly been paid their principal investment and interest.

The President assured the victims that if cases have already been lodged against such personalities, such individuals would not be able to leave the country.

“Yung pong mga nakasuhan na, hindi na po sila pwedeng makaalis ng bansa,” she said.

The President also advised the victims that all cases involving pyramid scams will be followed up by the Department of Justice led by no less than State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuno.

The President further noted that if victims want to get the money they invested from these personalities through legal means, they should refrain from signing affidavit of desistance.

On those personalities who have reportedly fled to other countries, the President said Wycoco would confer with his counterpart in the United States to trace the funds.

The President also ordered the DOJ to set up a “clearinghouse” that would take on the complaints and follow-up of the victims. The clearinghouse would be composed of the existing government task force on pyramid scam, she said.

“Ang importante ay yung paglilitis ay talagang makumpleto at saka kung makakahanap tayo ng paraan na maibalik ang isang bahagi ng inyong pinuhunan, titingnan natin kung ano ang magagawa natin (the important thing is that the cases could be completed and that we find ways to bring back, in whole or in part, your investments),” she said.

Also present at the meeting were State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuno, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Justice Secretary Datumanong and NBI Director Wycoco.

The President has ordered all concerned government agencies to relentlessly pursue the investigation of the pyramid scam cases and assist the victims.

The President issued the order to the NBI to ease the pain of hapless victims, including soldiers and policemen, who had invested their meager savings, including retirement benefits, in the pyramiding schemes.

“Awang-awa siya doon sa mga na-biktima, lalo dun sa mga members of the military in the schemes and police na nag-loan pa sa Armed Forces of the Philippines Savings and Loan Association Inc. (AFPSLAI),” Wycoco earlier said.

The NBI is currently investigating 12 to 13 companies suspected of being involved in “get-rich-quick, too-good-to-be-true” schemes. Wycoco declined to name these companies as the NBI is still undertaking surveillance on them.

Aside from Multitel, there are still eight companies facing cases of estafa, violations of Securities and Exchange Regulations Code and the bouncing checks law.

Among these companies are Mateo Management Group (MMG), Ma. Teresa Santos Trading, Tibayan Group Investment Co. Inc., Asia-Pacific Alliance Management, Kimberly Management/Eurocom Business Center, Philsuisse Financial Services and Consultancy and ICS Export, Inc.

Wycoco said the filing of cases against these companies might not be enough. “The whole machinery of government must work together: law enforcement, prosecution, the courts, the financial arm, so that appropriate remedies can be applied,” he said.

Wycoco also called on the media to inform the people about the activities of these groups so that they will not fall prey to their schemes.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 20, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041437/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar20.htm>

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- **Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA expresses confidence Iraq war will not bring permanent damage to economy**
- **GMA explains RP's role in the U.S.-led 'Coalition of the Willing'**
- **RP has no hatred against Iraqi people, says GMA**
- **Gov't opens free call centers to Middle East**
- **Manila to decide on U.S. request to expel Iraqi diplomats based on merits, says Ople**
- **GMA opens PACE call center in Malacañang**
- **GMA to hold daily telecon with Mideast crisis team**

Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye

We will make our own determination on how to handle the Iraqi functionaries in accordance with accepted diplomatic practices but always taking into consideration our national interest.

GMA expresses confidence Iraq war will not bring permanent damage to economy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed confidence that even if the current war in Iraq may result in some temporary and minor adjustments in the Philippine economy, it will not bring lingering or permanent damage.

Speaking at the opening ceremonies of the 24th Biennial Convention of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (FFCCCII) in Binondo, Manila, the President said that her assessment of the situation does not indicate the need at this moment for exercising extraordinary powers.

"This will be considered only as a last resort," the President said, explaining that the economic fundamentals of the country are sound.

She said that tourism and exports are up. Shipments in and out of the country are doing business, crude prices of oil are going down.

With sound economic fundamentals, the President said "we should look beyond the Iraq war and not be distracted from our national ambition to become a prosperous and strong Republic within the decade."

The President thanked the Federation for supporting the difficult reforms she has had to make in her administration, reforms, she said, that the economy needs for long-term prosperity.

The President further thanked the FFCCCII for supporting difficult financial reforms such as the Anti-Money Laundering Law.

"But I am thankful and hopeful that because we have been dialoguing, the final law that has come out will help us fight criminality and at the same time protect your rights to privacy," she said.

The President likewise thanked the FFCCCII members for their contribution to the Philippine educational reforms and their participation in the P1-billion component of the government program for school buildings. "I hope that in the next 15 months, together we will finally bridge the gap in classrooms in our entire public education," she said.

The President also expressed her gratitude for the FFCCCII's contribution to the government's agricultural reform, citing the hybrid rice which has resulted in the doubling of the income of the farmers who have participated in the program.

During the program, the President swore in FFCCCII president John K.C. Ng as Presidential Envoy for Chinese Affairs with the rank as ambassador.

His first assignment is to be her personal envoy and representative next week at the Philippine Exhibit in Shanghai.

“I look forward to John’s service in my administration, and I hope that through his leadership in that job, he will maximize the trade and tourism opportunities that the new China makes available for the Philippines,” the President said.

GMA explains RP’s role in the U.S.-led ‘Coalition of the Willing’

A terrorist with no access to weapons of mass destruction is a terrorist that is much easier to neutralize.

With this, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo justified her administration’s political and moral support to the US-led strike against Iraq, saying a successful disarmament would lessen the chances of these weapons getting into the hands of terrorists.

In a brief radio interview with CNN this morning, the President outlined the government’s stand against terrorism and why the Philippines joined the “Coalition of the Willing.”

“It is an international interest for us to support this coalition and be part of it because we believe that even in the present realities we can prevent weapons of mass destruction to get into the hands of terrorists who seek to sow mayhem in our Southern Philippines,” the President said.

As of today, more than 35 countries have already committed themselves to the coalition and the number is still growing. Among these are Australia, South Korea, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland Portugal, Romania, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Contributions from these nations would include direct military participation, logistical, intelligence and political support, specialized chemical and biological response teams, over-flight rights and humanitarian and other aid.

Asked if there is a possibility that the Philippines would send combat troops, the President said: “The combat troops will not be involved in the present conflict. We’re ready to support in terms of humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping during the post conflict. We could also consider the use of our air space and refueling facilities.”

She added that each member of the coalition is giving its contribution in accordance with its own capabilities and constitution.

“So we have already defined that our role will be in the post conflict, in the reconstruction, in the humanitarian assistance, in the peacekeeping and during the conflict in the possible use of air space and refueling facilities,” she said.

Only today (Thursday, Washington time), in a press briefing by White House spokesman Ari Fleisher, it was announced that Turkey, through its Parliament, has granted overflight rights to the US and coalition forces in a strong show of support.

In the same briefing, Fleisher said that many members of the coalition recently escaped from tyranny and oppression and “they understand what is at stake in bringing freedom and liberation to the Iraqi people, as the mission of disarmament continues.”

All told, the population of the “Coalition of the Willing” is approximately 1.18 billion around the world and includes nations from every continent on the globe. The coalition countries, representing every major race, religion and ethnic group have a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of approximately \$21.7 trillion.

RP has no hatred against Iraqi people, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed that the Philippines has no hatred against the Iraqi people but only against the Iraqi leadership for refusing to abandon its weapons of mass destruction.

Speaking at the 24th Biennial Convention of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (FFCCCII) at the Exhibit Hall of the Federation Center in Muelle de Binondo, Manila, the President said that participation of the Philippines in the “Coalition of the Willing” does not mean war between Iraqis and Filipinos.

“It is a battle between tyranny and freedom,” the President said, adding that the country is in solidarity with the Iraqi people in their struggle for freedom and in the coalition forces in the fight to redeem that freedom for the Iraqi people.

On Thursday at the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio City, the President announced that the Philippines was joining the “Coalition of the Willing” in terms of political and moral support for actions to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.

The President said that she joins all Muslims around the world in praying for the Iraqi people. “We pray that the Almighty will keep them safe and sound through this crisis. We stand beside them in a waiting of brighter day of freedom and prosperity,” she said.

The President pointed out that the Philippine’s participation of the “Coalition of Willing” is also a battle between security and terrorism.

She said local terrorists have been attacking our communities by kidnapping and bombing even before September 11 and even before she assumed the presidency.

These terrorists who had been kidnapping and bombing commercial establishments are linked with terrorist cells overseas, the President said.

“We don’t want them to have an access to weapons of mass destruction from their foreign benefactors,” the President said.

The President then called on the top Filipino-Chinese businessmen to close ranks, to be prudent and to cooperate with the government in addressing the challenges that the country is facing.

“This is the time for us to face our togetherness as a nation and our sense of belonging to the Republic,” the President said.

“This is the time when I want you to especially know that you have a government that cares or a citizen that cares for you,” the President said.

The government’s battle against terrorism is a battle between criminality and the justice system, and the community, the President said, is the most important pillar of the country’s criminal justice system.

The cooperation and vigilance of the entire community as well as the local government units are required to keep the country safe and secure, the President said.

The President expressed her gratitude to the civil society, which include federations like the FFCCCII, for their solidarity behind the efforts of the government to meet this current crisis.

The President specially thanked Dr. Lucio Tan and the Philippine National Bank for their support and for being the patron of the call centers of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), so Filipinos can get in touch with their relatives in the Middle East.

Gov't opens free call centers to Middle East

Want to call your loved ones in the Middle East or send them e-mail messages for free?

The Office of the Press Secretary and the Presidential Action Center, in partnership with other government agencies and telecommunication companies, today opened the Oplan Kalinga Call Center at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium (formerly Rizal Memorial Coliseum) near the Harrison Plaza Complex in Manila.

The Call Center is open to all Filipinos who wish to call their relatives in the Middle East to check their safety following the outbreak of war in Iraq. The Call Center is operational on 24-hour basis.

Press Secretary Hernani Braganza said the Oplan Kalinga Call Center would also provide free internet communication to allow relatives of Overseas Filipinos Workers in the Middle East to send e-mail messages to their loved ones.

“This Call Center is part of efforts exerted by government to allay the fears of the public on the danger posed by the Iraq war on OFWs still working in the Middle East,” Braganza explained.

“President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has instructed us to exert all efforts to ensure that all our OFWs are accounted for and their families here taken care of,” Braganza added.

Aside from free call and e-mail messages, the Oplan Kalinga Center would also house information and assistance desk manned by government agencies involved in uplifting the life of Filipino OFWs.

These agencies include the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Middle East Preparedness Team.

Providing private sector support to the Call Center are the Philippine Long Distance Co., Globe, Smart, Sun Cellular, Destiny Cable and the AMA Group of Companies.

Non-governmental organizations formed by OFWs and their relatives have also agreed to take part in the project by providing counseling and livelihood advice.

Braganza noted that the Oplan Kalinga Call Center was the latest communication center put up by the Philippine government to allow free interface between OFWs in the Middle East and their relatives here.

Also in place is the Tele-Ugnayan Center, located at the 10th Floor of the OWWA Building along Harrison Street near the corner of Buendia Avenue in Pasay City. The Tele-Ugnayan Center maintains links with the OWWA Regional Offices.

Braganza likewise bared plans to put up a separate call center in the vicinity of Malacañang.

Manila to decide on U.S. request to expel Iraqi diplomats based on merits, says Ople

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople today said that the Department of Foreign Affairs has not yet received a formal request from the United States to expel Iraqi diplomats from the country.

In an interview, Ople said that if there is a formal request as cited by a news report, then the Philippine government would examine the request on its merits. "Then, we will take the appropriate action," he added.

Ople was reacting to wire reports that said Washington has approached some 60 countries, including the Philippines, to expel Iraqi diplomats who, the US says, have been engaged in espionage.

The foreign secretary recalled that only last month, the Philippines has expelled Husham Hussain, the second secretary of the Iraqi embassy, after it gave credence to intelligence reports that the diplomat was probably in touch with some Abu Sayyaf elements in Mindanao.

"So, I resolved without a doubt in favor of our national security. I expelled the diplomat without the request of the United States," Ople said.

Ople said that the sovereignty of nations includes the prerogative to declare any diplomat *persona non grata*. "And you need not explain the ground for it," he added.

In the same interview, Ople also paid tribute to Philippine Ambassador to Iraq Grace Escalante.

"I want to present her to the President as a gallant lady ambassador of our country who has performed exceedingly well in her sensitive post in Baghdad," Ople said.

According to Ople, Ambassador Escalante is in Manila to attend the graduation of her son. He said that he approved the envoy's application for temporary leave so that she could spend all her time with her family in Manila whom she has not seen for a long time.

Ople said that the DFA has assigned somebody to keep charge of the Philippine embassy in Baghdad to serve the interest of Filipinos who may still be in the Iraqi capital although most of the Filipinos have already been relocated to Amman, Jordan and out of harm's way.

GMA opens PACE call center in Malacañang

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today unveiled the call center at the Presidential Action Center (PACE) near Malacañang, confident that this would address the need of families of overseas Filipino workers to keep in touch with their loved ones abroad.

After checking the facilities this afternoon, the President talked with Luz Diaz, the wife of a seaman jailed in Abu Dhabi allegedly for the non-payment of debts incurred by his employer, Gulf Agency.

Diaz told the President that her husband, along with 22 other Filipino seamen, have been in jail for two years now but the Philippine Embassy in Abu Dhabi has not, according to her, helped them.

Diaz said she was told that the Philippine Ambassador was always away from the chancery because of lingering illness. The Ambassador to Abu Dhabi is Amable Aguiluz III.

Upon hearing this, the President immediately called on Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople and told him to replace right away the Philippine envoy.

"The first thing that we would do is to replace our man there because we cannot have an ambassador who's always on sick leave," she told Mrs. Diaz.

Presidential Adviser on Media and Ecclesiastical Affairs Conrado Limcaoco, officer-in-charge of the call center, meanwhile, said the facilities would be open for 24 hours.

He said the call center might cut its office hours to 12 hours when the hostilities in the Middle East die down.

He said the call center was installed as ordered by the President precisely to calm the fears of relatives of OFWs on the growing tensions in Middle East.

Limcaoco praised the four sponsors for the call center for their good corporate conscience despite the competition in the market. They are Smart, Globe, PLDT and Sun Cellular.

With the call centers, families of OFWs could call their loved ones in the Middle East for three minutes each free of charge.

Aside from the PACE, there are also call centers available at the Ninoy Aquino Memorial Stadium and in malls around the metropolis.

GMA to hold daily telecon with Mideast crisis team

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that she would convene a 6:00 p.m. teleconference daily with Philippine officials in the Middle East to get a better picture of the situation of overseas Filipino workers (OFW) in the area.

In a teleconference with Middle East Preparedness Team Ambassador Roy Cimatu in Kuwait, the President was assured that the tension in Kuwait is dying down following the start of a US-led attack on the southern frontiers of Iraq.

The teleconference was aired live in a television news program tonight.

Cimatu said the OFWs in Kuwait, which is several kilometers from Basra, Iraq, continued to be in their respective areas of work.

The same situation holds true in other areas of the Persian Gulf like Jordan and Saudi Arabia, he said.

The threat of Iraqi missiles being poured on Kuwait would be minimized as soon as the US-led forces get Basra, Cimatu stressed. But he informed the OFWs in Kuwait to be vigilant and ready.

The President ordered Cimatu to confer with and coordinate with Filipino expatriates in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia where 950,000 OFWs are located.

However, he said there was that low probability that Saudi Arabia would be affected by the war.

Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Bahnarin Guinomla and Ambassador to Kuwait Bayani Mangibin were coordinating with OFWs in their respective countries of assignment, Cimatu told the President.

The President also informed relatives of OFWs in the Persian Gulf about the establishment of call centers in different places of Metro Manila, particularly at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium and near Malacañang.

Also serving as call centers are the 51 offices of the Philippine Information Agency and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration nationwide, the President said.

She added that the call centers, which offer at least three minutes of free calls to several areas in the Middle East, are open during normal office hours in the Gulf.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 21, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20051119003307/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar21.htm>

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BIR pushes easier ways for professionals to pay VAT

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has introduced another "creative" measure to make it easier and more convenient for professionals to pay the value added tax (VAT).

BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno has enjoined professionals – initially the actors and talents — to avail themselves of the withholding system that their networks could facilitate for them.

Parayno said the networks that BIR officials have conferred with agreed to the withholding scheme.

This included ABS-CBN, which has some 800 talents, that cited the partnership as a model that other professional groups and institutions could replicate.

Considering their very tight schedule as actors and actresses and rather than visit the bank monthly and maintain all kinds of record keeping, they expressed willingness to have the VAT withheld at the source, he said.

Professionals made their first VAT payment on March 20. The government expected a high of P8.6 billion in revenues from the VAT on professionals.

Parayno reported this development to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho and officials that attended the 3rd Revenue Command Conference in Malacañang early this week.

The BIR chief likewise noted that the BIR was very satisfied with the registration of professionals. About 10,000 individuals from the country's seven regions have registered in February.

"By this time, that should (have increased) to some 15,000. So if we prorate that or extrapolate that to the entire country, we should be reaching the target," he said.

"We are doing our very best to make their first transition as less painful as possible," Parayno added.

Parayno said the new scheme is expected to swing to the BIR side the life insurance underwriters, who have been very vocal against the VAT imposition.

Meanwhile, Camacho noted the BIR's efforts to make it easy for professionals to pay their VAT.

"Part of the reason why the resistance on the part of professionals have died down is the fact that the BIR has gone out of its way to explain and make it very easy, not only in the registry, but even in the payment (for professionals)," Camacho said.

The tax agency earlier launched the BIR-on-wheels program, wherein the BIR went to hospitals and studios to register professionals for their VAT payments.

The 10-percent VAT was required under a 1997 law. But its application to professionals, particularly those in the show business, was deferred for five years by a subsequent law that expired on Dec. 31, 2002.

Professionals included in the tax scheme are athletes and entertainers.

President's radio address to the nation

Magandang araw sa lahat ng ating mga kababayan.

Sa gitna ng nangyayaring matinding krisis ngayon sa Middle East, lalo nating dapat pag-ibayuhin ang ating pagkakaisa at pagtutulungan para sa katatagan at kagalingan ng ating bayan.

Tayo rin ay nakikiisa sa mga mamamayan ng Iraq sa kanilang pagpupunyaging makalaya habang pumapanig tayo sa coalition forces na nakikipaglaban para mabawi ang nasabing kalayaan. Ito ay hindi isang hidwaan sa pagitan ng Iraqis at mga Pilipino. Ito ay isang labanan sa pagitan ng kalupitan at kasarinlan.

Nakikibahagi tayo sa panalangin ng mga Muslim para sa kaligtasan ng mga mamamayan ng Iraq. Patnubayan sana sila ng Maykapal na maging ligtas sa kapahamakan. Kasama nila tayo sa paghihintay ng isang magandang kinabukasan na may kalayaan at kasaganaan.

Habang ipinagdarasal natin na matapos na kaagad ang giyera doon, patuloy nating ipapatupad ang ating mga kaukulang hakbang at aksyon para mapagaan ang epekto ng krisis na ito sa Gitnang Silangan sa ating pambansang pamumuhay.

Ang ating pagkilos ay nakatuon sa dalawang bagay: ang kaligtasan ng ating mga kababayan sa Gitnang Silangan at ang pagiging listo natin dito laban sa terorismo.

Kitang-kita naman natin nitong mga nagdaang araw na ang ating pagiging kasapi ng coalition of the willing ay hindi mapanganib para sa OFWs sa Middle East. Sila ay nasa pangangalaga ng ating mga embahada, kanilang employers at host governments. Kaya, huwag sanang masyadong mag-aalala ang kanilang mga pamilya dito, at tayo ay kasama nilang magdarasal para sa kapayapaan.

Para mabawasan ang inyong alalahanin, naghahandog tayo ng libreng tawag o bukas na linya ng komunikasyon para sa ating OFWs sa Middle East at sa kanilang mga pamilya sa Pilipinas. Para sa kanilang mga kamag-anak dito, may mga cellular phone booths sa OWWA headquarters sa F.B. Harrison, Pasay City, duon din sa Ninoy Aquino Stadium at diyan sa Malakanyang, sa Public Action Center, at labing-isa regional offices ng OWWA na matatagpuan sa mga pangunahing lungsod ng bansa.

Ang overseas communication facilities naman ay naka-set up sa Kuwait, Saudi Arabia at Dubai.

Bukas na po ang ating Oplan Kalinga website www.oplankalinga.gov.ph para sa mga news, advisories at mga mahahalagang impormasyon na nais ninyong malaman sa kahandaan ng pamahalaan na mapagsilbihan ang ating mga OFWs at kanilang mga mahal sa buhay. Meron tayong Kamustahan Lines na nasa Ninoy Aquino Stadium sa Harrison, Manila na bukas 24 oras para sa libreng tawag sa inyong mga mahal sa buhay na nasa Middle East. Katuwang natin ang PLDT, AMA Computer College, SMART, GLOBE, SUN CELLULAR at iba pang cellular companies sa serbisyong ito sa inyo.

Samantala, inatasan ko na ang ating Department of Foreign Affairs, katulong ang Middle East Preparedness Team, na gawin ang lahat upang alagaan ang kalagayan ng mga Pilipino sa paligid ng Persian Gulf. Karamihan sa kanila ay

mananatili kung sila ay nasaan, protektado ng mga depensa sa anumang pag-atake na inihanda ng kanilang tinutuluyang bansa sa pakikipagtulungan sa mga puwersang Amerikano.

Doon naman sa mga kailangang umalis sa mga mapanganib na lugar, naayos na ang mga plano para dito, kabilang na ang mga kailangang travel documents at inarkilang sasakyan. May relocation centers silang mapupuntahan na may sapat na pagkain, tubig, at iba pang kagamitan. Ang ating mga embahada ay laging bukas para sa kanila para sila ay matulungan at mabigyan ng impormasyong kailangang-kailangan.

Tinitiyak ko sa kanilang mga mahal sa buhay dito na hinding-hindi natin sila pababayaan. At iparating din sana ninyo sa mga nasa ibayong dagat na ang kapakanan ng kanilang mga naiwan dito ay patuloy nating pangangalagaan.

Ang ating contingency plans para protektahan ang interes ng publiko ay matagal na nating pinaghandaan. Sa pagsiklab ng digmaan, ang ating ekonomiya ay makakaranas ng bahagyang pagbabago, pero hindi ito magtatagal dahil matibay ang ating mga tuntuning pangkabuhayan o economic fundamentals. Bumababa na rin ang presyo ng langis.

Ang ating in-country crude oil supply o langis na nasa bansa na, ay tatagal ng animnapu't-dalawang (62) araw. Ito ang pinakamataas na natalang imbentaryo sa loob ng sampung taon. May padating pa na 16 million barrels na maghahatid sa ating imbentaryo hanggang sa kalagitnaan ng Hunyo.

Para maiwasan ang pagtaas ng pamasaha, nagbukas tayo ng gasolinahan sa tatlong terminal ng pampasaherong sasakyan para magbenta ng murang krudo. Dalawa dito — ang nasa Mandaluyong at Quezon Avenue — ay isa sa pakikipagtulungan ng Eastern Petroleum para sa mga kasapi ng Pasang Masda. Ang pangatlo, na nasa Cubao, ay katulong ang Flying V para naman sa mga miyembro ng Piston. Mayroon na ring bubuksang ganito ang Petron sa Quiapo.

Tungkol naman sa supply ng pagkain, hindi tayo magugutom kahit na ang giyera ay tumagal pa nang dalawang buwan dahil ang stock natin ng bigas ay tatagal ng siyamnapu't-limang (95) araw. Ito rin ang pinakamataas na imbentaryo ng bigas sa loob ng tatlong dekada.

Ang ating supply ng asukal ay sapat para sa isandaan at dalawampung (120) araw, o apat na buwan. Ang supply ng cooking oil naman ay tatagal ng animnapung (60) araw, o dalawang buwan.

Ang ibig sabihin ng lahat nang ito ay hindi tayo dapat ma-alarma. May sapat tayong pagkaing naka-imbak at kailanman ay hindi tayo kailangang pumila o mag-rasyon.

Gayunpaman, may monitoring teams tayo na mag-iikot sa lahat ng palengke para matyagan ang presyo ng mga bilihan. At para magtagumpay ito, kailangan ding magbantay ang mga mamamayan at i-report ang sinumang tindera na magtataas ng presyo nang hindi dapat.

Binabalaan ko ang mga nais magsamantala, tulad ng pagtatago ng supply o paniningil ng sobra. We will protect our consumers from unscrupulous traders who engage in hoarding, profiteering and opportunist speculations. Nagpapasalamat naman tayo sa nakararaming negosyante na tapat na tumutulong para maging matatag ang ating supply at presyo ng pagkain at ibang pangunahing bilihan.

Para alagaan ang ating pambansang seguridad, pinakilos na natin ang buong pamahalaan, kabilang na ang local governments, AFP at PNP. Tinatawagan ko ang ating pribadong sektor, ang civil society at mga mamamayan na makipag-ugnayan at makipagtulungan sa kanila upang pangalagaan ang ating mga komunidad.

Inaatasan ko ang lahat ng pamahalaang lokal na pulungin kaagad ang kanilang crisis management councils, at pangasiwaan nang personal at malapitan ang pagpapatupad ng ating contingency plans. Susubaybayan lahat ito ni DILG Secretary Joey Lina na palagiang mag-uulat sa akin.

Hinihiling ko ang ating buo at tapat na pagmamatyag. Dapat tayong maging listo laban sa tinatawag na collateral terrorist attacks o pag-atake ng mga desperadong extremists na may simpatiya sa nangyayari sa labas ng bansa.

Kung may maririnig kayong anumang bulung-bulungan o banta nang kaguluhan, itawag ninyo ito kaagad sa Patrol 117 o Text PNP 2920.

May hotlines din tayo sa iba't-ibang ahensiya ng pamahalaan tungkol sa mga pangyayaring kaugnay ng kasalukuyang krisis, tulad ng DFA at Middle East Preparedness Team Action Center, Department of Energy's Consumer Welfare Office, at OWWA.

Magkaisa tayo, Muslim man o Kristiyano, sa tungkulin ng pagbabantay at pagpapairal ng katahimikan. Ang kaligtasan at kagalingan ng ating bansa ay nasa ating kamay. Bawa't Pilipino ay dapat maging responsable sa kaniyang kapuwa. Ito ay isang makasaysayang pagkakataon para tayo ay magbuklod sa panahon ng krisis, na makailang beses na nating ginawa noon.

Isantabi na natin ang anumang di matuwid na pagkiling o pagpanig sa iba. Pagsanibin natin ang ating mga puso at lakas para harapin ang mga kailangang gawin. Sa ating pagsasama-sama, kaya nating pagtagumpayan ang krisis na ito.

Maraming salamat at patnubayan nawa tayo ng Diyos.

GMA renews call for unity amid domestic, global crisis

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today rallied every Filipino to be responsible for his fellowmen, as she enjoined the people to do their patriotic duty of guarding and maintaining national peace.

“Ang kaligtasan at kagalingan ng ating bansa ay nasa ating kamay (the welfare and safety of the country lie on our hands),” the President said in a radio message aired nationwide.

She said the prevailing domestic and global crises have become another historic opportunity for Filipinos to once more unite and overcome.

“Pagsanibin natin ang ating mga puso at lakas para hanapin ang kailangang gawin (Let us join our hearts and strength to look for the right moves to get through the crises),” she added.

The President stressed that the Filipino nation is one with the Iraqi people in the latter's struggle for freedom.

On the government's decision to support the coalition forces, she said: *“Ito ay hindi isang hidwaan sa pagitan ng Iraqis at mga Pilipino. Ito ay isang labanan sa pagitan ng kalupitan at kasarinlan (This is not a fight between Iraqis and Filipinos. This is a war between tyranny and freedom).”*

She said that the Filipino nation has joined their Muslim brothers throughout the world in praying for the safety of the people of Iraq.

And while everyone prays for a swift end to the Iraqi crisis, the government will continue to carry out necessary measures to mitigate the effects of the Gulf war on the people's socio-economic well-being, she said.

“Ang ating pagkilos ay nakatuon sa dalawang bagay: ang kaligtasan ng ating mga kababayan sa Gitnang Silangan at ang pagiging listo natin dito laban sa terorismo (Our moves are focused on the safety of Filipinos in the Middle East and the alertness of Filipinos here against terrorism),” she added.

The President said overseas Filipino workers (OFW) in the Gulf are far from harm's way, stressing that "*sila ay nasa pangangalaga ng ating mga embahada, kanilang employers at host governments (they are under the care of our embassies, their employers and host governments).*"

To ease the apprehension of relatives of Middle East-based Filipino expatriates, she said the government has opened call centers that could link OFWs in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Dubai, the United Arab Emirates and their relatives in key cities in the Philippines.

The *Kamustahan Lines*, which offer free long-distance cellular and telephone calls to as long as three minutes, are open for 24 hours at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium in Manila.

Other call centers are at the Public Action Center in Malacañang and the head office and 11 regional offices of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

The centers are made available with the support of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, AMA Computer College, Smart, Globe, Sun Cellular and other telecommunication companies.

Also open is the Oplan Kalinga website www.oplankalinga.gov.ph which issues regular news, advisories and important information on government programs for OFWs and their loved ones.

The President also said she had ordered the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT) under Ambassador Roy Cimatu to do everything possible to see to the safety and welfare of OFWs in the Gulf.

They are safe from any attack from hostile forces, thanks to their host governments in cooperating with the American troops, she said.

Those who are leaving areas of perceived danger would be helped by the DFA and the MEPT, she noted, adding that travel documents and transportation would be facilitated for them.

Relocation areas for OFWs are in place with enough food, water and other needs. Embassies are always open to serve them.

In the home front, the President said she had placed the government's full resources on national security, particularly those of local governments, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

She called on the private sector, civil society and the people to cooperate with authorities in protecting the communities.

"Dapat tayong maging listo laban sa tinatawag na collateral terrorist attacks o pag-atake ng mga desperadong extremists na may simpatiya sa nangyayari sa labas ng bansa (We must maintain a high level of alertness to deal with collateral terrorist attacks and sympathy attacks from extremists)," she said.

She urged the people to report threats to security to Patrol 117 or text it to Text PNP 2920.

GMA urges army to be sensitive to socio-economic, strategic implications of tactical decisions

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today reminded army commanders to be doubly aware and extra sensitive to the strategic implications of tactical decisions that they make in the field.

The President made the reminder as she upheld the authority of field commanders to render tactical decisions within their area of responsibility.

She recently issued a command directive that defined strategic implications of tactical operations.

In a speech during the 106th anniversary of the Philippine Army at Fort Bonifacio, Makati City, the President said that while her directive is stressed in the army's doctrine development program, "the policy-making prerogative of civilian authority shall not be impaired."

The directive, she added, should apply to brigade commanders and above. "It is their decision, it is their authority, it is their responsibility."

She has authorized the Secretary of National Defense to determine the applicable levels of command responsibility attendant to her directive.

The President explained that a "tactical operation acquires strategic implications which our commanders must take into account even on the ground, when it involves public perception beyond the immediate area of operation, or when it involves adverse consequences such as general state of law and order, socio economic activity and political stability within or beyond the immediate area of operation."

A field commander shall conduct operations in a manner that shall entail the following:

- The least possible impact of such operations in the community of non-combatants especially on their livelihood and normal conduct of every day lives,
- The minimum evacuation from homes or areas of food production,
- The close coordination with pertinent agencies of government within his or her area of concern when socio-economic dislocations are expected or become imminent as a result of such operations,
- The full safety assessments in coordination with the Philippine National Police for areas prone to conflict tailover or collateral acts of terrorism,
- The strategic sensibility to the peace processes and negotiations within affected armed groups, and
- The over-all adherence to national policies and public interests.

The President said that all pertinent campaign plans should be updated to incorporate a psychological operations component as well as comprehensive civil-military coordination component.

She cited the army for producing 15 functional manuals for doctrine development. They are due for promulgation.

GMA cites global coalition againsts terrorism in helping RP stem Abu Sayyaf threat

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the roots of the Philippine involvement in the "coalition of the willing" dated back to the period immediately following the September 11, 2001 attacks when she made a strategic decision to join the global war against terrorism.

The President, speaking during the 106th anniversary celebration of the Philippine Army at Fort Bonifacio, Makati City, said that "even before I became President of the Philippines, we had long been in the frontline against terrorism in our own land."

She said one country alone could not eliminate terrorists like the Abu Sayyaf as they link to other terrorist organizations that give them financial support and material.

"The global coalition that was formed to check terrorism helped us in our battle with the Abu Sayyaf," she said.

Global, political and economic security has become closely intertwined, she said adding that "separate national interests are woven into the overall fabric of counter terrorism."

“And so today, we support the ‘coalition of the willing’ because of the sweeping imperatives we faced a year and a half ago,” she stressed.

“We do not want weapons of mass destruction to fall into the hands of terrorists operating in the Philippines,” she said.

The President disclosed that the US-led forces are clearing threats in Southern Iraq and as the battle for Baghdad begins, “the relative safety of our nationals from weapons of mass destruction, is more or less assured.”

She condoled with families of coalition soldiers who died in the line of duty, “just as we condoled with the families of soldiers who perished in the line of duty fighting terrorism in the Philippines.”

The President said that joining the “coalition of the willing” did not preclude the government’s full support for the United Nations in meeting the humanitarian crisis.

“We pray that the Iraqi people, as well as other innocent victims of war, will be spared from grave suffering and harm just as our nationals have so far been spared,” she said.

She added that the government is prepared to send medical personnel and relief workers to help in post-conflict Iraq.

“While we deal with the ramifications of the Iraq war in the country’s national interests, we must continue to telescope our sights on the fight against insurgency, terrorism, and poverty within our country,” the President said.

She congratulated Philippine Army Chief Gen. Gregorio Camiling for the Army’s Plan 00 which enhances an understanding of the dynamics of political stability, economic development, social cohesion, ethical behavior, environmental sustainability and cooperation among nations.

“I hope this helps our officers to carry out the command directive that she issued recently defining strategic implications of tactical operations,” the President said.

GMA reassures enough oil, food supplies to see RP through effects of Iraqi crisis

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the public that any negative effect of the ongoing Middle East conflict on the country would be short-lived because of the country’s sound economic fundamentals.

In a radio interview, the President said contingency plans to protect the interest of the public have long been prepared by the country’s economic managers.

She said in-country crude oil supply would last up to 62 days, the highest inventory ever registered in the past 10 years.

An additional 62 barrels, she added, would be forthcoming to make the inventory last up to June.

To avoid any increase in transport fares, the government has opened gasoline stations in three terminals to sell cheap crude.

Two of these – one in Mandaluyong and another in Quezon Avenue – were put up through the efforts of Eastern Petroleum for members of the Pasang Masda.

The third one, in Cubao, was set up by Flying V for the members of Piston. Petron would also put up one in Quiapo, she said.

The President also assured that Filipinos would not go hungry even if the war in Iraq lasted for two months since the rice inventory would last up to 95 days, also the highest stock in the last three decades.

As to the supply of sugar, the President said the country has enough to last 120 days or four months. Cooking oil inventory, she said, is good for 60 days or two months.

“Ang ibig sabihin ng lahat nang ito ay hindi tayo dapat maalarma,” she said. *“May sapat tayong pagkaing nakaimbak at kailanman ay hindi tayo kailangang pumila o mag-rasyon* (What all these means is that we should not panic. We have enough food supply. We don’t have to resort to food lines or rationing).”

She said the government has set up monitoring teams to keep watch over the prices of prime commodities. For this to succeed, the President asked the people to report unscrupulous traders who would take advantage of the situation.

“Binabalaan ko ang mga nais magsamantala, tulad ng pagtatago ng supply o paniningil ng sobra. We will protect our consumers from unscrupulous traders who engage in hoarding, profiteering and opportunist speculations,” the President said.

She thanked traders who helped stabilize prices of food supply and other prime commodities.

GMA awards medal to rescuer of Gracia Burnham in army anniversary rites

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded the Distinguished Conduct Star Medal to Capt. Oliver Almonares, who she cited for the rescue of Abu Sayyaf hostages Gracia Burnham and Erwin Resoroni in Culasian, Sirawai, Zamboanga del Norte on June 7 last year.

The President noted Almonares’ courage and gallantry in the face of terrorists as he led his unit, the 15th Scout Ranger Company, in engaging 30 Abu Sayyaf members led by Hadji Aldam Tilao aka Abu Sabaya that led to the rescue of Burnham and Resoroni.

During the 106th anniversary celebration of the Philippine Army at Fort Bonifacio, Makati, the President also conferred various awards to other army soldiers and non-government groups that distinguished themselves in their respective fields in support of the Army’s mission.

The awardees included:

- Gen. Dante Bonifacio, who was awarded the Distinguished Service Star for meritorious and invaluable service rendered as commanding general of the Army’s 202nd Infantry Brigade;
- Rizaldo Laurena, the Gold Cross Medal for gallantry in action as platoon leader of the 37th Infantry Battalion’s Charlie Company that fought off 100 Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) elements at Barangay Kitapok, Datu Piang, Maguindanao on June 11, 2002;
- Juan Belo, the Gold Cross Medal for gallantry in action as a crew member of an armored vehicle of the 42nd Light Armor Battalion during an ambush conducted by 20 dissident terrorists;
- Armando Cunanan, the Outstanding Achievement Medal for extraordinary and distinguished achievement in the conceptualization, development and publication of the Philippine Army Officer Career Management manual;
- Nueva Ecija Governor Tomas Josen, the Gawad sa Kaunlaran, for extending full support to the internal security operations activities of the 7th Infantry Division;
- Romeo Lim, for meritorious and invaluable achievements in the pursuit of socio-economic and other non-combat activities of the AFP while serving as commanding officer of the 5th Scout Ranger Battalion;

The 58th Infantry Battalion received the Commanding General, Philippine Army Streamer Award for being adjudged as the Best Infantry Battalion for 2002

The 8th Infantry Division got the Command Plaque of Merit for placing second in the Search for the Most Outstanding Literacy Category during the National Literacy Conference and Awards 2002.

Other recipients of the Command Plaques were: Paulino Bala, Best Philippine Army Enlisted Personnel for 2002; Mrs. Ederlina Alejan, Best Civilian Supervisor for 2002; and Philippine Business for Social Progress as the Best Non-Government Organization for 2002.

GMA launches discounted filling stations to ease impact of oil prices on transport sector

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today hailed concerned transport groups in Metro Manila as she launched several government-private sector programs intended to mitigate the impact of oil prices on the transport sector.

The President said the launching of at least two Quezon City diesel filling stations offering rebates was one way the government could show its gratitude to the transport sector that has sacrificed a lot by not raising fares.

This would ease the burden on jeepney drivers in this time of crisis, she said.

At the Flying V gasoline station at 15th Ave. and P. Tuazon Street in Cubao, Quezon City, the President launched the “*Tulong sa Pagsulong*,” a scheme wherein diesel fuel patrons could avail of rebates of as much as five liters for every 10-liter purchase.

Under the scheme, Flying V patrons who buy at least 10 liters of diesel will be given a coupon worth 5 liters of diesel. The patron may accumulate his coupons and have them exchanged to cash of at least P100.

At the Eastern Petroleum station in Quezon Ave. beside the Pantranco terminal, the President initiated the loading of cheaper diesel worth P16.25 per liter to members of the Pasang Masda transport group.

“Ito ay bilang pagpapasalamat sa ating jeepney drivers at ating mga transport groups dahil kahit na tumaas yung presyo ng krudo at gasolina nung panahon na hinihintay ang giyera sa Iraq, hindi pa rin nila tinaas yung kanilang presyo ng pasahe,” she said.

Flying V Chairman and President Ramon Villavicencio said the “*Tulong sa Pagsulong*” scheme was the oil firm’s response to the President’s call to help jeepney drivers who are most affected by the continuous increase in fuel prices.

With the President at the Flying V station were Energy Secretary Vincent Perez, Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board chairman Dante Lantin, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte and other Quezon City officials.

Flying V, in a statement, said that “despite the crisis facing the world today, and even as the increase in pump price is not sufficient to cover the general increase in procurement costs of fuel, it has launched the public service program in response to the call of the President to make sacrifices and sympathize with the plight of the jeepney drivers who serve the general riding public.”

Villavicencio said that during these hard times, business sense should be relegated to the background in lieu of the moral responsibility to respond to a cause of those in need.

Among the transport groups set to benefit from the “*Tulong sa Pagsulong*” scheme are the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines (FEJODAP), Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operators Nationwide, Samahang Operators at Drivers ng Project 4, P. Tuazon Farmers Cubao Inc. and the Group Unite Drivers, Operators into One Inc.

Among the transport group leaders present were Zeny Maranan, Boy Vargas, Efren de Luna, Crispin Rosales, Antonio Cardenas, Patrick Vergara, Nely Terania and Federico Alvarez.

At the Quezon Ave. gasoline station, the President witnessed the loading of gasoline by Secretary Perez, Pasang Masda president Roberto Martin, Roosevelt-San Francisco del Monte Drivers' Association president Greg Pajarillo and Eastern Petroleum Corp. president Fernando Martinez.

Eastern President Fernando Martinez said the President issued her appeal to the various transport groups and oil companies to ease the burden on the public transport industry as early as February 21.

In addition, a new gasoline station of USA 88 located in Felix Ave. near Cainta Junction is now operational.

The station is owned by Filprice Energy Corp. and offers discounts to jeepney drivers who are members, among others, of FEJODAP.

Secretary Perez said the efforts are relative to the President's directive to put up diesel pumps in jeepney terminals to ease the impact of increasing oil prices on the public transport sector.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 22, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041542/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar22.htm>

The President's Day: March 23, 2003

23 MARCH 2003

- **Gov't call centers help ease anxiety of OFWs, families in RP**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye (*on Petron's reduction of 40 centavos on their diesel products*)**
- **GMA cites authorities for mass transport, mall security**

Gov't call centers help ease anxiety of OFWs, families in RP

If only she knew how things would be, Lina Basal, a 36-year-old mother of five, would have advised her husband, Ronaldo not to push through with his Middle East employment, given how tension had built up months into the ongoing conflict between the United States and Iraq.

But family finances dictated the turn of events and now Ronaldo finds himself caught in the middle of a war while trying to earn something for Lina and their five children whom he left in Manila four months ago to work as a printing press operator in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Left with no choice, Lina and Ronaldo had to bear the pain of separation and had to content themselves with communicating through phone calls and text messages.

Over the weekend, when war in the Gulf intensified, Lina, with her two sons aged five and two in tow, found themselves among several relatives of overseas Filipino workers availing themselves of the free phone calls at the Oplan Kalinga Call Center near Harrison Plaza in Malate, Manila.

The 24-hour call center was set up by the Office of the Press Secretary and the Presidential Action Center in partnership with other government agencies and telecommunication companies following the outbreak of war in Iraq.

It also provides free internet communication to allow relatives of OFWs in the Middle East to send free e-mail messages to their loved ones.

Press Secretary Hernani Braganza said the call center is part of efforts exerted by government to allay fears of the public on the danger posed by the Iraq war on OFWs working in the Middle East.

"President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has instructed us to exert all efforts to ensure that all our OFWs are accounted for and their families here taken cared of," he said.

Mrs. Basal, who called from the booth of new telecommunications company Sun Cellular, lauded the project as a big help to those who are worrying about the safety of their loved ones in the Middle East.

"At least mararamdaman mo ang concern ng ating gobyerno para sa mga OFW. Malaking tulong ito sa amin," she said.

Hadji Helwa Sumael, a 34-year-old Muslim mother of two, concurred with Mrs. Balsa, saying "kahit anong oras, Muslim man o Kristiyano, puwedeng tumawag dito."

Mrs. Sumael, a native of Zamboanga now residing in Manila called her two cousins working as domestic helpers in Kuwait City from the PLDT booth while her two daughters—Myka, 7, and Jenika, 3—played around the spacious call center which also houses information and assistance desk manned by government agencies.

These agencies include the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Middle East Preparedness Team.

Providing private sector support are the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Globe, Smart, Sun Cellular, Destiny Cable and the AMA Group of Companies.

Perhaps, the most consoling sight to organizers of the project is the sight of children like 9-year-old Sarah Estrella beaming with joy as they talked to their parents in the Middle East.

Sarah was with her father Orlando when she talked to her mother Aurora, an OFW working in Kuwait City.

“Mabuti na lang nakausap namin siya,” beamed Sarah. “Kung hindi, hindi kami mapapakali ng tatay ko. Bakit naman kasi may giyera, giyera pa, eh.”

With that, Sarah got her father’s hand and together the two walked away from the call center, happy with the thought that their mother was safe, after all.

Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye *(on Petron’s reduction of 40 centavos on their diesel products)*

The President is pleased that Petron has heeded her call to be more sensitive to the needs of our people, especially during these critical times.

Big business have a huge corporate social responsibility.

The President anticipates that the other major oil players would follow suit soon.

GMA cites authorities for mass transport, mall security

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the police, military and local government executives for doing a good job in securing public utilities in Metro Manila, particularly the mass transit system, and shopping malls.

The President today personally witnessed the positive outcome of strict security measures carried out by police and security guards in the Mass Rail Transit and SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City.

To prove that Metro Manila remained safe from terrorists, the President, First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo and daughter Evangeline Lourdes, went to the MRT Taft Station in Pasay City this afternoon and boarded the MRT train like an ordinary citizen.

The President traveled from Pasay City to Shaw Boulevard Station and motored to nearby SM Megamall, in Mandaluyong City.

During her short train travel, the President interviewed some passengers inside the train and asked them how they feel about the tightened security conducted by the security guards in the MRT.

She said that based on her conversation with people inside the train and earlier in shopping malls, most said they felt safe and secure.

“They’re really very feeling secure, that’s why I congratulate our crisis managers. Hindi ba ang dami kinatatakutan? May panic buying, wala naman. Magkakaroon ng bombahan oras na magsimula ang giyera, wala naman,” the President told media.

The President enjoined the public to stay calm, maintain their ordinary daily routine and the police, military and local government executives would handle the security of the people.

“Kaya ituloy natin ang ating buhay sa pangaraw-araw. Importante lamang siyempre mas alerto tayo, alertness ang napakaimportante,” she said.

“Our police, military and local government executives are still in heightened alert. I ordered them to be our crisis manager to care the welfare of our citizens,” she added.

National Police Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., and National Capital Regional Police Office Director Chief Superintendent Reynaldo Velasco accompanied the President during her MRT trip and mall tour.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 23, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041554/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar23.htm>

The President's Day: March 24, 2003

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- **GMA urges other oil firms to cut diesel price**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **DFA, DOLE agree to limit travel ban to new OFW deployments to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Israel**
- **FEJODAP assures GMA it won't support petition for fare increase**
- **GMA okays expulsion of Iraqi diplomats, non-diplomatic personnel**
- **South Korean firms to invest in RP's natural gas industry, says DOE**
- **PBA players help OFW relatives make free call to Middle East countries**
- **GMA expresses sadness over death of Filipina domestic helper of SARS in Hong Kong**
- **GMA names Guiang new TESDA head**
- **Gov't team set to leave for K.L. to explore resumption of talks with MILF**
- **GMA calls on Iraq to observe Geneva convention in treatment of POWs**

GMA urges other oil firms to cut diesel price

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged other oil companies to follow Petron which cut back the pump price of diesel by 40 centavos per liter effective last midnight.

In an interview at Juan Luna St. in Tondo, Manila where she launched a P0.50 diesel discount per liter scheme to jeepney drivers, the President thanked Petron for bringing its diesel prices down.

"Am I urging the other oil companies to follow suit? Most certainly," the President said.

The President, who donned a Petron gasoline attendant uniform, thanked the company for taking the lead by decreasing the price of diesel.

"I'd rather that Petron play the role of price leader. You see, when Petron brought down its diesel by forty centavos, then the other oil companies also brought down their diesel price by forty centavos," the President said.

The President further said that she hopes these oil companies "would also allocate some specific ways by which they can give discounts to our drivers."

According to Petron, it has decided to cut back the price of diesel, widely used by buses and jeepney, in view of the drastic fall in the cost of Dubai oil from \$31 per barrel before the outbreak of war in Iraq to less than \$22 after hostilities started last week.

During the launching of the 50 centavos discount per liter on diesel products at the Tondo gasoline station, the President thanked Saudi Aramco, the foreign partner of Petron, for the gesture.

"I would like to thank Saudi Aramco because they are the partners of the Philippine government," she said.

The President said that no less than the president of Saudi Aramco assured her during a visit last year that the Philippines would be given priority in oil supply not only because of Saudi Aramco's investment in Petron but because of its 15,000 Filipino workers.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Iraq Situation

The end is not in doubt. We pray for a swift resolution and minimum casualties, especially among civilians.

The most important threat facing our country now are possible retaliatory terrorist attacks. The President has instructed the authorities to implement the highest level of preparedness. She wants all potential targets hardened, and alertness among our people tightened.

All public hotlines for public safety and welfare are urged to operate on a 24-hour basis to give reliable information that is important to the public. The President asks for the full support of the media.

The public is urged not to believe and/or spread rumors that tend to sow panic or fear. Keep calm, but alert.

Expulsion of Iraqis

The President has authorized the expulsion of one Iraqi diplomat for engaging in acts inimical to our national security. An Iraqi civilian (not a diplomat) is likewise being ordered expelled. The DFA and the Bureau of Immigration are expected to implement this shortly.

Gas Coupons

This was done as a contingency measure that is no longer necessary. Supply is high and stable, prices are going down, the war is expected to be relatively short and swift. There is no cause for alarm over this issue.

MILF

If the MILF is determined to help attain peace and progress in Mindanao, it should give up its senseless attacks and come to the negotiating table.

DFA, DOLE agree to limit travel ban to new OFW deployments to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Israel

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), upon consultations with organizations of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and Philippine embassies in Middle East countries, have agreed to limit the scope of OFW deployment ban to new deployments to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Israel.

In a statement, the DFA said that all travels to Iraq, however, remain suspended.

The term “new deployment,” the DFA said, refers to workers whose travel and work documents have not been completed before March 20, the start of the United States-led attack of the “coalition of the willing” against Iraq.

On the first day of the attack, the DOLE suspended the departure of OFWs to the Middle East, including those returning to their old jobs.

The DFA said that those exempted from the ban—and are, therefore, allowed to leave for the Middle East—are OFWs who are staying in Manila on vacation leave hence would need to go back to their employers and those who fall under any of the following categories:

- Those whose families are still at the work site;
- Those whose work sites are situated far enough from the battle areas; and
- Those whose work visas are about to expire.

Philippine Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Bahnarim Guinomla assured Foreign Affairs Secretary Bias F. Ople that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is secure and quiet despite the outbreak of war in Iraq.

Guinomla recommended that Filipinos with complete travel and work documents and those currently on leave here in Manila be allowed to return to Saudi Arabia to enable them to fulfill their pending job contracts.

Ople agreed on condition that all these returning workers immediately report and register with the Philippine Embassy in their respective host countries in the Middle East.

Guinomla also belied earlier reports of chaos and panic among Filipinos in Saudi Arabia including reports of cancelled outbound flights and over-crowding at the kingdom's international airports.

"Saudi Arabia remains calm and peaceful and our workers are familiar with the embassy's contingency plan. Please tell their relatives in Manila that these reports (of chaos) are simply not true," Guinomla said in his report to Ople.

FEJODAP assures GMA it won't support petition for fare increase

The Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines (FEJODAP) today vowed not to support the current petition for a fare increase following the government's launching of several programs that offer discount on diesel prices to transport groups.

At the Petron gasoline station at Juan Luna St. in Tondo today, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo offered a P0.50 discount per liter of diesel scheme to all FEJODAP members.

The P0.50 discount to FEJODAP members is on top of Petron's 40 centavos per liter cutback in diesel prices effective last midnight. All in all, the diesel price in the Juan Luna St. Petron is P15.70.

FEJODAP president Zeny Maranan thanked the President for the gesture.

"Kami po ay nagpapasalamat sa inyo ng labis labis sapagkat dito po ninyo ipinakita ang kapakanan ng mga tsuper sa pagmamahal na pinagkakaloob ninyo bagamat meron pong nakabinbin na increase sa fare sa LTFRB (We are very thankful to you because you have shown your regard for drivers though there is an ongoing petition for a fare increase at the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board)," Maranan said.

Maranan said that in return as a favor to the President, FEJODAP would not support and would even oppose the fare increase petition.

"Makaasa po kayo na talaga pong yung kahilingan niyo po sa amin na huwag kaming mag-file ng increase sa fare ay aming pong gagawin upang matulungan, hindi lang po kayo mahal pong Pangulo, kundi ang sambayanang Pilipino," Maranan said.

Petron chairman Nicasio Alcantara, who was also present at the launching, said the company decided to offer discount in the particular gasoline station to ease the burden of increasing oil prices to jeepney drivers.

In brief remarks, the President thanked the jeepney drivers and operators for their sacrifices to keep the fare affordable to passengers.

The President said the government is undertaking discount schemes to diesel patrons, particularly jeepney drivers, to mitigate any increase in basic goods' prices on the people during this time of crisis.

Last Saturday, the President launched several government-private sector programs intended to mitigate the impact of oil prices on the transport sector.

At the Flying V gasoline station at 15th Ave. and P. Tuazon Street in Cubao, Quezon City, the President launched the “*Tulong sa Pagsulong*,” a scheme wherein diesel fuel patrons could avail themselves of rebates of as much as five liters for every 10-liter purchase.

Under the scheme, Flying V patrons who buy at least 10 liters of diesel will be given a coupon worth 5 liters of diesel. The patron may accumulate his coupons and have them exchanged to cash of at least P100.

At the Eastern Petroleum station in Quezon Ave. beside the Pantranco terminal, the President initiated the loading of cheaper diesel worth P16.25 per liter to members of the Pasang Masda transport group.

“Ito ay bilang pagpapasalamat sa ating jeepney drivers at ating mga transport groups dahil kahit na tumaas yung presyo ng krudo at gasolina nung panahon na hinihintay ang giyera sa Iraq, hindi pa rin nila tinaas yung kanilang presyo ng pasahe (This is our way of showing our thanks to the jeepney drivers and transport groups for not increasing fares even if price of crude and gasoline went up before the Iraq war),” she said.

Flying V chairman and president Ramon Villavicencio said the “*Tulong sa Pagsulong*” scheme was the oil firm’s response to the President’s call to help jeepney drivers who are most affected by the increase in fuel prices.

Flying V, in a statement, said that “despite the crisis facing the world today, and even as the increase in pump price is not sufficient to cover the general increase in procurement costs of fuel, it has launched the public service program in response to the call of the President to make sacrifices and sympathize with the plight of the jeepney drivers who serve the general riding public.”

Villavicencio said that during these hard times, business sense should be relegated to the background in lieu of the moral responsibility to respond to a cause of those in need.

Among the transport groups set to benefit from the “*Tulong sa Pagsulong*” scheme are the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines (FEJODAP), Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operators Nationwide, Samahang Operators at Drivers ng Project 4, P. Tuazon Farmers Cubao Inc. and the Group Unite Drivers, Operators into One Inc.

GMA okays expulsion of Iraqi diplomats, non-diplomatic personnel

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she has approved the expulsion of an Iraqi diplomat and an Iraqi non-diplomatic personnel.

In an interview in Tondo, Manila, the President said the government is expelling those “found with some evidence of espionage” though she added that the government need not explain any reason for such gesture.

“We’re doing it individual by individual,” she said.

The President noted that Jordan, a neighbor of Iraq, already expelled five Iraqi diplomats.

“So, we are in fact bending backwards in a show of friendship to the people of Iraq that we are only expelling those with some evidence of espionage even if we don’t even have to explain any reason for expelling diplomats,” she said.

Last month, the Philippines expelled Husham Hussain, the second secretary of the Iraqi embassy, after giving credence to intelligence reports that he was probably in touch with some Abu Sayyaf elements in Mindanao.

Foreign Secretary Blas Ople said the sovereignty of nations includes the prerogative to declare any diplomat persona non grata. “And you need not explain the ground for it,” he added.

South Korean firms to invest in RP's natural gas industry, says DOE

The Department of Energy today said that South Korean firms have expressed keen interest to take part in the development of the country's downstream natural gas industry.

In a report, Energy Secretary Vicente S. Perez, who headed a Philippine delegation that visited South Korea last week, said that officials of the South Korean companies have shown interest in investing in the necessary infrastructure that would develop the downstream natural gas sector.

"Our natural gas industry is one of the industries that are attracting interest from different countries. Our meetings with the several Korean firms indicated a very strong interest among them to carry out these vital projects," Perez said.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the DOE to lead in forming a consortium with interested parties that would undertake the development of the downstream natural gas sector by putting in place the backbone transmission and distribution pipelines and related infrastructure facilities such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and refilling stations.

Perez said that among the South Korean firms interested in investing in the country's natural gas industry were Korea Electric Power Corp. (KEPCO) and Korea Gas Corp. (KOGAS).

KEPCO is the largest Korean firm investor in the Philippines through the operations of the \$700 million Ilijan natural-gas power plant in Batangas.

KOGAS, on the other hand, owns the largest LNG terminal in the world with a storage capacity of 2.24 million cubic meters as of end 2001.

"Natural gas is considered as the fuel of the 21st century and ranks as the most environmentally-friendly fuel. The availability of a viable gas transport infrastructure, however, is critical to increase its utilization given that based on our projections show that the demand for natural gas will pick up in the next coming years," Perez stressed.

According to Perez, from 203.2 million standard cubic feet (MSCF) of gas produced from the San Antonio field in Isabela in 1997, the country's production has increased by 2,336.5 percent to reach 4,951.3 MSCF in 2001.

At present, the Malampaya natural gas from the waters off Palawan is being used to fuel three power plants within a combined capacity of 2,700 megawatts (MW), Perez said.

PBA players help OFW relatives make free call to Middle East countries

Ginebra San Miguel guard Aries Dimaunahan had a chance to call his brother in Kuwait, teammate Elmer Lago was more than just pleased in assisting a lady from Valenzuela City place a call to her sister in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and a persistent Bong Ravena of Talk n Text would not let technical difficulties get in his way so that he could place a call to Bahrain in behalf of an elderly lady from Pandacan.

These were just a few of the scenes that transpired when players from the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) came Sunday night to assist callers in the Office of the President's Oplan Kalinga: Kumustahan calling center at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium (NAS).

Also at the calling center who manned the telephone lines were Red Bull's Mick Penisi, Jimwell Torion, Junthy Valenzuela and Nelson Asaytono and Ginebra's Sunday Salvacion.

There are currently more than 200 telephone lines installed at the NAS to accommodate free calls from the families, relatives and friends of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) working in the Middle East, Israel and Turkey.

“It is indeed heartwarming that our famous PBA players found time to assist our countrymen in placing their calls to their relatives and friends in the Middle East,” said Press Secretary Hernani Braganza.

The Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) is spearheading Oplan Kalinga on orders of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to exhaust all efforts to help alleviate the plight of OFWs during this time of conflict in the Middle East.

And in pursuit of such a mandate, the OPS has entered into agreement with the PBA to bring the Oplan Kalinga: Kumustahan calling center to PBA game venues starting Wednesday at the Makati Coliseum.

A composite team from the telecommunications companies rendering free service at the NAS, OPS, Presidential Action Center (PACE) and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) has been formed that would provide free telephone calls to the Middle East, Israel, and Turkey at the PBA games venues.

“This is our small way of bringing the services of the government to the people. What better way to do this than bring the Kumustahan calling center to the PBA?” Braganza said.

The PBA will be providing a booth for the OPS Kumustahan team at the Makati Coliseum on Wednesday and at the Araneta Coliseum on Friday and Sunday so that PBA fans who have relatives and friends in the Middle East, Israel, and Turkey could have the chance to place free calls while enjoying the PBA games.

GMA expresses sadness over death of Filipina domestic helper of SARS in Hong Kong

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed sadness over reports of the death of a Filipina domestic helper in Hong Kong because of the dreaded severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

In an interview, the President said she has ordered Consul General Victoria Bataclan of the Philippine Consulate in Hong Kong to ensure that the Filipino workers in the former British colony are safe.

The President also said she ordered Bataclan to keep the government posted of developments and to inform Manila what the consulate needs to ensure the safety and well-being of our workers.

She said she is consoled by the fact that the Ministry of Health in Hong Kong is doing its best to contain the dreaded viral disease.

“We continue to rely on them to keep our workers safe,” the President said.

Earlier, the President has directed our own Department of Health to make the necessary preventive measures so that SARS would not spread to the Philippines.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified Hong Kong, Singapore, China and Vietnam as among the countries in Asia that have reported cases of SARS.

GMA names Guiang new TESDA head

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she has appointed Alcestis Guiang as the new director general of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

The President said Guiang was her first choice even before she appointed Lucita Lazo, the first TESDA director general in her administration, who was recommend by the search committee.

Lazo is now Undersecretary for Repatriation of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

“Actually, she was my first choice because she’s a career official,” the President said.

Guiang is the Deputy Director General for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) of the TESDA since 1995. She was the Director of the Bureau of Technical and Vocational Education when it was merged with the NMYC to form TESDA.

A Career Executive Service Officer (CESO) since 1979, Guiang’s formal education includes nutrition, therapy, food chemistry, psychology, educational administration and supervision.

She is an international consultant in the field of technical education and training, management, secondary education and psychology, accredited with the Asian Development Bank.

Guiang replaces Dante Liban, who earlier submitted his resignation.

Liban, a former Quezon City congressman, has been at odds with the TESDA board in connection with the issuance of artist record books (ARBs).

Gov’t team set to leave for K.L. to explore resumption of talks with MILF

A government team is set to leave for Malaysia on Wednesday to hold exploratory talks with representatives of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Presidential Adviser for Mindanao and government peace panel chairman Jesus Dureza said today.

Dureza, in an interview after a lull in the meeting of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS) in Malacañang, noted that the talks are crucial to the possible resumption of peace negotiations with the MILF.

Dureza said there would be no specific agenda during the exploratory talks but noted that it might be possible that the government side would present the draft peace agreement that has been approved by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The COCIS meeting was also attended by local government officials of Mindanao. The President briefly attended the meeting.

“It is a first step (to the resumption of the formal peace talks). That’s why it’s crucial,” Dureza said.

Dureza said the meeting with the MILF is the result of back-channeling efforts by Presidential Adviser for Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales and Senior Adviser on International Competitiveness Roberto Romulo.

Romulo, a former foreign affairs secretary, has recently visited Kuala Lumpur on a special assignment by the President.

GMA calls on Iraq to observe Geneva convention in treatment of POWs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the Iraqi government to observe rules and conventions on prisoners of war (POWs) as stipulated in the Geneva Convention.

The President made the call in reacting to reports that one of the POWs now being held by the Iraqi military is a Filipino-American, a certain Joseph Hudson.

She said that Hudson, who is with the American military forces in Iraq, is a son of Mrs. Aniceta Hudson, a Filipino-American, from New Mexico, USA.

The President said that under the Geneva Convention, POWs must be treated well and fairly.

“The POWs should be given food, medicine, if needed, and never to be tortured,” the President said.

Although the Philippines is a member of the US-led “coalition of the willing” in the fight against the government of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, the President has stressed that the country will not be sending combat troops to Iraq.

The President, however, said that the Philippines would be willing to send humanitarian assistance to Iraq the moment the war is over.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 24, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20080227235021/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar24.htm>

The President's Day: March 25, 2003

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- **Filipino workers in Middle East continue to perform work despite war in Iraq, says DFA**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA names members of RP peace panels in talks with MILF**
- **GMA orders security measures tightened even outside airports**

Filipino workers in Middle East continue to perform work despite war in Iraq, says DFA

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople said that overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Middle East continue to perform their work despite the risk coming from the outbreak of war in Iraq.

Ople said that in a report to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Philippine Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Bahnarim Guinomla said that a group of six Filipino truck drivers assigned to bring fresh water from Makkah in Saudi Arabia to Kuwait for use by coalition forces stationed near the Saudi-Kuwait border continue to bravely perform their job.

The six Filipinos, who work for Al-Humayen Transport Company, said they are very much aware of the risks attached to their work. "They are committed, however, to fulfilling their job," Guinomla said.

The OFWs told embassy officials that although they are concerned about reports of missile strikes into Kuwait, they feel it is their obligation to continue with their work.

According to Ople, the US-led coalition forces depend on the Filipino truckers for their water, a valuable commodity in the arid desert.

The Filipino truckers also deliver water and other essential commodities to outlets in Saudi Arabia, thus ensuring a steady supply of bottled water to all nationals, including foreign workers, Ople said.

"Our overseas Filipino workers in war-affected countries in the Middle East have become a source of inspiration to others because of their valor and dedication to their jobs," Ople said.

Ople has instructed all Philippine embassies in the Middle East to maintain close contact with members of the Filipino community and their employers.

He also instructed Ambassador Guinomla to request the transport companies to look after the safety of the six Filipino delivery truck drivers.

Earlier, also in a report to the DFA, Guinomla said that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is secure and quiet despite the ongoing war in neighboring Iraq.

Guinomla recommended that OFWs with complete travel documents and those currently on leave in Manila be allowed to return to Saudi Arabia to enable them to fulfill their pending work contracts.

There are about 1.5 million OFWs scattered in the Middle East, the bulk of them in Saudi Arabia.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Iraqi Diplomats

This serves as fair warning that we shall not compromise our national security for any reason. The President calls upon all foreign nationals in the Philippines, whether diplomats or not, to desist from any activities inimical to our national interest. A tight watch is being conducted by the authorities, and the government will not hesitate to arrest and summarily deport aliens, if called for.

This is not an action directed against the people of Iraq. These are actions taken against individuals who have pose a threat to our national security, nothing more.

Peace Talks with MILF

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's commitment to peace remains unchanged but she will not allow innocent people to fall prey to terrorists. We call for principled negotiations for peace under the Constitution and our nation's sovereignty, a peace that guarantees the rights of civilians to be secure in their communities.

Exploratory talks shall soon open in Kuala Lumpur. Our team has been formed and is ready to leave. Government shall explore mechanisms to stop the fighting, allow evacuees to go home and jumpstart development.

We have conducted consultations with the leaders of Mindanao. They support the policy of active defense as well as principled peace initiatives.

SARS

The Department of Health is coordinating with the WHO and other countries with SARS cases. We are committed to provide all forms of assistance to OFWs who may have contracted the virus. The DOH has contingency measures in place.

GMA names members of RP peace panels in talks with MILF

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today named at least three persons who would join the Philippine peace and advisory panels in expected renewed talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The President said that as requested by stakeholders, "we're adding a member from the Department of National Defense, that's Undersecretary (Antonio) Santos Jr."

She said that she had not yet notified Senator Ramon Magsaysay Jr. but has included the latter as a member of the advisory panel. Another member is Basilan Rep. Gerry Salapuddin.

She added that she has not yet given any thought of naming a member of the Cabinet to the peace panel.

But she had asked local government officials in Mindanao to choose one from among them to sit with the peace panel.

The President stressed that the government has continued with its confidence-building measures preparatory to the renewed negotiations with the MILF.

"The main concrete way to build confidence is to find ways to bring back the Pikit (Cotabato) evacuees to their barangays. That would be, to me, the most important step in confidence building," she said.

She disclosed that at the most recent Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security meeting, "we talked about how to move the peace talks forward."

Earlier, the President said that while the government has opened up its arms of acceptance to those who wish peace, it would not hesitate to use the arms of force against those who disturb national peace and security.

GMA orders security measures tightened even outside airports

Fearing a repetition of the Davao bombing incident, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered general manager Edgar Manda to beef up security at the areas around the Ninoy Aquino International Airport and the Domestic Terminal to ensure the safety of passengers.

In a surprise inspection, the President noticed that security measures outside the NAIA are not as tight as inside, noting how vehicles going inside the parking lots and even at the driveways are not inspected.

Irked, she immediately ordered Manda to employ more security and inspection personnel outside the terminals and deploy more sniff dogs around the areas where there are many people waiting for the arrival of their loved ones.

“Well, inside the airport, it’s really world class. In fact, it has been judged one of the safest airports in the world. So I wanted to make the outside, the area outside, just as safe as the area inside the airport,” the President said.

The Chief Executive admitted that she has learned her lesson from the bombing at the Davao airport which killed many civilians only a few weeks ago.

“It was not inside the airport that experienced terrorist attack,” she said. “It was outside because inside, it was very well secured.”

During her inspection tour, the President allowed herself to be frisked by the lady guard, saying she wants everybody to be security conscious.

After going down the parking lot to inspect the flow of vehicles, the President walked towards the arrival and departure areas and greeted the passengers.

Aside from Manda, she was accompanied in her inspection tour by National Capital Region Police Office Director Chief Superintendent Reynaldo Velasco and Aviation Security Command Chief Jess Versoza.

At the Domestic Terminal, the President was also dismayed by the absence of inspection among people and cars entering the premises. She then proceeded to the Philtranco Bus terminal in Pasay City to oversee the security measures being done there.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 25, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20060427145401/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar25.htm>

The President's Day: March 26, 2003

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- **Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **RP-US military officials to discuss Balikatan 03-1**
- **BSP continues to take measures to strengthen peso**
- **GMA notes strong RP-Malaysia pro-peace, anti-terrorism alliance**
- **Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on the Iraq war**
- **GMA makes another inspection visit, this time to Cubao MRT station, shopping mall**
- **GMA tells OFWs to keep in touch with RP embassies, MEPT, in case of chemical fallout in Iraq**
- **DFA prepares plans for post-Saddam scenario in Iraq**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye**

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Surprise Inspections

The President urges people not to be complacent. This is the reason why she personally goes about inspecting security preparedness measures put in place by police and local authorities. Efforts are not being spared by government in preparing for the worst but citizens must likewise do their share.

KL Talks

The exploratory team of the government has been instructed to explore means to put the formal talks back on track under a firm agenda and schedule. There will no negotiation of substantive issues yet. These discussions will take place in the prospective formal talks. We would like to express our gratitude to the Malaysian government for its long-standing support for the Mindanao peace process. Malaysia has been our ally for peace, and in the war against terrorism.

RP-US military officials to discuss Balikatan 03-1

Officials of the Department of National Defense (DND) of the Philippines and the Department of Defense of the United States, represented by the US Pacific Command, will start discussing Thursday (March 27) future counter-terrorism coordination and cooperation efforts.

Philippine and United States senior military officials will meet in Manila to formulate the framework that will govern the conduct of a possible Balikatan 03-1.

The DND says the meetings will consider five policy issues in the planning or execution of future RP-US military events.

The issues include:

- Ensuring that any new military event meets the policy criteria set forth in the Philippine Constitution,
- Ensuring that the security interests of both the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the US military are promoted,
- Ensuring that the sensitivities to the social needs of the community in which the exercise may take place are considered,
- Ensuring that the exercise meets the criteria for what is best for the national interests of the Philippines and the US, and
- Ensuring that the exercise is not time bound and that basing will not become an issue.

The Balikatan will be conducted to enhance the capability of the AFP to ensure its sustainable success and to become self-reliant.

It is also expected to bring about the improvement in the quality of life of the communities where the activities may take place, to be done through humanitarian and civic action programs.

The interagency group, the DND says, will seek to include the participation of the local community leaders and their people.

Upon the completion of the meetings, a US assessment team under Major General Joe Weber, commander of the 3rd Marine Division, will work with the Southern Command in Zamboanga City to determine the most effective means to enhance the AFP's counter-terrorism capability.

The assessment, which excludes combat operations of any kind, will consist of field visits and consultations between military officials, and civic, educational and local leaders.

Last year, Balikatan 02-1 resulted in numerous AFP successes and the completion of many socio-economic projects that benefited residents of Basilan.

The DND says "any future combined AFP and US military events will seek to build on last year's similar successes."

BSP continues to take measures to strengthen peso

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) has continued to take the necessary steps to address the weakening of the peso, in addition to the sanctions it had imposed on foreign exchange dealers found to have engaged in speculation and hoarding of US dollars.

Recently, the Monetary Board, the policy-making body of the BSP, lifted the tiering system for BSP policy rates and increased the liquidity reserve requirement for universal and commercial banks to mop up excess liquidity that was also putting the inflation target at risk.

Although the bulk of foreign exchange transactions so far appear to be in order, the BSP said it continues to evaluate foreign exchange transactions for possible violations.

To date, the BSP has imposed administrative sanctions (monetary and non-monetary) on eight banks, two of them required to dispose of their excess dollar holdings. A few others were given time to explain certain transactions.

The BSP decided not to publish the names of the banks that have been sanctioned, for the moment. As a practice, the disclosure of the names of erring banks is resorted to depending on the nature of the circumstance.

It will be recalled that the BSP has been closely monitoring foreign exchange transactions of all commercial and universal banks on a daily basis since February this year when it noted "an unusual demand for foreign exchange caused possibly by concerns over continuing tension in the Middle East."

BSP examiners have been reviewing day-to-day foreign exchange sales of all commercial and universal banks to ensure that they are complying with BSP regulations.

In addition, banks were directed to make all documents supporting the sale of foreign exchange available for verification by BSP examiners. The BSP implements daily monitoring of forex transactions whenever demand for forex goes beyond normal levels.

The BSP also continues to dialogue with the Bankers Association of the Philippines to further identify measures that would reduce market volatility and to find ways to enforce strict compliance with foreign exchange rules.

The peso has reacted positively to these measures. After breaching P55 to \$1, the peso has been gaining against the US dollar. From P54.97 last Wednesday, it improved to P54.48 Thursday, settled down at P54.45 last Friday and closed at P54.50 Monday.

On Tuesday, the peso closed at P54.30.

GMA notes strong RP-Malaysia pro-peace, anti-terrorism alliance

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the “continuing alliance for peace and against terrorism” between the Philippines and Malaysia.

The President said the stronger relations between the two countries has also eased the situation in Mindanao, as she expressed confidence that Malaysia’s support as third-party facilitator in the peace talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) would succeed.

“That just goes to show how Malaysia is so sincere in helping because there are so many important key officials that are involved in the third-party facilitation,” she said.

“Just today, I had a visit from some key officials of Malaysia,” she said.

The President also named three people who would be leaving for Kuala Lumpur for exploratory talks with the MILF

She said the exploratory three-person team is composed of Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza, either Defense Undersecretary Antonio Santos Jr. or Senior Presidential Adviser Paul Dominguez, and Social Welfare and Services Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman.

Dominguez and Santos have to choose between the two of them who would go as member of the team because they represent the same constituency, she said.

She clarified that Presidential Adviser Norberto Gonzales would also go to Kuala Lumpur, but “not officially.”

“He is going there, but he is going to do his own assignment, so he is not part of the exploratory panel to talk with the MILF,” she said.

Statement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on the Iraq war

The impending battle for Baghdad has raised the possibility of chemical attacks and acts of terrorism.

This will be the climax of the war which could rouse embedded terrorist cells all over the world.

This is the reason why I have called upon a full alert among military and police authorities and the closing of ranks with the local governments and the communities.

All Filipinos in the Middle East must also be on a high state of alert and maintain close touch with their embassies and the Middle East Preparedness Team.

An enemy in the throes of defeat is prone to sow terror.

We have spared no effort in preparing for the worst even if it has not come to pass.

Let's not be complacent and let our guard down. Let's be focused and calm and ride out the storm.

GMA makes another inspection visit, this time to Cubao MRT station, shopping mall

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today personally witnessed the actual explosion of a bomb during a drill performed by the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the security force of the Metro Rail Transit Corporation (MRT) station in Cubao, Quezon City, to ensure that MRTs and shopping malls are secured.

“We have to have drills to practice. So this is what I am doing. I am having them practiced to make sure that the targets are hard rather than soft,” the President said, stressing that she has learned a lot from the Davao City bombing experience.

The President likened the Cubao and the SM Megamall drills to the fire and earthquake drills that she witnessed when she was young. “By the same reason, because terrorism is a threat all over the world now, we should also be prepared for that,” she said.

On the Davao City incident, the President said that although the airport itself was well secured, the area outside was not. “*So may nakapasok, may nakapag-iwan ng bomba* (someone was able to enter and left a bomb).”

“So it is very important to have the inspection going on in a crowded place,” the President said.

The President cited Philtranco bus station in Pasay City, which she visited yesterday, as having 100 percent inspection.

“In the past they did not have that 100 percent inspection but I am glad to see that now that there is a terrorist threat in the world, they have 100 percent inspection of people coming in. So, that makes the Philtranco much safer,” the President said.

The President stressed the importance for everybody to be always on the alert, to be on the look out for abandoned or left packages.

The simulation drill in Cubao's MRT station started when a MRT passenger supposedly saw a suspicious abandoned package. “Everything was already like a clockwork,” the President said.

“We want the ordinary riders of the MRT to be on the look out for left behind or unattended packages and they must tell the nearest security guard. Because as we have seen in the drill earlier, the nearest security guard knows what to do once he's alerted,” the President said.

National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) Chief Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco said that after the demonstration, they will be having a “critique” to know what areas of the drill need improvement, such as in coordination and in implementation.

After witnessing the drill at the MRT station in Cubao, the President motored to the SM Megamall in Ortigas to witness another demonstration of bomb detonation.

GMA tells OFWs to keep in touch with RP embassies, MEPT, in case of chemical fallout in Iraq

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on all overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Middle East to keep close contacts with Philippine foreign missions and the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT) in the wake of reports that the Iraqi military might unleash its chemical weapons against the advancing forces of the US-led coalition.

In a teleconference with MEPT head Ambassador Roy Cimatu, who is based in Kuwait, the President said the impending battle in Baghdad has created the possibility for a chemical attack and more acts of terrorism.

“This could be the climax of the war, which could rouse and beget terrorist cells all over the world,” the President said.

The President said that an enemy “in the throes of defeat is prone to sow terror,” referring to the regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

“That is why we have spared no effort in preparing for the worst. Let’s not be complacent and let’s be focused and calm and ride out the storm,” the President said.

In the local front, the President also called on all Filipinos to be on full alert and to coordinate with military and police authorities, as well as with their local government units, in thwarting any terrorist attacks.

During the past few days, the President has made surprise visits to places that could be susceptible to terrorist attacks.

This morning, the President witnessed a security-related drill at the MRT Station in Cubao, Quezon City and visited the SM Megamall in Ortigas, Mandaluyong City, to check on the mall’s security precautions.

On Tuesday, the President also made a surprise inspection of the security measures undertaken at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

DFA prepares plans for post-Saddam scenario in Iraq

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has started to look beyond the Iraqi crisis as it laid down plans for a possible post-Saddam Iraq scenario.

In a teleconference today with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT) head Ambassador Roy Cimatu said “we are looking into the possible participation of the Philippines in the reconstruction of Iraq.”

Cimatu said Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople has instructed officials of the department to give due consideration on the matter.

Ople has also instructed DFA Undersecretary Delia Albert to work out with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) a mechanism to prepare Filipino contractors and manpower providers to participate in the reconstruction work and rehabilitation work of post-Saddam Iraq.

The instructions likewise called on Albert to work with major US contractors who will likely be preferred by the new Iraqi regime and have employed Filipino expatriates before.

Cimatu told the President that the “reputation of the Filipino worker is such that we feel that all of the contractors who will be involved in the reconstruction will naturally come to the Filipino worker.”

“They have shown their work, they have proven their skills,” he added, in reference to the overseas Filipino workers.

Meanwhile, the DFA has also proposed the dispatch of a humanitarian mission of doctors and nurses as well as a modest peacekeeping force as a mode of participation in a post-Saddam scenario.

Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye

Representatives of the Philippine and US governments held meetings today in Manila to discuss policy issues on future counter terrorism coordination and cooperation efforts.

Last year, cooperative efforts, exemplified by Balikatan 02-1, resulted in many successes for the AFP as well as many humanitarian assistance and civic action projects that helped to improve the local communities' security and living conditions in Basilan. Any future combined AFP and US military events would seek to build on last year's similar successes.

The Philippines is represented in the meetings by officials of the Department of National Defense while the United States is represented by officials of the US Pacific Command and the US embassy.

Top of the agenda are policy issues for the possible holding of Balikatan 03-1.

As part of the planning process, the goals of the meetings are to consider the following important issues prior to any planning or execution of future RP and US military events:

Ensuring any new military event meets the policy criteria set forth in the Philippine Constitution.

Ensuring that security interests of both the Philippines and the US are promoted.

Ensuring that the sensitivities to the social needs of the community in which military event may take place are considered.

Ensuring that the military event is appropriately timed.

Ensuring that the Philippine and the US military cooperation will not involve basing or a permanent US presence.

These military activities will be conducted to enhance the capability of the AFP to combat terrorism. The long-term goal is for the AFP to be self-reliant.

More importantly, these activities are expected to bring about the improvement in the security and living conditions of the communities in which the activities may take place through humanitarian and civic action programs.

Upon completion of the group's meetings, a US joint military assessment team, led by Maj. Gen. Joe Weber, commanding general, 3rd Marine Division, will work in concert with the AFP Southern Command in Zamboanga to determine the most effective means to enhance the AFP's counter-terrorism capability.

The assessment, expected to last two weeks, will consist of consultations between the AFP and the US military in Southern Command, field visits, and discussions with civic, educational, and local leaders.

The assessment team's mission does not include combat operations.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 26, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041643/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar26.htm>

The President's Day: March 27, 2003

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- **Gas coupon only for worst scenario — Palace**
- **GMA calls for more coordination in intelligence work in anti-terrorism campaign**
- **GMA cites role of local execs in anti-terrorism drive in Cebu City command conference**
- **GMA calls for more interfaith dialogues in the fight against terrorism**
- **NAIA security beefed up, GMA told**
- **Philippines still free from S.A.R.S., says Dayrit**
- **GMA asks media to deprive terrorists of benefit of glorified coverage, publicity**
- **Thousands of jobs opportunities in Mideast expected to arise after armed conflict**

Gas coupon only for worst scenario — Palace

There will be no need for gas coupons.

This was stressed today by Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye as he tried to squelch speculations that gas rationing would be resorted to by the government due to the reported printing of 5 million coupons.

In a radio interview, Bunye emphasized that the country has an ample supply of oil which is good for 72 days, the country's highest ever inventory in 10 years.

Despite this, he said, the government has not scrapped a standby plan to distribute rationing coupons to motorists in a worst case scenario of an oil shortage should the ongoing war in the Gulf deteriorate.

Bunye was reacting to reports that the National Printing Office has delivered 5 million rationing coupons to the Department of Energy.

"Ang lahat nang ito ay paghahanda lamang in the event na ma-disrupt ang supply ng krudo from the Middle East. Alam mo pag nagpaplano ka para sa isang contingency, you plan for the worse (All of these are contingency plans just in case worse comes to worst)," Bunye explained.

He said the country's 72-day inventory is more than enough to tide the country over and there will be no need for the gas coupons.

"Ito namang mga coupons na ito ay parang general purpose. Puwede nating gamitin sa future. Hindi naman masasayang yan (These are general purpose coupons that can be used in the future. They will not go to waste)," Bunye added.

GMA calls for more coordination in intelligence work in anti-terrorism campaign

CEBU CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called for coordinated efforts in intelligence gathering among the various government and military units in order to thwart terrorism.

In an anti-terrorist command conference held at the Waterfront Hotel here, the President cited the need to anticipate events "very efficiently and effectively" for the country to succeed in the war against terrorism.

She called the attention of various intelligence units for more intelligence and "intelligent vision" and the sharing of information between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

“I have seen situations where the intelligence service of a specific area command does not have the same information as the PNP regional office. In some cases, the latter do not have valuable information known by the Area Command Intelligence Unit,” the President said.

She cited as an example an arrested Abu Sayyaf commander in Sulu who was mistaken to be carrying a P5-million price on his head by the police. It was the Southern Command (Southcom), she said, which called the attention of Malacañang that the captured Abu Sayyaf leader was a P1-million guy.

“That could have been avoided if there had been more caution within the area command of the AFP and the PNP Regional Command,” she said.

The President advised those in attendance that whoever is the senior person among the intelligence networks of the PNP, AFP, the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) and National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) should form a team which he himself will head.

All information must then be fed into the data bank of the NICA and be reported to Malacañang, the President added in her directive.

During the same command conference, the Chief Executive enjoined everybody to strengthen internal focus against terrorism.

GMA cites role of local execs in anti-terrorism drive in Cebu City command conference

CEBU CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. to reissue and update the circular he sent to local executives describing the role and participation of local government units (LGUs) in the government’s anti-terrorism campaign.

Speaking at an anti-terrorism command conference at the Waterfront Hotel here, the President said “we must strengthen our internal focus against terrorism.”

The President enjoined all local government executives, from the governor down to the barangay level, to help in the prevention, intervention and containment of all terrorist acts.

Lina, during a teleconference with the President in Malacañang Wednesday, reported that the barangays where transmission lines and electric powers are located, have already been identified and segregated for “target hardening.”

“The barangay officials have already been alerted and they have formed their own neighborhood watch groups to coordinate with the Philippine National Police in case some suspicious characters are roaming around the area,” Lina said.

All over the country, specially in urban centers, Lina said that the local executives of each municipality have already prepared and updated their public safety plans.

“In that public safety plan an updated anti-terrorism and anti-kidnap component are now incorporated,” Lina said.

In the anti-terrorism component, the protection and guarding of vital installations are given better security measures, Lina said.

Lina said, it would be difficult for those who have any bad intentions to penetrate these vital installations and create chaos.

Lina likewise reported to the President that the PNP commanders in the fields were given very specific instructions to see to it that there is no lowering of guards and laxity on the part of those who are supposed to take charge and protect these important facilities.

The President has continued her surprise visits to public places, like MRT stations and shopping malls to make sure that these are 100 percent secure.

She witnessed the actual explosion of a bomb during what she called “practiced drill” to make sure that the targets are well-secured.

The President had also visited the Ninoy Aquino International Airport and the SM Megamall in Ortigas, Mandaluyong City and the Philtranco bus station in Pasay City to make sure that these crowded areas are safe.

She said that she has learned a lot from the Davao City experience where a bomb exploded in a passenger waiting area just outside the international airport.

GMA calls for more interfaith dialogues in the fight against terrorism

CEBU CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the need for broader understanding of the religious and ethnic diversity of the country in the coordinated fight against terrorism.

“We must pursue broader interfaith dialogues to promote Christian and Muslim solidarity in the country,” the President told the participants of an anti-terrorism command conference held at the Waterfront Hotel here.

The President said the terrorists would like to foment a religious war in the Philippines and cautioned law enforcement agencies not to fall for it.

She said that the conflict in Mindanao should instead be transformed into an opportunity to forge a religious understanding, ecumenism and solidarity among the Muslim and Christian population in Mindanao.

In Executive Order No. 37, the President has directed the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process to undertake measures that would broaden Muslim and Christian brotherhood so as to achieve a long-lasting peace and stability in Mindanao.

In the command conference, the President said the peace process with the mainstream Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is aimed at isolating the terrorists from the moderates among the Muslim Filipinos.

The President also encouraged local government executives to initiate their own peace talks with dissident groups in their localities.

She also called on the Department of Justice to anticipate all legal issues and concerns that are expected to arise in the stepped-up campaign against terrorism.

“The DOJ should set up a special team to serve a special requirement for the war on terrorism including the speedy prosecution, deportation and extradition of suspects,” the President said.

NAIA security beefed up, GMA told

CEBU CITY—On orders of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, security at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) has been beefed up, according to NAIA general manager Edgardo Manda.

In a teleconference during the Philippine National Police Region 6, 7 and 8 command conference at Waterfront Hotel in Lahug, Manda informed the President that among the additional security measures already being implemented is the deployment of a crowd control officer and the banning of knapsacks, backpacks and other types of luggage in the greeters' area.

Manda said that he has also deployed armed mobile guards in the parking area, including the special operations unit and strictly implemented the 20-second stop for loading and unloading at the departure level of the airport.

Meanwhile, the President today surprised officials and employees of the Mactan Cebu International Airport (MCIA) when she conducted an unscheduled inspection on the premises of the airport to personally check on the security measures being implemented here to preempt possible terrorist attacks.

The President arrived at the Mactan Air Base on board a Lear jet around 10:00 in the morning, more than one hour early from her original arrival time of 11:15 a.m. She immediately motored to nearby Mactan airport.

Some employees of the airport were surprised when the President alighted from a white car and entered the main entrance.

General Manager Angelo Verdano of Mactan Cebu International Airport apologized to the President for coming late and the lack of (appropriate welcome) preparations for her.

During her inspection, the President went inside the airport and observed the security measures put in place by airport police at the arrival area in the parking lot.

The President also went to the welcomers' area just across the street from the arrival area and greeted the people waiting for their loved ones. She also inspected the flow of vehicles coming in and out at the departure area of the airport.

After her surprise visit and inspection at the MCIA, the President motored to the Waterfront Hotel in Lahug to lead the PNP command conference for Regions 6, 7 and 8.

Philippines still free from S.A.R.S., says Dayrit

CEBU CITY — Unlike several countries, the Philippines is still free from the dreaded killer disease more popularly known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS.

This was the good news relayed by Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo this afternoon during the teleconference that followed the Command Conference for the Philippine National Police officers in Regions 6, 7 and 8 and the Armed Forces of the Philippines at the Waterfront Hotel in Lahug City.

In his report, Dayrit said that while countries and territories like China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Singapore and the United States have recorded various cases of the dreaded disease, there has been no single documented case in the Philippines as reported by the World Health Organization.

In that WHO report, Dayrit said that of the 1,323 SARS cases reported in 14 countries, China recorded 792 cases, Hong Kong 316, Vietnam 58, Singapore 74 and the United States 40.

The Health Secretary told the President that in compliance with her instructions, the DOH had already put in place all measures and strategy to prevent the spread of the infection.

Dayrit assured the President that in the event the disease finds its way into the country, the DOH will quickly identify and contain the source of the infection.

“So this strategy has worked very well,” he said. “We have a coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Labor and Employment as well as with our consulates abroad, particularly the consulate in Hong Kong.”

He also informed the President that all nine overseas Filipino workers in Singapore who had been infected by the disease have survived and in good condition.

He also said that of the three Filipina domestic helpers reported afflicted with SARS in Hong Kong, one is dead and the other two are in critical condition.

The DOH Secretary advised Filipinos to postpone any travel plans to countries with prevalent cases of SARS.

“If the travel is non-essential and unnecessary, for example shopping in Hong Kong, we could advise them to postpone their travel,” he said. “For Filipinos who cannot help but go to China or Hong Kong because of business, we advise them to take precautionary measures.”

GMA asks media to deprive terrorists of benefit of glorified coverage, publicity

CEBU CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on media to do their part in the fight against terrorism by depriving the terrorists of the benefit of glorified coverage and publicity.

She also asked media to help the government in maintaining calm, sobriety, prudence and solidarity in society and to support the implementation of policies and programs in the fight against terrorists.

During a command conference of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police regional offices in the Visayas, the President likewise ordered the Office of the Press Secretary and the Philippine Information Agency to maintain close and constructive contact with the media “in the pursuit of our common objective.”

She then asked the OPS and PIA, which are both headed by Press Secretary Hernani Braganza, to arrange periodic briefings “to bring the media into the loop of collective action and information.”

The President noted that armed groups ranged against the government as well as their allies in the streets are engaged in the more strident and militant campaign to challenge the government and to sow rumors and disinformation.

The President said “it is important for our people to be aware of the truth, to resist any and all attempts to sow panic or irrational fear.”

“It is important for us – police and civilians, national officials and local government officials, executive and legislative, government and citizenry...to close ranks in meeting the crisis,” she said.

“Each and every Filipino has the responsibility to be aware and enlightened, to be vigilant and to act with discipline and with the genuine concern for the common good,” the President added.

Thousands of jobs opportunities in Mideast expected to arise after armed conflict

CEBU CITY—An estimated 50,000 to 100,000 job opportunities in the Middle East are awaiting skilled and non-skilled Filipino workers once the war ends in Iraq.

This was the report made by special envoy retired General Roy Cimatu, head of the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT), to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo this afternoon during the teleconference at the Philippine National Police – Armed Forces of the Philippines command conference at the Waterfront Hotel in Lahug City.

“The Kuwaiti government has nice words for the OFWs because they were the ones who stood by the Kuwaiti government in their crisis. And I should expect a lot of workers will be needed in Kuwait and Iraq,” Cimatu said during the telephone conversation with the President.

Cimatu informed the President that one or two months after the war, the reconstruction will start and probably a massive demand for workers.

“In fact, there are a lot of money already allotted for rehabilitation and reconstruction for Iraq and this will be in the form of structures that have been destroyed or additional infrastructure that may be used for further development,” Cimatu said.

Cimatu added that some oil refineries destroyed during the armed conflict would be improved and these are potential sources of job opportunities for the overseas Filipino workers.

He also inform the President that the Kuwaiti government will be needing semi-skilled workers after workers from other countries left their jobs before the war.

“I think they will not be coming back anymore, so there’s a vacuum for semi-skilled Filipino workers who wants to work here,” Cimatu said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: March 27, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20080108092614/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar27.htm>

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- **DFA conveys to Iraq gov't concern for safety of Fil-Am P.O.W. in Baghdad**
- **More Filipinos accept jobs in Gulf despite Iraq war**
- **GMA accepts U.S. donation of \$5.3-M equipment, \$1M in medical supplies to Jolo hospital**
- **GMA continues inspection trips, checks rice supply this time**

GMA orders AFP, PNP to gear modernization program to war against terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has called for the revision of the shopping list of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) in their modernization program to conform to the new reality of terrorism.

In an anti-terrorism command conference held in Cebu City Thursday, the President said the AFP and the PNP must take into consideration the threats of terrorism in their procurement of equipment and supplies.

“Your requisitions should take into account the new threat of the 21st century, which is the terrorist threat,” the President told participants that included top officials of the AFP and the PNP, and local executives of Regions 6, 7 and 8.

The President said she was not talking about additional budget “but how to reallocate your existing budgets away from the less important procurement.”

The maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) of the AFP and the PNP should also be reexamined so that they will be used in the anti-terrorism campaign that the government has waged.

The President said that lawless elements and terrorist groups ranged against the government and their allies, including those abroad, are engaged in a more strident and militant campaign to sow rumors and disinformation.

“We, in government, must be thoroughly equipped to meet this threat. Our armed forces and the police must be in place to protect the communities,” the President stressed.

DFA conveys to Iraq gov't concern for safety of Fil-Am P.O.W. in Baghdad

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople has conveyed to Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri Philippine concerns over the treatment of Joseph Hudson, a Filipino-American member of the US armed forces.

In a report, Ople said he had sent a letter to Minister Sabri, conveying the government's and his own personal concern over Hudson's safety and well-being.

“I also told Minister Sabri that we have called on all parties concerned to observe humanitarian law in the treatment of prisoners,” Ople added.

In a statement issued last March 24, Secretary Ople called on the parties to the conflict to observe the rights of both combatants and non-combatants.

He said that prisoners of war (POWs) should be treated humanely in accordance with the Geneva Conventions, particularly Article 13 of the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and Part III, Section II of its 1979 Additional Protocol I.

Ople's letter was prompted by his belief that while Hudson may no longer be a Filipino citizen, the ties of Fil-Americans to the Philippines and the Filipino people continue to be strong.

"In my letter to Minister Sabri, I also expressed our hope that the international humanitarian agencies, particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, will be allowed by the parties to attend to the needs of all prisoners of war," Ople said.

Ople said he had met and held bilateral meetings with Minister Sabri in the context of multilateral meetings like the United Nations General Assembly last year and at the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Kuala Lumpur last February.

"Our exchanges have been frank and our common desire for the welfare of our people sincere. It is my hope that he will give our concerns on this matter his attention," Ople said.

More Filipinos accept jobs in Gulf despite Iraq war

The growing number of Filipinos going to the Middle East for sure job placements only shows that despite the ongoing war in Iraq, the windows of opportunities for employment in the region has increased.

National Security Adviser Roilo Golez stressed this as he noted government efforts to regularly inform and assure the nation that all is well in the Gulf and that there was nothing to fear as the host-nations of Filipino expatriates are far from the conflict areas.

"Ang mga Pilipino ay hindi nangangamba na magpunta sa Middle East (Filipinos have no apprehensions in going to the Middle East)," he said in a radio interview.

"Yan siguro ang resulta ng patuloy na pag-announce natin ng mga takbo ng mga pangyayari sa Kuwait (This could be the result of our continuous efforts to announce developments in the Gulf, particularly in Kuwait)," he added.

There was a time when the people feared for the safety of overseas Filipino workers (OFW) in Kuwait, but until today, there had been no reports of a single refugee and there had been no need to relocate any single OFW, he noted.

Golez said that since March 17, a daily average of 263 OFWs flew to the Middle East, most of them responding to jobs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

But on March 25, the numbers increased to 403 and the next day, 487.

"Kalmadong-kalmado po yung mga tao at mga kababayan nating mga Pilipino (The people and OFWs are very calm) in the Middle East," he said.

GMA accepts U.S. donation of \$5.3-M equipment, \$1M in medical supplies to Jolo hospital

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today accepted from the United States government, represented by US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, a donation of hospital equipment worth \$5.3 million for the use of the community hospital in Jolo.

The President and Ricciardone witnessed the formal handover of the donation from Joint US Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) Chief Col. Mathias Velasco to Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Governor Parouk Hussein.

Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina Jr. also witnessed the donation handover in simple rites at Villamor Air Base.

The President said the event was a great day for Sulu “to remember those times of friendship and cooperation” between the Philippine and US governments.

She recalled that it was in the town of Look, Sulu where American Jeffrey Shilling was rescued from the hands of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf.

She said that the donation from the U.S. Department of Defense JUSMAG-run Humanitarian Assistance Program (HAP) was given without condition. “This is not a quid pro quo,” she added.

But she still stressed that it was up to the will of the people of Sulu to agree to the Balikatan and to what extent they would like to have it conducted in the area.

The donation was made possible through the HAP, which provides excess equipment to local government and non-government agencies.

The donated equipment consists of a medical clinic, including beds, linen, operating room equipment, emergency room equipment, dental chairs, field dental units, lighting, mammogram equipment, a medical laundry facility, and office equipment.

The Jolo Hospital also received consumable medical supplies worth approximately \$1 million from Knightsbridge and Remedy, two non-government organizations in the US.

The medical supplies include bandages, tapes, needles, intravenous tubing, and surgical supplies.

The humanitarian assistance donation is the most recent contribution from the US government to the Philippine government in support of its ongoing development efforts in the Southern Philippines.

The HAP program is administered by Col. Velasco while the Knightsbridge and Remedy supplies are administered by Mrs. Karika Bridges.

GMA continues inspection trips, checks rice supply this time

It’s not only airports, malls and transport terminals that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is inspecting these days.

After making sure that security measures at these places are at their highest levels against possible terrorist attacks, the President wants to make sure that food supply would not be hampered when the situation in the Middle East deteriorates.

This morning, the President visited the rice warehouse of the National Food Authority (NFA) at the Food Terminal Inc. Complex in Taguig to make sure that measures for an efficient operation are being implemented.

She said she would like to ensure that only good quality rice is distributed through the NFA authorized outlets which include the Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera sa Barangay and the accredited retailers.

The President was briefed by NFA Administrator Arthur Yap on the rice stock appearance, quality maintenance and the preservation of stock quality in warehouses.

While there, Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo reported to the President that the country has a rice inventory of 83 days, the lowest volume so far.

He, however pointed out that the inventory can still go up in the next few days due to the expected rice harvest. He also said the country is expecting imports of bumper stock in line with the President's instructions.

"We want to assure the public that we have enough rice and that we have been ready since three months ago when the President gave the order to be prepared and make sure that we have sufficient rice at stable prices in major urban centers and throughout the country," Lorenzo said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 28, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041716/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar28.htm>

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- **GMA urges Filipinos to stay alert, united against terrorist attacks**
- **GMA enjoins communities to do share in overcoming crisis**
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- **GMA pushes SME expansion in barangays**
- **Gov't not yet issuing SARS-related travel ban**
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- **Cimatu says no Filipino hurt or killed in Kuwait blast**

Remain calm and be united in the face of challenges ahead, GMA tells people

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has called on the Filipino people to remain calm but united in the face of challenges ahead, including the possible adverse effects of a prolonged war in the Middle East.

In an anti-terrorism command conference held in Cebu City last Thursday, the President said that even in the face of an extended war scenario, the government's contingency plans "can be stretched out effectively."

"It is important for our people to be aware of the truth, to resist any and all attempts to sow panic and irrational fear," the President said.

The President said that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP), national and local officials, and the community should cooperate with each other to meet the crisis, especially in the war against terrorism.

"Each and every Filipino has the responsibility to be aware and be enlightened, to be vigilant and to act with discipline and with the genuine concern for the common good," the President said.

The command conference was attended by top officials of the AFP and the PNP, as well as local executives of Regions 6, 7 and 8.

Ambassador Roy Cimatu, head of the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT) who is now based in Kuwait, reported to the President in a teleconference during the command meeting that the contingency plan for OFWs in the Middle East is now being followed.

Cimatu also reported that an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 job opportunities in the Middle East await skilled and non-skilled Filipino workers once the war in Iraq is over.

He said that Kuwaiti authorities have nice words for OFWs for having stood by them during the ongoing war in neighboring Iraq as well as in the first Gulf War in 1991.

DTI reports major foreign investments in Western Visayas, Southern Mindanao

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has reported that Western Visayas and Southern Mindanao recently acquired major investment boost with a British group putting up a P4.56 billion renewable energy generation facility

in Victorias, Negros Occidental and a Japanese investor putting up a P280 million granite wall panel plant in Digos City, Davao del Sur in Southern Mindanao.

DTI Secretary Manuel Roxas II said other big investment projects in the regions approved this year are Genpack Corporation's P1.04 billion tin can manufacturing project in General Santos City also in Southern Mindanao, and a P1.3 billion plastic packing factory of Modern Packaging Films Inc. of the Chemphil Group in Bataan.

These are among the P10.3 billion worth projects that were granted incentives by the government through the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zones Authority during the first two months of this year, Roxas said.

"We have a good start. Our earlier figures show that exports for the first two months were good and businessmen are investing once more," Roxas said

He noted 106.5 percent increase in investments for the January-February period this year compared to the P5.0 billion listed last year.

"The interest shown by investors is very encouraging, this is indeed a testament to the progress we have made in attracting foreign and local investors despite geopolitics and the tense situation in Mindanao," Roxas said.

"More importantly, these investments will further boost our employment generation capability as close to 13,000 additional job opportunities will be made available to our people," Roxas added.

Foreign investments accounted for P5.66 billion represent 131 percent increase over the foreign investments infused during the same period last year, Roxas said.

The Victorias cogeneration project of British investors covers a 34 percent share of total foreign investments, a major jump from last year's British investments share of less than 3 percent of foreign investments.

Japanese firms, with a total of P1.75 billion investment during the first two months, had a 31 percent share while the Americans had 25 percent, Roxas said.

Meanwhile, substantial investments worth P1.74 billion or 17 percent of total investments were directed to Southern Tagalog and a total of P1.35 billion or 13 percent to Southern Mindanao.

Roxas said that the cogeneration plant of Victorias Bioenergy Inc. in Negros Occidental, which will be fueled with bagasse from Victorias Milling Corp. and other mills in the area, pushed investments in the electricity, gas and water supply sector by 537 percent.

Victorias Bioenergy Inc., which was granted pioneer status by the BOI, was formed to produce renewable energy and to supply electricity to VMC and surrounding communities. The plant, set to start full commercial operation in October, 2005 is expected to generate jobs for some 700 workers.

Roxas said that the Digos-based Yoshimi Nakayama Corp, which will be producing granite wall panels as construction materials, was granted non-pioneer status and will start commercial operations by the end of the year. It plans to employ 178 people.

President's radio address to the nation

Isang masigla ang mapayapang umaga ang ipinapa-abot ko sa lahat ng ating mga lokal na opisyal sa barangay, mga punong-barangay, mga kagawad, mga sangguniang kabataan, gayundin sa lahat ng ating mga kababayan. Binabati ko kayong lahat mula Luzon, Visayas, hanggang Mindanao sa araw ng ating pagsama-sama, ang magkasabay na pagdiriwang ng Barangay Assembly Day sa buong bansa.

Lubhang napapanahon ang okasyong ito sapagkat nasa gitna tayo ng isang krisis at pag-aalala ng publiko. Ito ay ang giyera sa Iraq at ang pangamba kaugnay ng terorismo at ng ekonomiya.

Ang digmaan sa Iraq at ang gulo sa Mindanao ay iisa ang kaaway – terorismo. Kailangang alisan ang Iraq ng mga armas na malawakang pamumuksa dahil ang mga ito ay maaring ipuslit dito sa atin at gamitin ng mga terorista sa pag-atake sa mga kawawang sibilyan. Dito natin makikita ang kaugnay ng giyera sa Iraq at ang aktibong depensa ng mga komunidad laban sa mga naghahasik ng lagim sa Mindanao.

Habang mahigpit nating nilalabanan ang dahas ng mga rebelde, masigasig din ang mga hakbang ng pamahalaan upang muling maisulong ang usapang pangkapayapaan. Inatasan ko ang Exploratory Team ng gobyerno na humanap ng paraan para maibalik

ang pormal na pag-uusap. Lutasin ang sitwasyon ng mga nagsilikas sa Pikit at wakasan ang dahas ng mga terorista. At nagpapasalamat tayo sa pamahalaan ng Malaysia, sa kanilang walang sawang pagsuporta sa mahabang prosesong pangkapayapaan sa Mindanao.

Sa kabila nito, binabalaan ko ang mga armadong grupo na huwag samantalain ang sitwasyon para hamunin ang pamahalaan. Hinihiling ko rin sa mga grupong nagdaraos ng kilos protesta na huwag magpakalat ng mga maling balita at impormasyon at huwag ipulutika ang giyera, maging dahilan ng ating lalong pagkawatak-watak.

Higit kailanman, ngayon tayo lalong dapat magkaisa at magtulungan tungo sa iisang direksiyon. Malaki ang posibilidad na ang mga kasabwat ni Saddam Hussein ay gumamit ng nakakalibot na sandatang kemikal o pagsabog ng mga pag-atake ng terorismo sa ibat-ibang dako ng mundo. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit inatasan ko ang ating militar at pulis na maging lubos na alerto at makipag-ugnay sa mga lokal na pamahalaan at mga komunidad.

Ginagawa ng gobyerno ang lahat para harapin ang krisis pero hindi tayo dapat maging kampante at luwagan ang ating pagbabantay. Maging listo tayong palagi at kalmado para malampasan ang unos na ito.

Hinihiling ko ang ating buo at tapat na pagmamatyag. Gaya ng ibang bansa dapat tayong maging listo laban sa terrorists attack o pag-atake ng mga desperadong extremists sapagkat ang terorismo ay malakas ang loob. Hindi sapat ang pagkilos ng pamahalaang nasyonal lamang. Ang pakikipagtulungan at pagmamatyag ng buong komunidad at lahat ng pamahalaang lokal ay kailangan upang ang Pilipinas ay maging ligtas para sa mga mamamayan.

Ang bagong banta ng siglo bente-uno – ang terorismo – ay kailangan ng puspusang kilos ng buong pamahalaan hanggang sa hanay ng barangay para bantayan ang mga nakakahinalang tao, pagkilos at kagamitan. Kaya naman inatasan ko na ang lahat ng pamahalaang lokal na pulungin kaagad ang inyong crisis management councils at mangasiwa ng personal at malapitan sa pagtupad ng ating contingency plans kaugnay ng krisis. Ito ay ayon sa mga tungkulin ng mga local leaders.

Magtatagumpay lamang kayo sa mga gawaing ito kung magtutulungan ang lahat ng mga barangay na nasasakupan ng mga local leaders. Ang ating mga local leaders ang dapat maging crisis managers sa inyong mga komunidad. Kayo ang mangangasiwa sa pagmatyag sa lahat ng klase ng problemang sosyal at ekonomikal na kaugnay sa krisis tulad ng presyo ng mga pangunahing bilihan at para tiyakin na ang komunidad ay ligtas laban sa lahat ng uri ng terorismo.

Bukod sa pagmatyag laban sa terorismo kailangan ding magbantay ang mga mamamayan laban sa mga nais magsamantala sa krisis tulad ng pagtago ng supply ng pagkain o paniningil ng sobra. Bagamat may monitoring teams tayo na nag-iikot sa mga palengke para matyagan ang presyo ng mga bilihan, mahalaga ring i-report ninyo ang sinumang tindera o negosyante na nagtataas ng presyong hindi dapat.

Ang mga local leaders din ay information champions para sa katatagan ng ekonomiya at kagalingan ng publiko. Kayo ay may tungkuling ipaalam sa mga mamamayan ang mga mahahalagang pangyayari sa inyong paligid.

Harapin ang mga maling balita at ispekulasyon at ipakalma ang komunidad sa pamamagitan ng pagsasabi sa taong bayan ng totoo.

Ang mga leaders din ang ating anti-street crime czars. Dapat niyang protektahan ang mga mamamayan laban sa mga kriminal na bumibiktima sa mga mahihina, at sa mga manloloko na nagsasamantala sa kanilang kapwa.

Ang suporta ng komunidad ang unang susi para maging epektibo ang pagsugpo ng kriminalidad. Kaya hinihiling ko rin sa ating mga mamamayan na paigtingin ang inyong pakikipagtulungan sa ating pulis para lalong mabilis at mabisa ang kanilang pagsupil sa krimen.

Mga minamahal kong kababayan, ang ligtas at galing ng ating bansa ay nasa ating kamay kaya magkaisa tayo sa tungkulin ng pagbantay at pagpapa-iral ng katahimikan. Bawat Pilipino ay dapat responsable sa kanyang kapwa. Ito ay isang makasaysayang pagkakataon para tayo ay magbuklod sa panahon ng krisis na ilang beses na nating ginawa noon. Ang ganitong pagbuklod ay dapat magsimula sa ating mga barangay kung saan ang lahat ay magkakakilala at nagkakaisa sa damdamin at hangarin.

Magsama-sama tayo at magtulungan para maibsan ang mga pag-aalalang dulot ng giyera sa Iraq. Magsama-sama tayo at magtulungan upang walang naka-ambang panganib sa ating dinadaan at makatulog tayo ng mahimbing kasama ng ating mga mahal sa buhay. Sa ating mga barangay nakasalalay ang kapayapaan at seguridad ng ating bansa.

Kaya naman sa pagkakataong ito, hinihiling ko ang inyong tulong at hangad ko ang inyong tagumpay. Ang inyong tagumpay ay tagumpay ng ating bansa at ng buong sambayanan. Ang inyong patuloy na pakikiisa at suporta ang maghahatid sa atin tungo sa matatag at matibay na Republika.

Magandang umagang muli at mabuhay kayong lahat.

GMA cites military's relentless pressure on ASG for Indonesian hostage's escape

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Friday night formally turned over to Indonesian embassy officials Mr. Julkipli, one of their nationals who escaped from the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), as she vowed to continue efforts to rescue the remaining hostages of the ASG and to further step up cooperation initiatives against international terrorism.

The President turned over Mr. Julkipli to Indonesian Charge d' Affaires Alexander Laturiuw and Minister Counselor Chairul Soelaeman Natudisastra during ceremonies at the State Dining Room in Malacañang.

Mr. Julkipli is a seaman held hostage by the ASG for almost a year.

Wearing a shirt and jeans, Mr. Julkipli was all smiles when he shook the hands of the President, who in turn, asked him how he was.

"I am glad that Mr. Julkipli, an Indonesian national, was able to get away from his Abu Sayyaf captors as a result of the pressure of military operations brought to bear upon the terrorist group," the President said.

Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Dionisio Santiago, and Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Narcisco Abaya accompanied the President at the turnover ceremonies.

The President commended the military under Santiago and Abaya for the unrelenting offensive against the Abu Sayyaf.

In a message, she said the military officials have assured her that there would be no let-up in operations until all the remaining hostages are rescued and the Abu Sayyaf is decisively beaten.

“I assure the families of the remaining hostages that all efforts shall be taken to rescue them safely,” she said.

The President noted that the Indonesian government was informed of the progress on the operations against the bandit group.

She said the Philippines shares with Indonesia a strong abhorrence of terrorism, noting that their partnership extends across the seas through a multilateral agreement along with Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia.

We continue to work closely in checking the movement of terrorists, firearms and materials.

The President further noted that the fight against terrorism bared an affinity to what’s going on across the world.

“There is a coalition to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and stop the harboring of transnational terrorists cells that could use these weapons elsewhere. The threat of terrorist using such weapons confronts all mankind and the Philippine is no exception. We must always be on guard in checking tans-national and domestic terrorists,” she said.

The threat of terrorists using such weapons confronts all mankind, including the Philippines, the President stressed.

“We must always be on guard in checking transnational and domestic terrorists,” she said.

The President turned over Julkifli to the Indonesian government with the hope that the two countries’ partnership against terrorism “will always be strong and enduring.”

GMA urges Filipinos to stay alert, united against terrorist attacks

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today asked the people to stay alert against possible collateral terrorist attacks on innocent civilians, particularly in Mindanao.

“Gaya ng ibang bansa, dapat tayong maging listo laban sa terrorist attack o pag-atake ng mga desperadong extremists sapagkat ang terorismo ay malakas ang loob (Like other nations, we should remain alert against terrorists and desperate extremists),” the President said in a radio message.

She said it was imperative for the national government and the people to help each other contain any threat to national security.

The President said the war in Iraq and the conflict in Mindanao are imperative means to combat a common enemy, terrorism.

“Kailangang alisan ang Iraq ng mga armas ng malawakang pamumuksa dahil ang mga ito ay maaring ipuslit dito sa atin at gamitin ng mga terorista sa pag-atake sa mga kawawang sibilyan (Iraq should be disarmed of weapons of mass destruction that could be brought into the country and used by terrorists to attack communities),” she said.

“Malaki ang posibilidad na ang mga kasabwat ni Saddam Hussein ay gumamit ng nakakalipol na sandatang kemikal o pagsabog ng mga pag-atake ng terorismo sa ibat-ibang dako ng mundo (There is the possibility that people conniving with Saddam Hussein will use chemical weapons or bombs in terror attacks in different parts of the world),” she said.

Because of this, she has ordered the military and the police nationwide to stay on full alert and coordinate with local government officials and communities.

But while the government is fighting rebels in the southern front, it has taken steps to pursue peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The President said she has directed a government exploratory team to seek ways to get the MILF back to the peace table in Kuala Lumpur, through the third party facilitation of Malaysia, while resolving the situation of people dislocated by the conflict in Pikit, Cotabato.

However, she warned armed groups against taking advantage of prevailing conditions to challenge government.

She rallied the nation to unite and move together in a singular direction, while enjoining groups staging protests to stop misinforming the public and use the war for political or vested interests.

“Ginagawa ng gobyerno ang lahat para harapin ang krisis pero hindi tayo dapat maging kampante at luwagan ang ating pagbabantay. Maging listo tayong palagi at kalmado para malampasan ang unos na ito (The government is doing everything to weather the crisis but we should not lose our guard),” she said.

GMA enjoins communities to do share in overcoming crisis

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo called on every Filipino to do his share in tiding the country over the crisis brought about by the war in Iraq.

In a radio address commemorating Barangay Assembly Day, the President asked Filipinos to be vigilant and take the opportunity to unite in this time of crisis.

“Bawat Pilipino ay dapat responsible sa kanyang kapwa (Let us all be our brother’s keepers),” she said. *“Ito ay isang makasaysayang pagkakataon para tayo ay magbuklod sa panahon ng krisis na ilang beses na nating ginawa noon (This is an opportune time for us to show our unity in time of crisis, a feat that we have done so many times before).”*

This kind of unity, according to the President, should start at the barangay level where everybody knows each other and where people are united in their pursuits and ambitions.

She encouraged the people to bond together and help each other in easing the tension brought about by the war in Iraq.

“Magsama-sama tayo at magtulungan upang walang nakaambang panganib sa ating dinadaan at makatulog tayo ng mahimbing kasama ng ating mga mahal sa buhay (Let us join hands and help each other to clear our paths of all dangers so that we could sleep soundly with our loved ones),” she said.

Saying that the peace and security of the country lie on the barangays, the President took the occasion to ask everybody’s help and support to achieve success towards that end.

“Ang inyong tagumpay ay tagumpay ng ating bansa at ng buong sambayanan. Ang inyong patuloy na pakiisa at suporta ang maghahatid sa atin tungo sa matatag at matibay na Republika (Your success is the country’s success. Your continued support is what will bring us towards a stable and strong Republic),” she said.

GMA sees MILF signing peace pact to develop Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today raised hopes that Hashim Salamat, leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), would sign a peace pact with the government to start a common agenda of the government and the rebel group – that of developing Mindanao.

The President made the expectation as she disclosed a “mini Marshall Plan” where the United States government would likely pour in some \$150 million, part of it for use in the rehabilitation and development of areas afflicted by the Mindanao conflict.

In a radio interview, the President said: “*Inaasahan natin na si Salamat ay pipirma ng peace agreement para iyong \$100 million ay magamit para sa kaunlaran ng kanyang mga lugar at kanyang mga kasama na babalik na sa ating lipunan.*”

Amid reports that US President George W. Bush has promised to give funds to those who joined the Coalition of the Willing, President Macapagal-Arroyo said the government submitted a proposal outlining the country’s needs for combating terrorism.

“*Inaasahan natin na tutulong sila duon* (We are expecting the US to help on that matter),” she said.

However, she stressed that some of the countries listed in the coalition maintained US military bases. “*Tayo wala* (We have none of those bases),” she added.

But despite this, the country has been getting substantial development aid from the US, she stressed.

She recalled that before she became President, the country received some \$1.9 million in military assistance.

Last Friday (March 28) alone, the US government donated equipment and medical supplies worth some \$6.3 million, or roughly P400 million, to the Jolo regional hospital, she noted.

GMA pushes SME expansion in barangays

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo today encouraged all Filipinos to expand small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in their barangays in line with her nationwide livelihood program.

In a question and answer forum following a speech commemorating Barangay Assembly Day, the President enjoined entrepreneurs to borrow money from the nearest rural or savings banks and even the Land Bank to expand their businesses, saying the government has allocated a total of P10 billion for the purpose.

“*Tulungan ninyong maghanap ng mga successful na SMEs at ilapit po ninyo sa mga rural bank, savings bank at Land Bank sa inyong mga lugar upang matulungan silang mag-expand* (Please help in finding successful SMEs in your area and encourage them to borrow money from rural banks, savings bank and Land Bank for them to be able to expand),” she said.

The President, four months ago, signed a law authorizing small micro enterprises in the barangays all over the country, as part of her livelihood program for the barangays.

She had also initiated the Kalahi Seeds Project in some chosen barangays, part of a World Bank-financed program that would give jobs to people in the barangays.

“*Gusto kong idagdag na ang pangunahing programa natin ay magbigay ng trabaho sa taong bayan kaya sa barangay ay gusto nating mapairal iyong inyong mga small and medium enterprises na nagtatagumpay* (I want to add that our primary objective is to give jobs to the people that’s why we want to encourage successful small and medium enterprises to expand),” the President said.

In the same forum, Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. of the Department of Interior and Local Government explained that the thrust is to allow information about government projects and programs to trickle down to the barangays.

“Maraming programa ang pamahalaan para matulungan ang mamamayan ngunit hindi alam ng karamihan tulad ng microenterprises, iyong program sa health, itong health card, at iyong program sa anti-terrorism (The government has many programs that the people don’t know like the micro enterprises, health program, health card, and anti-terrorism programs),” Lina said.

The DILG Secretary also mentioned the scholarship grants of the Department of Science and Technology and the Philippine Coconut Authority as well as the employment and livelihood programs being initiated by the government.

“Dapat malaman ito ng mga barangay residents so that they can participate and be empowered. Kapag hindi kasi nila alam itong mga programa, they will not reap the benefits of the program that the President is pushing (The residents of the barangay should be well informed so that they can participate and be empowered. If they don’t know about these, they will not reap the benefits of the program that the President is pushing),” he added.

Gov’t not yet issuing SARS-related travel ban

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the government is not keen on issuing travel bans to countries reported to have cases of the dreaded Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

In a radio interview, the President said that as of the moment, other countries have not issued SARS-related travel bans.

“Kung hindi naman importante iyong biyahe ay iwasan na lamang. Pero kung importante ang biyahe ay puwede pa ring ituloy (Avoiding non-essential travel would help. But if the travel is important, it could be pushed through),” she said.

The countries with SARS-related cases have been adopting strict quarantine precautions, she noted, adding that *“malamang ang ating nagbibiyaha ay hindi sila mai-expose (the chances of Filipino travelers being exposed to SARS are nil).”*

The President said the Philippines had also implemented precautionary rules to prevent SARS from afflicting the people.

Meanwhile, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit today reported to the President that the Philippines continued to be SARS-free as of the moment.

In the President’s regular teleconference, Dayrit said the government has continued monitoring developments on the SARS, while implementing its seven-day quarantine policy.

He told the President that the Department of Health placed under medical check-up and observation at the San Lazaro Hospital today a 41-year old female overseas Filipino worker (OFW) from Hong Kong after having found her to have symptoms.

But he said the move was precautionary. The OFW has no history of having been in contact with any SARS-patient.

Gov’t to conduct briefings, drills against terror attacks

The government would be conducting an extensive and intensified briefing and drills against possible collateral terrorist attacks starting on Monday, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez said today.

Golez made the announcement during President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s teleconference with Middle East Preparedness Team chief Ambassador Roy Cimatú at Malacañang.

Golez said the intensified briefing and drills would be conducted in practically all the departments of the government especially all members of the Iraqi crisis management team.

These are, among others, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Transportation and Communication.

Golez also noted that the Philippine National Police would be giving a lecture on how to handle bomb threats and terrorist attacks.

The National Security adviser said the PNP would likewise conduct briefings and drills for the private sector.

He said Police Director Vic de Leon, a graduate of the Crisis Management Course in the United Kingdom, would supervise both the government-wide and the private sector drills.

Golez said although a long war is an unlikely scenario, the country's oil and food supply remains highly adequate.

He said Energy Secretary Vincent Perez assured him that the country's oil supply is up for 76 days, much higher than the 65 days supply at the start of the conflict in the Gulf.

On food, Golez said rice supply will last for 95 days and this would be supplemented by 400,000 tons of rice coming in from abroad next month.

Cimatu says no Filipino hurt or killed in Kuwait blast

Ambassador Roy Cimatu today confirmed that no Filipino was either hurt or killed during a large explosion that rocked a shopping mall in downtown Kuwait City at about 2 a.m. (7 a.m. in Manila).

Cimatu, during the regular teleconference with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, said Filipinos continued to be calm but alert in Kuwait City.

He told the President that the nearest OFW resident is about a kilometer away from the blast site.

He and embassy officials saw no need for any relocation as of the moment.

Cimatu, head of the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT), said an ocular showed mall debris littering the area.

In an earlier radio interview, the President said the MEPT had long prepared for any eventuality in the Persian Gulf due to the conflict in Iraq.

She said the MEPT was ready for any scenario – the stay scenario, relocation scenario, evacuation scenario and others.

They have also coordinated with host governments and employers to ensure the safety and welfare of overseas Filipino workers in the area and throughout the Middle East.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 29, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071009234944/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar29.htm>

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- **GMA discloses 16-point anti-terrorism program**

GMA embarks on Ro-Ro caravan tour on Monday

President Gloria Macapagal will officially open on Monday (March 31) the Strong Republic Nautical Highway to serve as an efficient and shorter way to Mindanao, as an agri-tourism area and as a grains highway.

Together with members of the Cabinet and heads of government agencies and members of media, the President will lead the caravan that will kick off at the Freedom Park in Malacañang then on to the Calapan City Roro (Roll On-Roll Off) port terminal in Oriental Mindoro and end at the Dapitan City port, Zamboanga del Norte.

In a briefing in Malacañang, Presidential Adviser on Official Development Assistance Absorption and CORD for MIMAROPA Marita Jimenez said the caravan will traverse Batangas in the Calabarzon, Oriental Mindoro in MIMAROPA, Aklan, Capiz and Iloilo, Negros Occidental in Region 6; Negros Oriental in Region 7 and Zamboanga del Norte in Region 9.

The Manila to Dapitan caravan will cover a total of 703 kilometers of road travel and 137 nautical miles of sea travel.

Roro terminals are located in Batangas City, Calapan; Roxas, Oriental Mindoro; Caticlan, Malay, Aklan; Iloilo City; Bacolod City; Dumaguete City and Dapitan City.

In Oriental Mindoro, the President will inaugurate the Roxas Port Terminal. She will also be presented with rebel returnees and will have lunch with the local government officials and participating agencies of the roro caravan.

At Caticlan, the President will likewise open the Jetty Port and Terminal Building.

The President will also have a meeting with Boracay Resort Owners, Tour and Hotel Operators and will be discussing security measures in the area.

On April 1, the President will have breakfast with local officials and fishermen at the Baybay Beach in Roxas City, Capiz, and after arriving at Iloilo City, will have lunch with rice farmers, members of the irrigators association, traders and the agribusiness sector.

At Bacolod City, the President will meet with the Rotary Club and Negros Press Club at the L'Fisher Hotel.

The "End of the Tour to the Strong Republic Nautical Highway" will be at the Dapitan City where the President will make an assessment of the caravan tour.

GMA resolve against terrorism cited by int'l news agency

A respected international news agency has called on American investors to look into the investment opportunities in the Philippines, citing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as a tough leader in the likes of Margaret Thatcher and her effective economic policies resulting in continued growth and stable currency.

Gregory Fossedal of the Business and Economics Desk of the United Press International (UPI) who wrote a special article entitled "*The Bottom Line: Manila's Maggie*," said America's early success against the ruling regime in Iraq has helped lift stock markets throughout the region, from Israel to Kuwait.

But according to him, another country that should benefit from further progress against the global terror network has so far been overlooked by investors.

"That country is the Philippines, where one of the toughest leaders this side of Margaret Thatcher, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, is working hard to crush an insurgency of separatist Muslim and communist rebels," Fossedal said.

He noted that the local market has not moved much yet as the Philippine index is up 3 percent from its level at the end of February through the successful start of the Iraq campaign in the last 10 days.

This, he said, compares to a rise of nearly 10 percent in Israel over the same period.

By contrast to the aftermath of the last major leg of the war on terror, the rout of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Philippine stock market was one of the top performers in the world, Fossedal said.

He said that viewing the political and economic landscape of the Philippines today, there's a good chance that the United States' assured win in Iraq will have a positive impact on the country.

"Economic policy in the Philippines is characterized by a stable currency, which is essentially linked to the US dollar, a stabilizing factor, but allowed to slide by 1 percent or so per month to provide flexibility," the article said.

Fossedal further noted that President Macapagal-Arroyo has cut tax rates twice, to a top rate of tax on personal income of 26 percent, down from 33 percent when she took office. The tax rate is also relatively flat, with corporations paying a rate of 22 percent, only slightly below the rates on human labor.

He added that despite economic growth rates of 4 to 6 percent, the Philippine government has suffered revenue shortfalls, with tax receipts and other government income declining 15 percent from their highs in 2000.

The President, the article noted, has responded by slashing spending by 10 percent, sticking with her tax cuts and insisting that strong growth is needed to close the deficit in future years

The article noted that despite the residue of crony capitalism, ongoing insurgency, corruption and local terrorism, Macapagal-Arroyo "has fought back with Thatcher-esque resolve."

She "has firmly aligned herself, unlike say the new government in Korea, with the US war on terror."

"The bottom line is, her resolve and resourcefulness are probably under-discounted. That makes Philippine equities a good buy," it said.

The article noted that Philippine Long Distance Co. posted a 9.3 percent profit growth in results posted in late March, mostly on the strength of 40-percent plus growth in mobile telephone services.

As well, the First Philippine Fund, which can be bought and sold on the New York Stock Exchange, provides a well-managed basket of Philippines stocks.

The syndicated article was released March 27.

Joint statement of GRP and MILF peace panels

The Philippine Government Panel for the Exploratory Talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) met with the representatives of the MILF Peace Panel on March 27-28, 2003 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and agreed on the following:

1. Both parties reiterate their commitment to achieve a comprehensive just and lasting political settlement of the conflict in Mindanao and resolve to undertake appropriate steps to pave the way for the resumption of the formal GRP-MILF peace negotiations;
2. Both parties reaffirm to implement effectively on the ground all past and existing GRP-MILF agreements. Details of implementation shall be discussed by the panels;
3. Both parties agree to exercise mutual restraint to minimize if not put an end to violence in Mindanao;
4. To normalize the situation and facilitate the early return of evacuees to their places of origin and allow rehabilitation to proceed, a new arrangement on the ground will be forged by both parties;
5. The Philippine Government takes note of the activation of the Bangsamoro Development Agency;
6. Both parties agree to direct their respective Technical Committees to work on the Implementing Guidelines of the Joint Communique signed on May 6, 2002 to ensure that the peace process is not adversely affected by the presence of criminal groups in Mindanao. The Technical Committees will meet within two (2) weeks from today;
7. The parties agree to improve the existing mechanism for monitoring of the cessation of hostilities including the composition of an observer/monitoring group as provided for in the Implementing Guidelines on the Security Aspect of the Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001;
8. The parties reaffirm the provision on the grant of Safety and Security Guarantees to MILF leaders and members who are directly and principally involved in the GRP-MILF peace talks; and
9. Both parties expressed their gratitude for the gracious hospitality of the Government of Malaysia in hosting and facilitating the exploratory talks and for continuing its support to the peace process.

Done in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia this 28th day of March 2003.

For the GRP For the MILF

PA JESUS G. DUREZA ATTY. LANANG ALI

Members of Delegation Members of Delegation

SEC. NORBERTO GONZALES

ATTY. MICHAEL O. MASTURA

SEC. CORAZON JULIANO-SOLIMAN

ATTY. MUSIB M. BUAT

USEC. ANTONIO C. SANTOS

MOHAJIRIN T. ALI

EDIR. DIOSITA T. ANDOT

GRP, MILF reiterate commitment to achieve just, lasting peace in Mindanao

The path to peace has become clearer as both government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front have reiterated their commitment to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting political settlement of the conflict in Mindanao.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita and Government Peace Panel chairman and Presidential Adviser Jesus Dureza presented today at Sulu Hotel a joint statement of the two parties following the success of the two-day exploratory talks in Kuala Lumpur that ended Thursday.

Both parties, according to Ermita and Dureza, have resolved to undertake the appropriate steps to pave the way for the resumption of the formal peace negotiations

He said both parties likewise reaffirmed their commitment to implement effectively on the ground all past and existing GRP-MILF agreements and exercise mutual restraint to minimize, if not put an end, to the violence in Mindanao.

According to Ermita and Dureza, both parties also agreed to normalize the situation in Mindanao and facilitate the early return of evacuees to their places of origin. The two parties also agreed to allow the evacuees' rehabilitation to proceed after a new arrangement on the ground is set to be forged.

The government representatives noted the activation of the Bangsamoro Development Agency, the "body that would funnel development funds for the improvement of the lives of the displaced persons."

Both parties likewise agreed to direct their respective technical committees to work on their implementing guidelines of the joint communique signed on May 6, 2002 to ensure that the peace process is not adversely affected by the presence of criminals in Mindanao.

On the issue of ceasefire, the two parties agreed to improve the existing mechanism for monitoring of the cessation of hostilities, including the composition of an observer or monitoring group.

The ceasefire observer team has been provided for in the implementing guidelines on the security aspect of the Tripoli agreement on peace of 2001.

The two parties also reaffirmed the provision on the grant of safety and security guarantees to MILF leaders and members who are directly and principally involved in the GRP-MILF peace talks.

Both parties also expressed their gratitude for the gracious hospitality of the Malaysian government in hosting and facilitating the exploratory talks and for continuing its support to the peace process.

Aside from Dureza, those who attended the exploratory talks representing the government were Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Norberto Gonzales, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano Soliman and Undersecretary Antonio Santos. Representing the MILF were Atty. Lanang S. Ali, Atty. Michael O. Mastura, Atty. Musib M. Buat and Mohajarin T. Ali.

The holding of exploratory talks was a result of the back-channeling initiatives from both parties.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo earlier sent Senior Adviser on International Competitiveness Roberto Romulo as a special envoy to Malaysia to reaffirm the Philippine's eagerness for the foreign government to be a third-party facilitator for peace talks with MILF.

GMA discloses 16-point anti-terrorism program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has listed down a 16-point counter-terrorism program that would assure that the global threat "does not become a reality in our country."

In the command conference in Cebu City last March 27, the President stressed that everyone "must act together" to carry out the checklist in the face of a renewed alert against terrorism worldwide.

The 16-point counter-terrorism program:

- Organization of a whole counter-terrorism enterprise and the delineation of clear areas of responsibility and accountability. The President said the Cabinet Oversight Committee under Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo would oversee and supervise the anti-terrorism campaign, and could call upon all government agencies to support its functions and responsibilities;
- Efficient and effective anticipation of events through intelligence and intelligence fusion, meaning the consolidation and sharing of all overt and covert domestic and international sources of information relevant to the country's response in the war against terrorism;
- Strengthening of the country's internal focus on terrorism through the active participation of local government units down to the barangay level in the prevention, interdiction and containment of terrorist acts;
- Cleaning the government of terrorist and criminal coddlers
- Holding accountable all private groups abetting or aiding terrorism;
- Synchronization of internal efforts with the global outlook to be spearheaded by the Department of Foreign Affairs;
- Combining a policy of tactical counterforce with the sect of strategic legal measures. This enjoined the Department of Justice to set up a special team to serve the special requirements of the war on terrorism including the speedy prosecution, deportation and extradition of suspects;
- Strengthening of the peace process to isolate terrorist groups from the moderates;
- Pursuit of broader inter-faith dialogues to promote Christian and Muslim solidarity;
- Recognition of the political, social and economic underpinnings of terrorism. Under this, the President urged the initiation of special community development projects in areas where extreme poverty make its residents vulnerable to the courtship of terrorist groups;
- Exercise of the strictest vigilance among all law enforcement agencies and local government units, particularly against the movements of suspected persons, firearms, explosives, raw materials of explosives, toxic materials and biological materials;
- Close coordination of preparations and actions in the event of catastrophic terrorist attacks, even if they should be remote;
- Comprehensive security plan for critical infrastructure including power plants, power transmission and distribution facilities, oil and gas depots, key public works infrastructures, vital communications facilities, public and private buildings and facilities in the nerve center of commerce and industry;
- Protection of the security, welfare and interests of overseas Filipino workers;
- Continued modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police, taking into consideration the threats of terrorism; and
- Media support in the implementation of policies and programs, in enlightening the public of the rationale behind their actions, and in promoting consensus and even constructive criticism.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 30, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20070821215626/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar30.htm>

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- **OFWs in Kuwait, other Gulf states in high spirits, says DOLE**
- **RP offering only humanitarian and peace-keeping help in post-war Iraq, GMA says**
- **GMA says gov't ready for confidence building measures to push talks with MILF**
- **Ro-Ro facilities to spur trade, tourism in Visayas, Mindanao, says GMA**
- **GMA unveils Roxas port marker, kicks off Ro-Ro caravan to Visayas, Mindanao**

OFWs in Kuwait, other Gulf states in high spirits, says DOLE

Overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Kuwait and other Gulf countries, particularly those 384 stranded workers at the Bahay Pinoy relocation site in Nuwaiseeb, have remained calm and in high spirits despite the tension brought by the war in Iraq, according to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

In a report to Malacañang, DOLE Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said the Presidential Middle East Preparedness Committee (PMEPC), headed by Ambassador Roy Cimatu, and the Philippine embassy and labor officials in Kuwait are in constant touch with the DOLE in Manila.

“So, we are updated on the situation of some 60,000 OFWs in Kuwait,” Sto. Tomas said. “Our OFWs there go about their normal work routine. They are calm and in high spirits,” she said.

Sto. Tomas said that the OFWs who have been moved to the Bahay Pinoy relocation center in the South, near the Kuwait-Saudi border, continue their livelihood program activities that they have been doing at the Filipino Workers Resource Center (FWRC) in Kuwait City before the outbreak of the war.

“Our labor officials and welfare officers just moved to Nuwaiseeb the equipment the workers were using in their livelihood activities from which they had a chance to earn a little money,” Sto. Tomas said.

Sto. Tomas also cited a report of the PMEPC which said the Kuwait Petroleum Company (KPC) had assured the public of uninterrupted petrol and diesel supply in Kuwait.

In Lebanon, Sto. Tomas reported that Philippine embassy and labor officials in Beirut have divided themselves in four teams and visited four churches in Beirut, and one in Damascus, Syria to check on the conditions of the more than 20,000 OFWs in the two countries.

The embassy team also distributed the “Safety and Emergency Handbook” to OFWs in Lebanon and Syria.

In Bahrain, Sto. Tomas said Philippine embassy and labor officials have advised OFWs in the tiny kingdom in the Arabian Gulf to maintain the highest state of preparedness and to refrain from going out to populated centers to avoid being targets of possible terrorist attacks.

RP offering only humanitarian and peace-keeping help in post-war Iraq, GMA says

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today appealed to the Filipino people to support her stand in siding with the “coalition of the willing” in the US-Iraq war as she stressed that the Philippines is offering only humanitarian and peace-keeping assistance to Iraq in a post-war scenario.

In a radio interview this morning, the President said that the Philippines’ offer of humanitarian and peace-keeping assistance is aimed at helping restore the freedom, dignity and collective security of the Iraqi people.

“Kaya dapat ang taongbayan natin din ay hindi nahahati sa isyung ito. Dahil ito ay nakatukoy sa ating pinakaminamahal na asal bilang isang katauhan (That’s why I hope our people would not be split on this issue. Because this is one of our dearest contribution to humanity),” the President said.

The President explained that the democratic ideals that the United States would like the Iraqis to enjoy are the same ideals that the Filipinos have fought for in EDSA against oppression and dictatorship.

“Kaya itong coalition of the willing, dapat ito ma-transform into coalition for humanitarianism (So, this coalition of the willing should be transformed into a coalition for humanitarianism),” the President said.

The President also assured the Filipino people that even if the war in Iraq would last for two months or even longer, the government contingency plan for Filipinos, both here and abroad, could take care of that.

She said that contrary to earlier predictions, the war in Iraq would take a longer period, adding that the first Gulf War in 1991 lasted for about a month.

GMA says gov’t ready for confidence building measures to push talks with MILF

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed government readiness to carry out confidence building measures that would accelerate the conduct of formal peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

But the President said all steps to promote peace in Mindanao should guarantee the safety and security of civilian communities against terrorist attacks, ensure that those displaced by the conflict would be returned to their homes where they could permanently live peacefully and productively, and assure the neutralization of criminal and terrorist activities in the area.

In a radio interview, she said the government and MILF peace negotiators have met in Kuala Lumpur and, in a joint statement, resolved to undertake appropriate steps to resume formal peace talks while reaffirming to implement effectively on the ground all past and existing agreements.

She said Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, in a press conference, outlined the details of the joint statement last Sunday (March 30).

“Tanggap na tanggap natin ang kahit na ano mang kilos tungo sa isang pangmatagalang kapayapaan(We accept any move that would ensure lasting peace in Mindanao),” she said.

The President also cited the participation of Malaysia as a third-party facilitator to the government-MILF peace talks.

She said the government also looked forward to working closely with the Organization of Islamic Conference.

In the event that a peace pact is concluded with the MILF, the government would seek all means to rehabilitate and develop areas in Mindanao destroyed by the conflict.

She said the campaign for peace should be equaled by an anti-poverty campaign.

“Isang dahilan kung bakit sila ay nasa giyera ay dahil nga mahirap na mahirap sila. At isang dahilan kung bakit mahirap sila ay napakatagal na nasa giyera (A reason why they are at war is that they are poor. And a reason why they are poor is because they are affected by a long war),” she added.

It is imperative to cut this “vicious cycle on both sides” so that the peace talks could move forward and so that socio-economic development could be done in Mindanao, the President said.

Ro-Ro facilities to spur trade, tourism in Visayas, Mindanao, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the importance of the roll-on, roll-off (Ro-Ro) facilities in speeding up the development of Mindanao not only in trade and commerce but also in tourism.

In a radio interview, the President explained that with the Ro-Ro facilities, trucks carrying goods or produce from Mindanao to Luzon and vice versa need not unload in every port and would go direct to their destinations, thus greatly reducing transport costs.

When asked if the Ro-Ro facilities are now in place, the President said that that is what she will demonstrate starting today.

The President today kicked off the four-day motor caravan participated in by members of the Cabinet, heads of government agencies, and members of the media, that would traverse what she described as the “Strong Republic Nautical Highway.”

The kick-off ceremonies were held this morning at the Freedom Park in Malacañang.

In the radio interview, the President said that with the Ro-Ro facilities, motorists from Luzon could take their vacations to the Visayas and Mindanao using their cars all throughout their journey.

This will definitely promote domestic tourism and not just enhance the flow of produce, like grains and other agricultural products, from Mindanao to the different parts of Luzon, including Metro Manila.

The President said the commercial operation of the Ro-Ro facilities would be on April 12, the start of the summer vacation in schools.

In a briefing on Sunday, officials said that the caravan would proceed from Manila to Batangas City and on to Calapan City Ro-Ro port terminal in Oriental Mindoro and end at the Dapitan City port, Zamboanga del Norte.

From Batangas City, the caravan will travel to Oriental Mindoro, to Aklan, then on to Capiz and Iloilo, Negros Occidental in Region 6; Negros Oriental in Region 7, and Zamboanga del Norte in Region 9.

The Manila to Dapitan caravan will cover a total of 703 kilometers of road travel and 137 nautical miles of sea travel.

Ro-Ro terminals are located in Batangas City, Calapan; Roxas, Oriental Mindoro; Caticlan, Malay, Aklan; Iloilo City; Bacolod City; Dumaguete City and Dapitan City.

In Oriental Mindoro, the President inaugurated the Roxas Port Terminal. She was also presented with rebel returnees and had lunch with the local government officials and participating agencies of the Ro-Ro caravan.

At Caticlan, the President was scheduled to open the Jetty Port and Terminal Building.

The President will also have a meeting with Boracay Resort Owners, Tour and Hotel Operators and will be discussing security measures in the area.

On April 1, the President will have breakfast with local officials and fishermen at the Baybay Beach in Roxas City, Capiz, and after arriving at Iloilo City, will have lunch with rice farmers, members of the irrigators association, traders and the agribusiness sector.

At Bacolod City, the President will meet with the Rotary Club and Negros Press Club at the L'Fisher Hotel.

The "End of the Tour to the Strong Republic Nautical Highway" will be at the Dapitan City where the President will make an assessment of the caravan tour.

GMA unveils Roxas port marker, kicks off Ro-Ro caravan to Visayas, Mindanao

ROXAS, Oriental Mindoro – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today unveiled the Roxas port marker here to kick off a four-day agro-tourism caravan that would open the Strong Republic's Nautical Highway and showcase the efficiency and effectiveness of the government's Roll-on Roll-off (Ro-Ro) program.

The President unveiled the Roxas port marker to the cheering of hundreds of flag-waving schoolchildren, farmers and laborers who also welcomed the Presidential caravan along the 124-kilometer road from Calapan, Oriental Mindoro to this southern agricultural town.

The rousing welcome showed the people's solid support for the nautical highway, which officials expect would open windows of agricultural and tourism opportunities in the southwestern seaboard.

"This is the route where the big rice producers are," said the President as she unveiled the marker prior to boarding the Ro-Ro vessel, Super Shuttle Ferry 2, that would take her and the caravan for a four-hour sea trip to Caticlan, Aklan.

Participants, including mediemen, in the convoy of some 80 vehicles trying out the new agro-tourism highway linking Luzon to the Visayas and Mindanao islands were themselves surprised at the outpouring of support for the Ro-Ro project.

Following the unveiling of the marker, the President witnessed the signing of a loan agreement between the Development Bank of the Philippines and Phil-Nippon Shipping.

The loan will be used to purchase a Ro-Ro vessel for the Roxas-Caticlan route.

A Ro-Ro ship allows cars and other vehicles to roll on aboard at the port of departure and disembark or roll off the same way at the ship's port of destination.

The President, together with Transportation and Communication Secretary Leandro Mendoza, earlier unveiled another marker and inaugurated the Philtranco terminal in EDSA, Pasay City.

Philtranco carries passengers and cargo from Manila to as far as key cities in Mindanao.

In the same ceremony, she sent off four Philtranco buses that took Ro-Ro caravan officials and participants to the Batangas City port where they boarded a Ro-Ro boat for Calapan City in Oriental Mindoro.

In Calapan where the President arrived aboard a Bell 412 helicopter, she unveiled another port marker and met with local officials, expectedly discussing with them the government's overall socio-economic development program as a result of the Ro-Ro project and the continuous campaign against terrorism and poverty.

From Calapan, she left for Roxas, Oriental Mindoro where she also met with local officials and the leaders of some 500 members of the insurgent New People's Army who have rejoined government.

While on the way to Caticlan aboard the Super shuttle Ferry 2, the President conducted a Cabinet meeting.

The four-day caravan will take the President and her party to Boracay Island, Roxas City in Capiz, Iloilo City, Bacolod City, Kabankalan City in Negros Occidental, Bais City in Negros Oriental, Dumaguete City and Dapitan City in Zamboanga del Norte.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: March 31, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20080322010255/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/mar31.htm>

The President's Day: April 1, 2003

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- **GMA orders DFA to help establish ASEAN humanitarian consensus to aid Iraqis**
- **No official travel ban to countries with S.A.R.S., says Palace**
- **April 9, a working day, but still to be observed as Fall of Bataan – Palace**
- **GMA assures power for Panay Island**
- **GMA hopes to bring down cost of produce, boost tourism with Nautical Highway**
- **GMA reminds local officials to be extra vigilant**
- **Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye**

GMA orders DFA to help establish ASEAN humanitarian consensus to aid Iraqis

ILOILO CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed her “deep concerns” about the humanitarian crisis affecting Iraqi civilians in the ongoing war in Iraq.

In her speech during a meeting with rice farmers, irrigators’ associations and traders in Panay held this afternoon at the Sarabia Manor Hotel here, the President said that the Philippines is prepared to send peace-keepers and humanitarian workers in areas in Iraq where they can safely help.

The President earlier said that the US-led “coalition of the willing,” which the Philippines has supported, should now be transformed into the “coalition for humanitarianism.”

She said that she has directed Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople to work with “like-minded” neighbors in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to establish an ASEAN consensus on how to conduct the humanitarian assistance in Iraq.

The President said that ASEAN can join hands with other countries in extending assistance to the Iraqi people at this hour of their need consonant to the emerging thrust of the United Nations.

According to the President, the Philippines’ offer of humanitarian and peace-keeping assistance is aimed at helping restore the freedom, dignity and collective security of the Iraqi people.

She said that the democratic ideals that the United States would like the Iraqi people to enjoy are the same ideals that the Filipinos have fought for in EDSA against oppression and dictatorship.

No official travel ban to countries with S.A.R.S., says Palace

Malacañang today said that although there is no official ban on the travel of Filipinos to countries in the region where cases of the killer pneumonia have been reported, it would be advisable for those without urgent reasons to go there to postpone their trips.

In an interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said that in the case of Hong Kong, the ban for the deployment of Filipino workers there stays but not for labor reasons but for health reasons.

Bunye confirmed that Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas has recommended to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that the ban should not be lifted because the former British colony is still reeling from the threat of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) that has already claimed several victims.

The first reason for the ban of the deployment of OFWs to Hong Kong, Bunye said, was the wage cut ordered by the Hong Kong authorities on Filipino domestics.

But Bunye said this problem is now almost settled because there are now pending cases to be filed against Hong Kong authorities by the affected OFWs themselves and the Philippine government.

Bunye said that the government is advising Filipinos to be extra cautious in traveling not only to Hong Kong but also to some affected countries like Singapore, China, Vietnam, and Canada.

He also said that although there has not been any reported confirmed SARS case in the Philippines, it is advisable for the people to be on the alert and to follow the preventive measures recommended by the Department of Health.

For those coming from the affected countries, it would be advisable of them to go on voluntary quarantine for at least one week, Bunye said.

April 9, a working day, but still to be observed as Fall of Bataan – Palace

Malacañang today said that the Fall of Bataan will still be observed through appropriate ceremonies on April 9 although it will be a working day after President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared April 7, a Monday, as non-working holiday.

In an interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said the President's directive to declare April 7 as a non-working holiday in lieu of April 9, which is a working day, is aimed at giving the Filipinos a longer weekend.

Bunye, who is with the presidential caravan traversing the Strong Republic Nautical Highway (SRNH), said that the idea is to give Filipinos more time to enjoy their weekends to boost domestic tourism.

“Pero gugunitain pa rin yong April 9 at magkakaroon ng appropriate ceremonies na gaganapin sa araw na iyan (But we will still commemorate April 9 and there will be appropriate ceremonies on that day),” Bunye said.

This will be the 61st commemoration of the fall of Bataan during World War II.

In the same interview, Bunye said that during the ongoing presidential caravan, the government is just trying to demonstrate that a national highway can be opened through the western seaboard, from Luzon all the way to the Visayas and Mindanao.

Bunye said that there is now an existing eastern seaboard highway—the Pan-Philippine Highway—from Manila to the Bicol Region and on to Samar-Leyte and to Mindanao.

GMA assures power for Panay Island

ILOILO CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured that power would continue to flow in the Panay Island despite predictions of shortage starting this year.

During a meeting with rice farmers, irrigators associations, and the trade and agri-business sector at Sarabia Manor Hotel this afternoon, the President said private power generations companies have agreed to supply the needed power in various locations of the island.

“I’m glad to inform you that there are power generation companies from private sector that undertake the addition of power supply on Panay Island itself in various locations,” she said.

The President noted that there would be about 30 to 40 megawatts of power that would be ready by the end of the year or in the first few months of 2004 from, among others, Mirant and Power One.

The President ordered last year the creation of a Panay Power Task Force to coordinate a solution to the imminent power shortage consistent with privatization and deregulation of the law.

Meanwhile, the President reported the signing this morning of a memorandum of understanding between the Antique Gov. Sally Perez and the Korean Electric Power Corp. (KEPCO) for the construction and setting up of 100 megawatt circulating, fluidized bed combustion power plant using the Semirara island in Antique.

The President thus urged rural electrification cooperatives for the islands covering the provinces of Aklan, Antique, Capiz and Iloilo to work fast and ensure the speedy implementation of power agreements with the private sector.

“The government can only promote the solutions. But you, the electric distributors, must take responsibility for the timely implementation of the projects,” she said.

She also called on the local officials and communities to lend assistance to these projects such as the necessary permits and approvals “so that they are not delayed.”

“And I hope that the Senate will soon pass the Transco franchise bill so that they can privatize Transco,” she added.

GMA hopes to bring down cost of produce, boost tourism with Nautical Highway

ROXAS CITY, Capiz – Armed with a P20-billion package from the Development Bank of the Philippines, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo hopes to achieve two things in launching the Strong Republic Nautical Highway—bring down the cost of agricultural products and boost domestic tourism.

In a luncheon press conference at the Baybay Beach here, the President urged private investors to avail themselves of the DBP loanable fund that will set into motion the role on-roll off (Ro-Ro) system of terminals and ferry boats linking Luzon to Western Visayas and Mindanao.

“With the system of Ro-Ro terminals and ferry boats, these will be a new revolution in trade and commerce the way that the ferryboats within Visayas and Mindanao also revolutionized travel,” she said.

The President, on the second day of the Presidential caravan inaugurating the new agri-tourism highway, signed in Roxas, Oriental Mindoro last Monday a loan agreement between the DBP and Philippine Nippon Shipping for the purchase of a Ro-Ro vessel for the Roxas-Caticlan route.

Late Monday, she also unveiled a port marker at Caticlan with Aklan Governor Florencio Miraflores, Malay Mayor Cicilo Cawaling and Aklan lone district Rep. Billy Colizo.

She hopes to open other Ro-Ro routes linking the western and eastern seaports of the country with the aid of the loan package.

This, the President said, should open even bigger market for the agricultural product of Visayas and Mindanao in a faster, cheaper way.

“Before, it was cheaper to import corn from Thailand than from Mindanao,” she explained. “But with the Ro-Ro system, it will now be competitive to ship out of Vis-Min than Thailand.”

She said that although the main use of the nautical highway is to reduce cost, she also hopes to boost domestic tourism in the 17 provinces that the route will cut through.

She cited such world-class tourist destinations like Boracay, Dakak and Bais where people can even go whale watching.

In another effort to give the domestic tourism a shot in the arm, the President likewise announced she was moving Araw ng Kagitingan from April 9 to April 7 in line with her holiday economics.

She, however, emphasized that the celebration will still be held on April 9.

“We are not adding a new holiday. We are only transferring. Ceremonies will still be held on April 9 but the holiday will be on April 7, Monday,” she said.

GMA reminds local officials to be extra vigilant

ON BOARD THE MILLENNIUM UNO (from Iloilo to Bacolod) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the local officials of Iloilo and the two Negros provinces to be extra vigilant against security threats, reminding them of their important functions in times of crisis.

During a command conference aboard the Millennium Uno Roll On-Roll Off (Ro-Ro) ferry from Iloilo to Bacolod City, the President led a briefing for local officials from Iloilo, Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental on the safety and security measures they need to carry out in the wake of the special security threats facing the world today.

The President said “it is very important to meet with the officials of Iloilo and Negros Occidental because these are the two largest provinces in the country.”

The President said that if these two provinces are safe “you can say that the whole country is safe.”

The President reminded the local officials of their three important functions in times like this: one, as crisis managers; two, as information champion; and three, as anti-crime czars.

The President reiterated what she said in a command conference in Cebu last week that the police are now under the supervision and control of the local executives.

“The PNP local units are under your supervision and control, and the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) are there to support you in your triple function,” President said.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. also gave a briefing on the security arrangements the PNP has been carrying out.

“Hindi puwedeng maganda lang sa papel (Things shouldn’t just look good on paper),” Lina said, adding that they should work in times of crisis.

Lina said actual drills on anti-terrorist measures should be carried out to ensure that public safety plans are really working.

Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye

The Supreme Court is the final arbiter when it comes to matters of law. It is an independent body. Its decision carries the weight of law and must be respected.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

The President's Day: April 2, 2003

02 APRIL 2003

- **GMA promotes tourism potentials of Boracay, other Visayan islands**
- **GMA appoints Dayrit as SARS Crisis Manager**
- **Statement by Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Filipino domestics file case before HK High Court questioning legality of wage cut, levy**

GMA promotes tourism potentials of Boracay, other Visayan islands

BAIS CITY, Negros Oriental – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today described as “good, clean fun” Tuesday night’s dancing at the world-renowned Boracay Island.

The President stressed this as she dismissed reports criticizing how she could dance the night away in Boracay in the face of various problems confronting the country.

“I prefer Boracay dancing than those politicians who love to bash me at every opportunity,” she explained. “It was nothing but good, clean fun with the First Gentleman (Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo).”

She noted that her official party and participants to the Strong Republic Nautical Highway caravan enjoyed the hospitality of islanders.

This and the island’s natural splendor have made Boracay a major tourist destination in the Philippines. Many have called it Paradise Island.

The President and her delegation spent the night in Boracay after ending the second day of a three-day Roll-on Roll-off (Ro-Ro) caravan that would showcase the country’s eastern seaboard route for Ro-Ro passenger and cargo transit and tourism potentials.

Today, the President went dolphin watching at the Bais City port in eastern Negros Island. The city is fast becoming another tourist attraction.

She was thrilled at the sight of dolphins breaching, spinning and riding the bow of the Presidential pumpboat that also had on board Atty. Arroyo and local officials led by Negros Oriental Governor George Arnaiz.

Meanwhile, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the President wanted to show domestic and foreign tourists that the places the caravan visited “are now easy to reach and safe.”

Bunye also brushed aside criticisms on the President, saying that despite her hectic schedule, she continued to be on top of the situation.

“I hope they were only joking,” Bunye said when asked to comment on calls for the President to stop the caravan and focus on other more important concerns.

The three-day caravan started in Batangas City and would end in Dapitan City, Zamboanga del Norte Thursday (April 3).

GMA appoints Dayrit as SARS Crisis Manager

BAIS CITY, Negros Oriental – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today named Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit as Crisis Manager for the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) malady.

The President made the announcement in the course of a three-day Strong Republic Nautical Highway caravan that launched the government's Roll-on Roll-off (Ro-Ro) program while promoting tourism in islands in the Visayas and Mindanao.

She said Dayrit's team resembled that of the Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT) under Ambassador Roy Cimatu.

While Cimatu's MEPT are looking after the safety and welfare Filipino expatriates in the Middle East against acts of terrorism spawned by the Iraq war, Dayrit's group will look after the safety and welfare of the people against the deadly SARS which has afflicted people in many countries, she added.

In a press briefing aboard a Ro-Ro vessel cruising the Iloilo City-Bacolod City route late Tuesday afternoon, the President directed the Department of Health (DOH) to coordinate with the Coast Guard and other agencies to protect seafarers coming in and going out of all major ports.

"We must try to lock out the disease as much as possible" and contain threats from SARS, she said.

The SARS should be dealt with in as much the same way as the government is dealing with the other crisis, she pointed out.

She also took the occasion to congratulate the DOH for doing its best to make the country SARS-free.

Meanwhile, the President ordered the police and the military to sustain heightened alert in the wake of continued threats from terrorists.

She said the visibility of security forces at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport "must be brought to all major ports," she said.

Statement by Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye

On Kuratong Baleleng Case

Instead of bashing the Supreme Court by innuendo, Senator Lacson should welcome the opportunity to clear himself once and for all. Falsely attributing political motives to the decision constitutes an assault against the integrity of the judicial system and is a disservice to our country.

On SARS

Senator Joker Arroyo was probably kidding. But if he was serious, his remarks are based on the wrong premise as they tend to portray a situation worse than it really is. For the record, we don't have a single confirmed case of SARS. The problem is adequately attended to not only by the Department of Health but also the other agencies of government. The President is on top of the situation and she is in close touch with Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit whom she has designated as crisis manager to deal with this emergency.

Filipino domestics file case before HK High Court questioning legality of wage cut, levy

ON BOARD THE M/V DON RAMON DE BOHOL (from Dumaguete to Dapitan) – The Philippine Consul General in Hong Kong, Vicky Bataclan, informed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during a teleconference today that Filipino domestics have filed a case before the High Court of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) questioning the legality of the levy or wage cut imposed on foreign domestic workers by the HKSAR government.

Named respondents in the case filed yesterday, the day the wage cut took effect, were HKSAR chief executive in Council, the director of immigration and the Employees Retraining Board.

The case was filed by five Filipino and two Indonesian domestics, two migrant organizations and a Filipino lawyer residing in Hong Kong, who is an employer of a domestic worker.

The case is being handled *pro bono* by Massie and Clement Solicitors, and barristers Gerard McCoy SC (Queens Counsel), Philip Ross and Neil Thomson.

The case is seeking a court order to set aside and declare as illegal and unconstitutional the decision by the Chief Executive in Council on February 25, 2003 to reduce the minimum allowable wage of domestics by HK\$400 per month and impose a levy of HK\$400 on the employers. The lawyers also are filing for damages, on behalf of the plaintiffs, for money wrongly expropriated by the HKSAR government.

The President earlier announced that the Philippine government will fully support Filipino workers in Hong Kong who will avail themselves of all possible mechanism to contest the levy or wage cut even as efforts of Philippine official will continue to explore all means possible in calling upon the sense of fair play of the Hong Kong government for it to reconsider the implementation of this discriminatory policy.

First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo visited Hong Kong recently and met with lawyers of Massie and Clement who have volunteered to assist and handle the case for free as an expression of their belief in the justness of the cause of the Filipino domestics.

The lawyers of the domestics claim that the decision of the HKSAR Chief Executive in Council imposing a wage cut is *ultra vires* (exceeded its authority) on technical grounds and based on "irrelevant consideration." They also said the levy on the employers is actually a tax imposed on the domestics which is illegal and unconstitutional.

It was noted that the HKSAR government made the decision imposing the levy and wage cut without the passage of a substantive law and therefore is without any legal effect. As the levy is a form of taxation, the Legislative Council should have approved the imposition of this tax as required by Article 73 (3) of the Hong Kong Basic Law, the lawyers of the domestics said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: April 2, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20080302100924/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/apr02.htm>

The President's Day: April 3, 2003

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- **GMA orders crackdown on Davao City wharf bombers**
- **Justice will be done, GMA assures victims of Davao bombing**
- **Davao united against terrorism, lawlessness**
- **Davaoens calm but alert in wake of Sasa blast**
- **DFA instructs all RP missions abroad to adopt contingency plan against S.A.R.S.**

GMA orders crackdown on Davao City Wharf bombers

DAPITAN CITY, Zamboanga del Norte — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) to do a crackdown on the lawless elements and terrorists who bombed the Sasa Wharf in Davao City.

The bombing killed 15 persons and injured more than 40 other individuals, according to the latest reports.

The President stressed that the AFP as well as the PNP must take appropriate measures, including the setting up of visible checkpoints, for the arrest of these lawless elements and terrorists. She vowed that they, together with the Davao City airport bombers, will be hunted down and made to face the full force of the law.

The President said the wharf incident is part of the renewed challenge of terrorism she warned about in the past weeks.

“This is a grim reminder that we must always be alert and watchful, and those who wish to do us harm in a manner that creates a wide swath of fear must not intimidate us,” the President said.

The President pointed out that the police and military alone cannot do the job. “This is a total war requiring the full attention and resources of the entire community,” the President said.

Asked if Mindanao would be placed under a state of emergency, the President replied that only Davao City and Davao Provinces would be declared under a state of lawless violence. “And under a state of lawless violence, I can empower the military to do these crackdowns, and I am doing so,” the President said.

The President will proceed to Davao today to assess the situation.

Justice will be done, GMA assures victims of Davao bombing

DAVAO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assured victims of the April 2 bombing in front of the Philippine Ports Authority wharf at the Sasa district here that “justice will be done.”

“A speedy and thorough investigation is in order. The authorities will issue the necessary bulletins as evidence is gathered,” said the President during a press briefing at the Marco Polo Hotel here.

The President visited the scene of the bombing that killed 16 people and left 55 others injured.

There was an eerie atmosphere as the President, joined by some members of her Cabinet, stood over the exact spot where the bomb was exploded to offer prayers and flowers to the victims. There were still traces of blood on the scene, and pieces of slippers and footwear lay scattered all around.

The President then proceeded to the Davao Medical Center where 37 of those injured were brought. The others injured were brought to San Pedro Hospital (13), Davao Doctors Hospital (three), Davao Medical Mission (one), and Brokenshire (one).

During the press briefing, the President noted that “the threat of terror will be relentless.”

“It will be contained only by the extent of our collective vigilance at all times (because) it will rise and escalate to the extent it can exploit our own complacency,” said the President.

The Sasa bombing came less than a month after a bomb ripped through a waiting shed at the airport terminal that left 21 dead and 117 injured.

The President underscored that she had actually started counter terrorism inspections in Metro Manila last week, particularly her surprise check of the security measures being undertaken at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

The President, who is coming off a four-day launch of the Strong Republic Nautical Highway from Batangas to Dapitan in Zamboanga del Norte, also said that she had raised the same warning as she traversed several ports throughout her trip from Luzon to Mindanao.

“Our alertness must be all encompassing, penetrating and nationwide,” she said. She likewise emphasized that both the government and the public “cannot leave an opening for the enemy that strikes when it sees us relax our guard.”

“We must harden potential targets by demonstrating collective vigilance,” said the President, who added that the fight against terrorism is a “total war requiring the full attention and resources of the entire community.”

“Each citizen must be the eyes and ears to sense danger and must have the initiative to immediately report to the authority,” she said.

Davao united against terrorism, lawlessness

DAVAO CITY—The united Davao community who defied and crushed lawlessness and insurgency here through the Alsa Masa Group in the 80s have again risen to the occasion to support President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s declaration of a state of lawless violence in the Davao provinces.

Two bombing incidents within a month of each other in this otherwise peaceful southern city have made Davaoenos both indignant and vigilant.

But other than this, they fully supported the President’s declaration, according to City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

“Anybody who is under fear would welcome such a declaration,” he said. “This gives us the legal backing to run after the culprit.”

The declaration, an offshoot of Wednesday night’s bombing at the Sasa wharf here that killed at least 16 persons and wounded 55 others, empowered the President to call on the Armed Forces of the Philippines to suppress lawlessness in the Davao area.

Covered under the declaration are Davao City and the provinces of Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur and Davao Oriental.

The President had earlier appointed Duterte as crisis manager for Southern and Central Mindanao (Regions 11 and 12 respectively) in the aftermath of the March 4 bombing at the arrival area of the Davao City International Airport.

Despite the tension brought about by Wednesday night's bomb blast, people here are not panicking. Earlier, Duterte called on his constituents to remain calm and unfazed by the terrorist attack.

"The target of terrorism is to bring you down to your knees and force you to negotiate," he said. "Deaths are only incidental."

The wharf bomb explosion was the 17th bombing incident in Mindanao since January and the second to strike this city.

Despite the heightened security alert, Duterte said nobody could prevent bombings from happening 100 percent, "unless, of course, we close Davao City and ask everybody to strip."

Davaoenos calm but alert in wake of Sasa blast

DAVAO CITY—Despite President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's declaration of a state of lawless violence here, Davaoenos went about their usual routine, unmindful of Wednesday night's bomb blast at the Sasa wharf here, the second that rocked the city in a month's time.

There were no cancelled flights, no abrupt troop movement, no nothing. Only heightened security in the wake of the latest terrorist attack that killed at least 16 people and wounded 55 more.

Department of the Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. liked what he is seeing. "That's the way things should be," he said. "People should remain calm although vigilant."

He dismissed fears that the declaration of lawless violence would mean curtailment of people's right, saying it is only intended to allow the military to take a more active role in suppressing violence in support of the crisis manager.

"According to the President, *hindi lang tayo umasa sa pulis at* (we do not only depend on the police and the military)," he said, adding that citizens and barangay officials should also be involved in the anti-terrorism campaign.

"Terrorism knows no time, no boundaries. We should never lower our guard," he added.

Shattered pieces of glass, slippers and torn pieces of clothing were the only grim reminder left of the senseless bombing at the Davao City port.

Among the victims was 15-year-old Janet Brillantes, a junior high school student at the Sto. Tomas Temple High School, who was among those visited by President Macapagal-Arroyo today at the Davao City Medical Center.

Janet's mother said her daughter was only fetching a neighbor at the port when the bomb exploded.

Janet sustained head, back and leg wounds and could hardly talk to the President.

She, however, managed to put on a faint smile when the President approached her bed.

DFA instructs all RP missions abroad to adopt contingency plan against S.A.R.S.

The Department of Foreign Affairs has instructed all Philippine foreign missions to adopt a contingency plan against the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) to avoid its spread among overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), including Filipino seafarers.

In a report to Malacañang, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople said the contingency measures that the DFA has adopted include the setting up of a SARS desk in every embassy and consulate where Filipinos can receive updated information about the disease.

Earlier, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered all concerned government agencies “to lock out the disease as much as possible and contain its threats.”

She has appointed Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit as crisis manager for the SARS, authorizing him to take all the necessary measures to prevent the killer pneumonia from spreading to the Philippines.

The President said that SARS should be dealt with in much the same way that the government has dealt with other crisis.

According to Ople, the directive that he has issued to all foreign missions is in compliance with the preventive measures ordered by the President.

Ople stressed that access to official reports of the World Health Organization and Department of Health would help reduce panic among Filipinos abroad.

He said that the Philippines is fortunate to have no known SARS case to date while maintaining that special care should be given to the health needs of OFWs including Filipino seafarers who travel from port to port.

Recently, SARS claimed the life of Adela Dalingay, a Filipino domestic helper based in Hong Kong.

Ople also ordered embassy officials in China to make sure that all Filipinos working there are properly informed about the symptoms related to SARS.

He cited reports that China remains the country with the largest number of SARS cases. According to the World Health Organization, 806 cases with 34 deaths have been reported in China.

There are 700 Filipinos in Guangdong province where SARS was said to have originated.

According to the DFA, Filipinos in China remain calm and have kept to their normal routine despite the SARS outbreak. Hospital employees, however, are required to don surgical masks while on duty.

Ople said Filipino seafarers, particularly those visiting ports situated in countries with known SARS cases, are a special concern following a report from the Philippine embassy in Jakarta that an Indonesian crewman died of suspected SARS on the way to Singapore from Hong Kong.

Another six Indonesian crewmen are still in quarantine at Singapore’s seaport.

“We have slightly more than two hundred thousand seafarers deployed overseas and I urge them to take the necessary preventive measures against SARS during these port calls,” Ople added.

He suggested that the Department of Labor and Employment and Department of Health work closely with the different manning agencies and local maritime associations in providing SARS updates to Filipino seafarers.

Embassies and consulates were also given strict instructions to meet with seafarers’ groups and their dependents abroad in a bid to expand the reach of the Philippine government’s SARS preventive education campaign, Ople said.

Meanwhile, Ople approved the purchase of 3,400 surgical masks to be sent to the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong for use of personnel and daily visitors to the consulate.

The request for surgical masks came from Consul-General Victoria Bataclan who said she has formed a monitoring team to visit 16 Filipinos confined in various hospitals, including five who are confirmed SARS patients.

Bataclan cited difficulties encountered by the Consulate in sourcing the WHO-recommended masks as well as its prohibitive cost at HK\$4.00 a piece.

Consulate officials noted that the SARS outbreak in Hong Kong has led most Filipino domestic helpers to spend their usual weekend day-offs at home with their employers instead of going to the park or mall.

“Our Filipino workers in Hong Kong are quite aware of the health risks posed by SARS and have become very cautious with their movements within Hong Kong,” Bataclan said.

She added that the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong recently turned over 180,000 primers on SARS specifically for Filipino OFWs.

“The Information Ministry sought the help of the Consulate in having its official SARS primer translated to Pilipino for the benefit of our OFWs,” Bataclan explained.

The primers have already been distributed to members of the Filipino community.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: April 3, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514041932/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/apr03.htm>

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GMA happy over acquittal of 5 OFWs in Kuwait

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Thursday night expressed elation over the acquittal of five Filipinos in Kuwait on charges of conspiracy and murder.

Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait Bayani Mangibin, in a report to the President during the regular daily teleconference in Malacañang, identified the five acquitted overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) as Mary Jane Bitos, Teddy Tomara, Jimmy Binuya, Rosalia Baclig and Norayza Esich.

The five Filipinos were charged with the murder of Bitos' husband, Luc Echier, in 2002.

They were released by the Kuwaiti police last October 2002 on the condition that they would be housed at the Philippine Embassy.

On Thursday (April 3), the Court of Cassation (Kuwait Supreme Court) issued a release order for the five Filipinos, as it found no evidence of the crime imputed to them.

The Philippine embassy has provided legal assistance to the five.

During the teleconference, the President asked Mary Jane how she is and if she would be coming home soon.

"Congratulations on your acquittal," the President said.

During the President's state visit to Kuwait last February, the foreign government pardoned 20 Filipino prisoners who have been jailed for various offenses.

On top of this, the Kuwait government has also allowed the return to the Philippines of some 200 OFWs who ran away from their employers during the past several months or even years.

Statement of Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye

Davao Incident

The President will not let terrorists succeed in turning Davao into a city ruled by fear.

She is confident that Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, aided by the AFP, PNP and the entire citizenry, will catch the culprits soon and will return the city back to normalcy. Duterte has done this before. He can do it again.

Meantime, the President asks for a strong inter-faith solidarity, unity and forbearance. She says there is no way we can win against terror if there are ethnic and religious barriers among our people.

Mawanay

Ador Mawanay has more comic and entertainment rather than evidentiary value. He is the same person Senator Lacson once called a liar. He is such a good acrobat and should join the circus.

Gov't has enough resources to meet S.A.R.S. threat — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the public that the government has the expertise and enough resources in the public health system to adequately manage any possible severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) case.

In a press briefing in Malacañang this morning, the President announced her formal creation of a SARS management team in response to the public's growing concern on the dangers which SARS poses to Filipinos.

Although there has been no documented SARS case yet in the Philippines as reported by the World Health Organization, countries and territories like China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Singapore, Canada and the United States have recorded cases of the killer pneumonia.

The SARS management team is headed by Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit with the following as members: Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro Baja, Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo, Interior and Local Government Undersecretary Ed Soliman, Press Undersecretary Milton Alingod, Commodore Ruben Lista of the Philippine Coast Guard, Ninoy Aquino International Airport General Manager Edgar Manda, and Dr. Jaime Montoya of the Philippine Society of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases.

The President designated National Security Adviser Roilo Golez as the adviser of the crisis management team on SARS.

According to the President, the Department of Health has already put in place all measures and strategies to prevent the entry and spread of SARS in the Philippines.

The team will be on top of a well-coordinated implementation of a system that consists of the following components:

1. A rapid identification, isolation and management of suspected SARS cases in hospitals;
2. The prevention of the entry into the country and spread of possible cases through an effective quarantine system at Philippine ports of entry; and
3. A communication system that will not only be able to manage the flow of vital information to the public but also handle public anxiety on the deadly viral infection.

In the event of an outbreak of SARS in the country, the President said that the San Lazaro Hospital and Research Institute of Tropical Medicine will be at the apex of the hospital system that is properly equipped to handle the influx of large numbers of cases.

The President enjoined everyone to contribute to the government's collective effort to manage the situation. "Do not entertain rumors spread by text messages, e-mail or any other means," she said.

She said that if the public has any concerns, call up any of the SARS hotlines for information and help.

The President likewise called on the people to be calm but prepare for the worst. "This was our policy for the Iraq war and we are reaping the dividends of our collective efforts," she said.

What the country needs today, the President said, is education, information, alertness, sobriety and a sense of public responsibility among all Filipinos.

After making a formal statement on SARS, the President then met with the newly-formed SARS management team at the Ramos Room of Malacañang.

PNP sees need to defend, not just secure, country's ports and installations

DAVAO CITY—In the aftermath of the April 2 bombing of the Sasa Wharf here, merely securing the country's ports and installations may no longer be enough.

"There is now a need to defend our vital installations far more than just securing them," said PNP Deputy Director for Administration Edgardo Aglipay.

Aglipay was directed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Thursday to create a task force that would integrate all security efforts at the air and seaports of Davao, which have reeled from a second bombing attack in less than a month.

Last Wednesday night, a bomb ripped a crowd of passengers and well-wishers just outside Philippine Port Authority (PPA) compound here that left 15 dead and scores injured.

Under the newly-created task force, all the agencies operating within and immediately outside the port's premises will be integrated into a defense unit tasked with securing the port.

The authority of the task force will extend to as far as two kilometers from the port, according to Aglipay.

Aglipay has actually implemented a similar scheme in Zamboanga City, which has so far been successful in deterring terrorist attacks.

The port manager will act as task force commander, with representatives from the PNP, AFP, the local government, Bureau of Customs and Bureau of Immigration as members.

The task force will have intelligence, investigation, security, logistics and technical capabilities enough to frustrate or cope with any terrorist attack.

Earlier, The President underscored the need for the task force to stage regular security drills to develop the port as "target hardened".

The President has also called for "extraordinary security measures" in this city after the Sasa wharf bombing.

First Gentleman refuses to give credence to Mawanay's 'tale,' says guy has zero credibility

First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo today dismissed suggestions from some quarters that he files libel or perjury complaints against Angelo "Ador" Mawanay, saying that he would rather ignore the latter's allegations.

In a radio interview, the First Gentleman said that if you file a case against Mawanay, you would only give importance to a person who has no credibility at all.

Mawanay, who was earlier tagged by the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) as its star witness against opposition Senator Panfilo Lacson, has made a turnabout and implicated the First Gentleman in his so-called expose on Lacson.

The First Gentleman said that Senator Lacson himself has called Mawanay a congenital liar and an incredible witness.

He said that he and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo were in Davao City Thursday to personally attend to the needs of the victims of the bombing incident in the city when they heard of Mawanay's fantastic tale.

"Kaya pinagtatawanan na lang namin (That's why we just laughed)," the First Gentleman said.

In a separate statement, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that Mawanay has more comic and entertainment rather than evidentiary value.

"He us a good acrobat and should join the circus," Bunye said.

Statement of Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye on President's birthday tomorrow

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is foregoing her birthday celebration tomorrow. She has decided instead to earmark the amount of One Million Pesos to help in the campaign against terrorism.

The President is making available the amount as reward money for any information which would lead to the early arrest of the Davao City bombers and bring them to justice.

GMA elated over lower inflation rate

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed elation over the report that the country's inflation rate has slipped to 2.9 percent in March compared to 3.1 percent in February.

The President took note of the decrease in inflation, which also dipped from 3.6 percent a year ago, after receiving a report from Socio-economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri.

Inflation is defined as any sustained or continuous increase in the prices of consumer goods and services.

In his report, Neri said inflation went down due to the slowdown in the inflation of food, beverages and tobacco that mitigated the faster increases in the prices of fuel, light and water.

He said the abundant supply of some food items – to include fish, corn, eggs, fruits and vegetables — led to lower prices.

Neri added that fuel and services remained as the main sources of inflation.

The prices of fuel rose 13.7 percent compared to last year's level but electricity prices were lower by 3.5 percent year-on-year due to the reduction in the power purchase adjustment last June 2002, Neri noted.

The price of water went up by 11.1 percent compared to year ago levels due to the increase in water prices last January.

Neri added that inflation is expected to remain manageable in the coming months.

GMA directs officials to return normalcy in Davao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today issued three directives aimed at immediately bringing back normalcy in Davao City and the Davao provinces.

In a brief statement during her regular daily teleconference, the President directed Chief Superintendent Edgardo Aglipay, Philippine National Police (PNP) Deputy Director for Administration, and Chief Superintendent Isidro Lapena, Regional Commander of the PNP Regional Command 11, to:

- Maintain law and order with an even hand to prevent inter-religious strife, and
- Speedily identify and get the culprits and return the normal course of community life and commerce (in Davao City) as soon as possible,

The President also directed Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita and Office of the Muslim Affairs Executive Director Zamzamin Ampatuan “to work closely with Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte in restoring the rampart of inter-faith solidarity in Davao City.”

“Mayor Duterte is on top of the situation and must have the full cooperation of the military, law enforcement and related agencies. Let us contain the physical and psychological consequences of this event,” she said.

“Terrorists want to put our lives in disarray, to institute suspicion and paranoia, to divide and to rule with the weapon of fear. Let us show them we are not afraid,” she said.

“We will put up a good fight for law and order and we will work together to rebuild our lives,” she added.

The President also called on the people to unite as she noted that “there is no way we can win against terror if we put up ethnic and religious barriers against each other.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: April 4, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514042020/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/apr04.htm>

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- **GMA opens LRT Line 2 Santolan-Cubao stretch**

Filipino soldiers will do the fighting in Balikatan 03-1 — Ople

Regardless of how either side characterizes the planned Balikatan 03-1, there has never been any question that it will be Filipino soldiers who will do the fighting, according to Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople.

Ople made the statement in response to speculations that Balikatan 03-1 will allow US troops to engage in combat.

“The objective basis that should characterize our military cooperation with the US will be the terms of reference for Balikatan 03-1. There is a clear understanding that Balikatan 03-1 will be based on and build on the success of Balikatan 02-1 which was held in Basilan,” Ople said.

Ople said that before the government even began discussions with the US on Balikatan 03-1, it already had a clear idea of what it wanted to achieve and “what we would allow to be done and what we would not allow to be done.”

“In crafting this policy, we were guided by the framework established by the Supreme Court when the constitutionality of the Balikatan in Basilan was challenged. And the policy is this: US forces will not be allowed to engage in combat in Balikatan 03-1. The fighting will be, and will always be, done by our soldiers,” Ople stressed.

The secretary said that this policy will admit only one exception, and it is an exception that will be interpreted in its most restrictive sense. He said that this exception is the exercise of the right of self-defense, adding that “it is an exception that will be subject to clear limitations. That is, the use of force should be reasonable and proportionate, and shall only be used for the duration of the direct threat.”

Ople said that like in the Balikatan 02-1 in Basilan, the US will provide training, assistance and advice to our soldiers, which our soldiers can then directly apply in the field, and where US soldiers will monitor, assess, provide feedback as well as provide exposure to modern communication, transport and other technologies and capabilities.

GMA's gift to public on her birthday; 100,000 jobs

When President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo celebrates her birthday today, April 5, she would offer a surprise gift to the public: over 100,000 new jobs available through the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Kabuhayan 2003 Action Center.

In a statement, the DOLE said the Kabuhayan jobs fair opened at the Atrium, Upper Ground Floor, Building A of SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City.

More than 100,000 job openings under the President's Summer Jobs Program are ready to be filled up.

DOLE Secretary Patricia A. Sto Tomas said a daily jobs fair from April 5 to June 10 would be the centerpiece activity at the Center.

Kabuhayan 2003 is the DOLE's contribution to the President's Kabuhayan, Kabahayan, at Kahusayan sa Pamamahala Program (KKK), which aims to generate employment opportunities and preserve existing jobs.

Sto. Tomas said the vacancies available for the Kabuhayan 2003 Action Center daily jobs fair included 60,000 youth work in community beautification and cleanliness; 10,000 office work, sales, hotel and restaurant services; 50,000 factory work in ecozones and technoparks; 50,000 jobs in construction and infrastructure projects, and 5,000 livelihood opportunities in tourism-related, cottage, and micro-enterprises.

Some 3,000 apprenticeship slots are also available in the jewelry-making, garments and textile manufacturing industries.

Those who plan to work abroad can apply for 4,000 overseas jobs available in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, United Kingdom, and Hong Kong.

Sto. Tomas said the jobs fair would be participated in by private firms and organizations namely: Guild of Philippine Jewelers; Magiclips; Cora Cares; Uniform Manufacturers Association of the Philippines; Uniform Manufacturers Organization and Designers Association; Federation of Philippine Textile Industries; Textile Manufacturers Association of the Philippines; Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry; Employers Confederation of the Philippines; Philippine Exporters Foundation, Inc.; Philippine Business for Social Progress; and the Private Recruitment and Placement Agencies.

Also participating in the said jobs fair are nine associations from the overseas employment sector and 29 government agencies.

"For two months, the Center will be a beehive of activity as there will be desks to provide the public with employment counseling and testing, business/livelihood counseling, skills training, E-card issuance, NBI Clearance issuance, SSS registration and overseas employment certification services," explained Sto. Tomas.

GMA orders Domingo to go after human smugglers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Friday night ordered the Bureau of Immigration to tighten its campaign against syndicated human smugglers who endanger the lives of Filipinos who want to work abroad even without legal documents to leave the country.

The President directed Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo to stop human smuggling during her regular daily teleconference, this time with Ambassador to Jordan Ruperto Dizon, at Malacañang's briefing room.

She told Domingo to deploy agents to arrest human smugglers who, in most times, disguise themselves as staff members of escort services in airports.

During the teleconference, the President learned that Lea Cordero, a native of Sultan Kudarat, illegally left the Philippines for Jordan with the help of an escort service agency.

Cordero is having problems, after running away from her employer recently but having no legal documents to show.

The President asked Cordero if she remembered the name of her escort but the latter did not recall it.

"Ma'am, pasensiya na po pero hindi ko po matandaan kung sino po iyon. Basta na lang dumating kami sa airport at (sila ang) nagturo sa amin kung ano ang gagawin namin (I can't recall the escort service's name. We arrived at the airport and they gave me instructions on how to go about)," Cordero told the President.

The President assured Cordero that she would talk to Commissioner Domingo to end the nefarious activities of human smuggling rings, and have the perpetrators arrested and prosecuted.

Cordero praised the President's immediate action, saying that the President's move would protect Filipinos from human smugglers.

Cordero, together with 20 other overseas Filipino workers who ran away from their employers, also asked the help of the President to return to the Philippines.

Cordero and her companions are in the custody of the Philippine Embassy in Jordan, waiting for the regularization of their documents.

President's radio address to the nation

Mga minamahal kong kababayan, tayo ay nabubuhay sa mapanganib na panahon. Ang pinakahuling insidente ng pambobomba sa Davao City ay nagtuturo sa atin na ang pinakamahalagang leksiyon sa ngayon ay maging mapagbantay. Kailangang maging listo tayo laban sa di-nakikitang kaaway, na walang suot na uniporme at walang dalang watawat. Isang kaaway na ang tanging misyon ay maghasik ng takot at sirain ang ating hinahon at pagkakaisa bilang isang bansa.

Ito ang panahon para tanggapin ng bawat Pilipino ang hamon sa kanya. Maari tayong magpadala sa takot na maghahatid lamang sa atin sa pamamanhid at kawalang pag-asa, o maari tayong tumayo at lumaban. Mangangahulugan ng matitinding sakripisyo para pangalagaan ang ating katatagan bilang isang bansa, at ang ating pagkaka-isa bilang isang lahi.

We are faced with a serious challenge. We must find within ourselves, within our own hands and resources, within our solidarity as a people—the capacity to fight, to prevail and to win.

Walang sinumang dapat bale-walain ang hangad nating kapayapaan. Nakahanda tayong ibigay ang ating buhay at karangalan para dito.

Pero ang kapalit ng kapayapaan ay palagiang pagbabantay. Hindi ko tinutukoy dito ang kaalistuhan lamang ng mga sundalo at kapulisan na nasa unahan ng laban. Ibig ko ring sabihin nito ang pagmamatyag ng mga ordinaryong mamamayan na nagtrabaho sa kalye o bukid man. Tinutukoy ko ang pagmamatyag ng mga Pilipino na may pananagutan para sa seguridad at kapakanan ng kanilang mga kapuwa. Tinutukoy ko ang bawa't Pilipino na handang maging mata at tainga ng komunidad para alamin ang pangamba at kikilos para ito ay supilin.

The price of freedom is perpetual vigilance. Complacency will only bring us ruin and peril.

Sa Mindanao, ang tungkulin ng pagbabantay ay naka-atang sa mga komunidad ng Muslim at Kristiyano man. Ang ating pinag-isang paghahanda para labanan ang terorismo ay mahalaga hindi lamang para sa katahimikan at kaayusan, mahalaga rin ito para sa ating katataganang politikal at pagsulong na ekonomikal.

Ang mga terorista ay patuloy tayong paghahati-hatiin pero dapat nating lagpasan ang hangganan ng paniniwala at lipi para bumuo ng isang kasunduan ng kapayapaan at kaunlaran. Hanapin natin ang mga katangian na magpapayabong sa ating pagkaka-isa, kalayaan, paggalang sa buhay at pag-aari, damdamin ng komunidad at kapakanan ng lahat.

Ang mensahe ko para sa mga taga-Mindanao ay ini-uukol ko rin sa buong bansa. Nahaharap tayo ngayon sa mabibigat at matitinding mga problema. Ang banta ng SARS ay patuloy na lumalaganap at idinadalangin natin na hindi ito makakarating sa ating bansa. Ang ating mga manggagawa sa Gitnang Silangan ay nabubuhay pa rin sa ilalim ng pangamba, bagama't handa sila sa anumang krisis. Ang pinakahuling pambobomba sa Davao ay nagdulot ng panibagong takot sa ating mga kababayan.

Ang inyong pamahalaan ay gagawin ang lahat ng makakaya upang malampasan ang mga ganitong krisis. Sisiguruhin natin na mapipigilan ang banta ng SARS. Titiyakin natin na ang ating *OFWs* ay magiging ligtas sa panganib. Hindi tayo titigil hangga't hindi nahuhuli ang nasa likod ng pambobomba at mabigyan ng katarungan ang mga biktima ng terorismo.

Pero, kahit ang lahat ng ito ay hindi matutugunan ng ating paghahangad ng kapayapaan, pagkaka-isa, katatagan at pagbabalik sa normal, sa dakong huli, ang kailangan natin ay damdamin ng pagka-bansa na nagmumula sa damdamin ng pananagutan sa ating kapwa Pilipino. Hanggang hindi tayo natututong mangalaga sa bawa't isa at igalang ang ating kapwa, hindi natin makakamit ang mga biyayang ating inaasam.

Muli, ako ay nananawagan para sa *moratorium* ng pamumulitika. Marami tayong naririnig na tinig sa mga lansangan, pakinggan natin silang lahat. Maaring paminsan-minsan ay hindi nagtutugma ang ating mga boses, pero huwag nating kalimutan na tayo ay isang bansa sa ilalim ng isang bandila. Huwag nating hayaang mabawasan ang ating pagkakaisa at paninindigan. Magkakasama tayong palalampasin ang unos.

Nananawagan ako sa lahat ng ating mga mamamayan saan man kayo naroroon, sa mga lansangan at bukirin o nasa laot ng karagatan, sa mga bahay at paaralan, sa mga lugar ng trabaho at pagsasaya — ang inyong Pangulo ay pamumunuan ang ating bansa sa pinakamagaling na paraang aking kakayanin, kasama ang lahat ng lakas na aking matitipon.

Pero kailangan ko ang inyong tulong at suporta. Samahan niyo ako para pangalagaan ang ating bansa at isulong ito tungo sa kaunlaran.

Stay with me. Let us keep our nation secure, and march onward to a strong Republic.

Nawa'y patnubayan tayong lahat ng Maykapal. Maraming salamat po.

GMA happy over performance of RP stocks, exports

LUBAO, Pampanga – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that despite negative global developments spawned by the ongoing war in Iraq, the Philippine stock market performed well in Asia and the country's export to the United States grew and remained competitive.

The President made the announcement in a short message she delivered before the end of a Thanksgiving Mass for her 56th birth anniversary celebration at the San Agustin Parish Church here.

In her message, she said she received two pieces of good news from an international analyst who said the country's stock market performed very well in Asia and the export industry became more competitive compared with other nations.

The news provided her one of the best birthday gifts she received today, she added.

“Again, we have the best performing stock market in (the Asian) region today. And even though the United States, our main market, is weakening, again our exports are still growing, which means that they are growing not because the market is growing but because they get more market share,” she said.

The President arrived here at 8:30 a.m. and attended the Thanksgiving Mass offered by her townmates. Pampanga Bishop Paciano Aniceto officiated the Mass.

The presidential convoy encountered temporary delay because of the ongoing rehabilitation work being made by the Philippine National Construction Corporation (PNCC) at the North Luzon Expressway.

First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and presidential children Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel, Evangeline Lourdes and Diosdado accompanied the President.

The President said she prayed to the Almighty God to bring “peace and prosperity in our country, peace and reconciliation for our people and the peoples of the world, and peace in the next elections so that it will be a culmination of the new politics that we are trying to bring about.”

“I’m wishing for peace and reconciliation so that we can heal the deep division in our society. And I’m wishing for peace, and honest elections, so that the new politics can be the legacy of my administration,” she told reporters after the Mass.

The President also joined for breakfast the clergy and local officials led by Bishop Aniceto and Governor Lito Lapid, respectively, at the patio of the San Agustin Parish Church.

She likewise visited and inspected the booths of the local Kabuhayan fair being conducted in front of the Lubao municipal hall, some 50 meters away from the church.

The Cabinet Secretaries and local officials who attended the Mass included Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, Jr., Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, Governor Lapid and Lubao Mayor Dennis Pineda.

GMA enjoins people to help nation overcome crisis

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today challenged every Filipino to rise up to the times and be ready to make sacrifices to safeguard the stability of the nation.

In her regular weekly radio message, the President warned against complacency, saying it would only lead the nation to ruin.

“We are faced with a serious challenge. We must find within ourselves, within our own hands and resources, within our solidarity as a people – the capacity to fight, to prevail and to win,” she said.

Saying peace could only be attained through vigilance, she called on the citizenry to help the police and the military in securing the nation against terrorists.

She enjoined the people to be the eyes and ears of the community in the fight against terrorism.

“The price of freedom is perpetual vigilance,” she said. “Complacency will only bring us to ruin and peril.

Citing that terrorists would always seek to divide communities to be able to succeed in their objectives, the President called on both Muslims and Christians to see beyond their faith to forge a united front for peace and progress.

“Hanapin natin ang mga katangian na magpapayabong sa ating pagkakaisa, kalayaan, paggalang sa buhay at pag-aari, damdamin ng komunidad at kapakanan ng lahat (Let us find the virtues that will enhance our unity, freedom, respect for life and property and community belongingness),” she said.

Despite the crises that the country is facing like the SARS epidemic, the terrorist threats and the plight of overseas Filipino workers caught in the war in Iraq, the President assured the people that the government is doing everything within its resources to overcome these crises.

However, she said, the government needs the support of everyone.

“Sa dakong huli, ang kailangan natin ay damdamin ng pagkabansa na nagmumula sa damdamin ng pananagutan sa ating kapwa Pilipino (In the end, what we need is a strong sense of nationhood that comes from our sense of responsibility to our fellow Filipinos),” she said.

“Hanggang hindi tayo natututong mangalaga sa bawat isa at igalang ang ating kapwa, hindi natin makakamit ang mga biyayang ating inaasam (Until we learn to care for each other and respect one another, we will never attain the blessings that we have been longing for),” she added.

GMA cites *Kabuhayan* Fair set up in Lubao

LUBAO, Pampanga – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today noted the *Kabuhayan* (Livelihood) Fair various government agencies conducted here to promote productivity among the people of Pampanga.

The President visited the different fair booths located at the mini-park in front of the Lubao municipal hall, about 50 meters away from the San Agustin Parish Church where she earlier attended a Thanksgiving Mass held for her 56th birth anniversary celebration.

Officials said the fair opened before the President arrived here at 8:30 a.m.

Among the agencies that participated in the fair were PAG-IBIG, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Agriculture (DA), Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Technological and Livelihood Research Center (TLRC), Philippine National Police (PNP) and National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), PhilHealth, and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA).

The PAG-IBIG released a P6-million check representing its loan assistance to qualified beneficiaries while the DSWD released P474,000, also in checks, to qualified Lubao residents.

The DA distributed sacks of assorted hybrid rice and corn seeds and turned over one four-wheeler truck worth P2 million to Lubao Mayor Dennis Pineda.

The DOLE, TESDA and TLRC set up a booth for jobs. The booth was an attraction for new graduates in the province.

PhilHealth also distributed 457 health cards to indigent families of Lubao, while the OWWA put up a call center so that residents could call their relatives working in the Middle East.

The PNP and NBI disseminated information about their thrusts, programs and projects.

A feature of the *Kabuhayan* fair was the tent of presidential daughter Evangeline Lourdes “Luli” Arroyo.

The tent, aptly labeled “*Libreng Gupit Handog ni Presidente*,” offered free haircuts to some 300 adults and children.

GMA opens LRT Line 2 Santolan-Cubao stretch

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today inaugurated the Santolan, Pasig City to Cubao, Quezon City stretch of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) Line 2, marking another achievement in her administration’s efforts to ease traffic through mass transit in Metro Manila.

After the President graced the Job Fair Program at the *Kabuhayan* 2003 Action Center at the SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City where she also had her daily teleconference with Middle East Preparedness Team Head

Ambassador Roy Cimatu, the President went to Santolan to lead in the inaugural ride aboard the Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA)-Megatren Line 2.

With the President in the initial ride were former President Corazon Aquino, First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo, daughter Evangeline Lourdes Arroyo, Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza, LRTA Administrator Teddy Cruz, Jr., local government officials and representatives from the Japanese government.

“Sana mapanatiling maganda at malinis ang mga train (I hope the trains would be well-maintained),” the President said after the inauguration ceremonies wherein she poured a bottle of champagne at the front part of the inaugural train.

The Santolan-Cubao stretch, representing Phase I of the project, spans 4.3 kilometers and traverses Aurora Blvd., a traffic-heavy route. It has four stations – Santolan (where the depot is located), Katipunan, Anonas and Cubao.

According to LRTA Administrator Cruz, Phase 2 of the rail system – from Cubao to Recto Avenue in Manila – is being fast tracked to meet its 2004 deadline.

Once fully operational, the entire line will span 13.8 kilometers and traverse Aurora Blvd., Ramon Magsaysay Blvd., Legarda St. and Recto Avenue.

Line 2, also dubbed as the “Megatren,” is at par in terms of facilities and technology with those in other parts of the world.

The trains are electrically-driven, using a solid state propulsion technology powered by electric motors of 1,500 volts. This enables the train to travel anywhere from 40 kilometers per hour to 80 kilometers per hour.

With such speed, travel time between Santolan and Cubao will take only from 10 to 15 minutes. At present, travel time between the two points takes from 45 minutes to more than an hour during rush hours.

A flat fare of P12 per trip will be charged from passengers after the free rides from today, April 5 to April 9.

The regular stored-value ticket will cost P120 each and the discounted ticket for senior citizens and persons with disability is priced at P96.

The megatren is commuter-friendly, specially for the mobility-impaired like the blind.

There are Braille engravings in the elevators to allow the visually-impaired to access the stations as well as path-finding tiles to guide them around the station concourse and platform levels.

For passengers using wheelchairs, there are reserved space for them inside the trains. Likewise, elevators have been installed in the stations for the use of the disabled.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: April 5, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20051211102630/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/apr05.htm>

The President's Day: April 6-15, 2003

The President's Day: April 16-30, 2003

The President's Day: May 1-6, 2003

The President's Day: May 7, 2003

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- **Statement of the President on MILF**
- **Statement of the President on SARS**
- **Statement of the President on PIATCO**
- **Statement of the President on surveys**
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Statement of the President on MILF

I call on our people to be vigilant and alert against more terrorist depredations and acts of cruelty against civilians. We shall not appease those who kill and maim the innocent. We shall not allow the peace talks to be held hostage by the threat of terror – and no more double talk. The MILF must unequivocally and unambiguously renounce terrorism in the pursuit of its objectives, and yield to the government all those who have engaged in terrorist acts – before expecting any relief from legal sanctions and punitive actions. Meanwhile, I call upon our vulnerable communities to strengthen their defense systems against terrorism, sharpen their crisis management plans; and tighten inter-community coordination to check terrorist movements. The government shall bring its case before Malaysia and Indonesia, the OIC and the whole Islamic world. We shall combine military action, stringent legal measures, community preparedness and full diplomatic pressure to bear upon this threat.

Statement of the President on SARS

The vigilance of our health authorities is commendable. They have quickly identified new cases and unearthed loopholes in the quarantine system. We shall maintain this policy of transparency and extreme care. The government is already taking corrective measures and will see through the recovery of the patients. Once more, I would like our people to remain calm, but fully alert. Review the preventive measures prescribed by the health department and religiously observe these. The key to fighting this disease is individual diligence and discipline. Be accountable for yourself and for the welfare of others.

Statement of the President on PIATCO

The government shall operate the NAIA Terminal 3 in the meantime, until the time is feasible for its privatization. The operation of the terminal shall adhere to full international standards of passenger safety and security. All legitimate commercial claims shall be justly compensated. There will be absolute fairness, transparency and due regard to the public interest. Further legal actions against errant parties are now within the purview of the Ombudsman. The legal process will be threshed out expeditiously and systematically, while airport operations will push through a comprehensive road map that will maximize economic impact, tourism gains and public convenience.

Statement of the President on surveys

Ratings will come and go. We are bent to sticking to our course unburdened by issues of popularity.

Statement of the President on Cha Cha

We are not involved in this debate. The Executive branch has its hands full on vital issues needing immediate attention. But one thing is sure as the sun rises in the morning – there will be elections in May 2004 under a cleaner, modernized electoral process that is part of the legacy of this administration.

Statement of the Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye

On PIATCO

1. The President has instructed Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong to refer the Supreme Court decision on PIATCO to the Office of the Ombudsman for the latter's appropriate action. The SC earlier ruled that those responsible for the flawed bidding should be held accountable.
2. The President has instructed Philippine Ambassador to Germany, Minerva Jean Falcon, to brief the German government on the SC decision and the possible action to be taken by the administration to see to it that foreign investors (in this instance, Franprot) are treated fairly and equitably.
3. The President said that Terminal 3 would eventually be privatized but she would prefer that its privatization be handled by the next administration. The immediate task at hand would be to open the terminal at the earliest possible time.

Bogus memo links OPAPP chief to sinister plan

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo R. Ermita today denied having crafted a memorandum for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo entitled "The President's Four-Point Policy Framework in Addressing the Southern Philippines Secessionist/MILF Problem" which defines an action plan for the so-called Oplan Greenbase.

Ermita contended that the format, language, and subject matter of the memo is "totally out of line with how and why I do things."

"This grand and sinister plan to subsume the peace process under the supervision of the Department of National Defense even tends to undermine the mandate of my office. Now why would I do such a thing?," Ermita explained.

Moreover, Ermita added, the scope of the activities described in the memo spans areas that are way beyond his authority and capacity as Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process. "Who am I to dictate what NEDA and the AFP should do doing?" he asked.

Added Ermita: "There is no such thing as Oplan Greenbase which is supposedly being orchestrated by Malacañang, to capture (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) Chairman Hashim Salamat dead or alive, to clear the way for the entry of foreign investors interested in petroleum exploration, and a psywar operation to justify Balikatan 03-1."

Government agencies, including the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), have been receiving faxed copies of said bogus memo in an effort "to sow confusion and malign the peace process," according to Ermita.

GMA bats for anti-terrorism, anti-SARS, socio-economic bills in LEDAC meeting

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today certified at least 14 bills as priority measures that Congress could attend to immediately to resolve a number of national concerns, particularly terrorism, the dreaded Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and socio-economic inadequacies.

In the meeting of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council at Malacañang, the President classified seven of the bills as first priority and the other seven, second priority.

The seven first priority bills included the:

- ***Anti-Terrorism Act*** that defines the crime of terrorism and provides penalties therefore. It seeks to prevent the commission and financing of terrorist activities. The act is up for interpellations in the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- ***Quarantine Program to Prevent SARS*** that prevents the entry and/or spread of SARS and other diseases inimical to public health. The bill, pending in the committees of health in both the House and the Senate, introduces safeguards such as quarantine and other programs and provides penalties for violations.
- ***Farmland as Collateral Bill*** that intends to spur agricultural productivity, especially in the countryside. The bill provides beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program and small farmland owners access to mainstream credit facilities. The bill, on third reading in the House and on second reading in the Senate, recognizes the use of certificates of land ownership as loan collateral with formal banking institutions.

The President expressed her desire to have this piece of legislation acted upon immediately, noting its benefits to the greater number of Filipinos involved in agriculture.

- ***Anti-Trafficking of Minors and Women Bill*** that will uphold the welfare and safety of Filipino women and children and accord them the full protection of their civil, political, economic and cultural rights. Up for bicameral review, the bill also aims to put in place a legal framework to stop and prevent various acts and other forms of trafficking of persons.
- ***Rationalizing the Pay Scale of the Judiciary Bill*** that seeks to enhance the system of administration of justice by adopting a rationalized compensation structure for the justices, judges and lawyers in the Judiciary. This will enable government to recruit and retain the best and brightest legal minds in the country. This bill is ready for third reading in the House and approved on third reading in the Senate.
- ***Rationalizing the Excise Tax on Automobiles Bill*** that will address the inequities brought about by the current definition of automobile by removing the bias against smaller cars with seating capacity of less than 10. It will also address the distortions in terms of engine displacements and fuel type used. The bill, projected to generate additional state revenues of P1.4 billion, is approved on third reading in the House and on second reading in the Senate.
- ***Rationalizing the Documentary Stamp Tax Bill*** that aims to expand the coverage of a certificate of deposit subject to documentary stamp tax. The bill's approval will mean P7.86 billion more in revenues while removing the key impediment to increased volume of financial instruments traded in the secondary market. It is approved on third reading in the House and on second reading in the Senate.

Another bill, the Optical Media Act, was earlier noted as a first priority bill. But Senator Manuel Villar, in the LEDAC meeting, proposed that the Debt Cap Bill be given due attention. President Macapagal-Arroyo agreed.

The other seven bills classified as second priority included the:

- ***Securitization Law*** that intends to improve liquidity in the domestic capital market, particularly within the mortgage housing finance sector. It provides the necessary infrastructure and market environment for a wide range of asset-backed securities that allow present valuations and the use of future stream of revenue. The bill is up for third reading in the House and second reading in the Senate.
- ***Dual Citizenship Law*** that allows dual citizenship to strengthen unity among Filipinos here and abroad and pave the way for their return while enticing them to invest in the Philippines. Interpellations on the bill will commence in the House while the Senate has approved it on third reading.
- ***Franchise for the National Transmission Corporation*** that will enhance the value of transmission assets of the National Power Corporation. It allows the government to recover more proceeds from its privatization, thus reducing the potential stranded cost and universal charge that will translate into benefits for electric users. The bill is approved on third reading by Congress and passed second reading in the Senate,
- ***Compensation to Human Rights Victims*** that recognizes the rightful claim for compensation by human rights victims during the Marcos regime. It gives the Presidential Commission on Good Government the authority to enter into compromise agreements relative to the Marcos ill-gotten wealth. The bill sets aside \$200 million (about P10 billion) from any future judgment in civil Case 41 pending before the

Sandiganbayan. The case involves Swiss bank deposits, placed at some \$650 million of the Marcoses uncovered by the PCGG and being held in escrow.

- ***Indexation of Sin Taxes*** that imposes excise tax on tobacco and alcoholic beverages. This will update the basis of taxation to the present level and will index the same to inflation rate. It is projected that some P3.22 billion and P10.62 billion will be generated as revenue from the imposition tax on beer and tobacco products, respectively.
- ***National Revenue Administration Act*** that creates a new entry to address institutional problems and enhance tax administration.
- ***Department of Housing and Urban Development*** bill that ensures the holistic and focused implementation of the government's shelter program while rationalizing the management of urban growth and optimum use of available resources for the provision of shelter and related services.

GMA certifies as urgent public health threat and quarantine bill of 2003

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, during the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) meeting in Malacañang today, certified as urgent a bill strengthening the regulatory capacity of the Department of Health and the Bureau of Quarantine Services on Public Health Threats.

This Quarantine Program to Prevent SARS was also included among the priority bills that Congress will pass before its adjournment sine die on June 6.

In the proposed bill, the President will declare the existence of a contagion or disease considered a threat to public health.

In this case, the Health Secretary through the Bureau of Quarantine Services would prevent the entry of persons, properties, vessels, from the country of origin or otherwise implement quarantine and other measures until such time as the President declares the contagion or disease as no longer posing a threat to public health.

According to the President, the present quarantine laws have very, very light penalties.

This act, which will be known as the "Public Health Threat and Quarantine Act of 2003," upgrades the penalties and powers on quarantine regulations.

The proposed bill penalizes any person who violates any regulation, guideline, and condition of quarantine, or knowingly conceals or falsely provides material information on matters requiring full disclosure a fine of no less than P10,000 nor more than P100,000 or its equivalent in subsidiary imprisonment.

The bill also provides that any vessel or aircraft violating quarantine procedures and/or fails to, or falsely submits, requisite documentation and clearances shall suffer the penalty of a fine in the amount of P100,000 but not more than P1 million without prejudice to the confiscation and/or destruction of the apprehended vessel or aircraft.

On the suspension of classes in the event of SARS problem, the Executive Order 201 gives the Department of Education the authority to close schools or suspend classes, but upon the advise of the DOH.

Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus said "the thinking now is that it is not likely that we will have a general epidemic that will require the resetting of schedules across the country," he said.

Present during the LEDAC meeting were: Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr., Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Senators Francisco Pangilinan, Ralph Recto, Ramon Magsaysay, Jr., Rodolfo Biazon, Manuel Villar, Vicente Sotto, Loren Legarda, Juan Flavio, Robert Barbers, Robert Jaworski; Congressmen Raul Gonzales, Propero Pichay, Agapito Aquino, Apolinario Lozada; Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus, Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Health Secretary Manual Dayrit, Agrarian Reform

Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narcisco Abaya and Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye.

GMA presents plaques to U.K. envoy, Bulacan governor for support vs transnational crimes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded plaques of recognition to Ambassador Paul Stephen Dimond of the United Kingdom and Bulacan Governor Josefina de la Cruz for actively supporting the worldwide concerted program for the prevention and control of transnational crimes.

The awarding was held at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang during a cocktail reception on the fourth anniversary of the Philippine Center on Transnational Crimes (PCTC).

Ambassador Dimond was recognized for his continuing support in broadening the cooperation in the campaign against terrorism and transnational crimes, particularly in the successful conduct of crisis management exercises in Bulacan on January this year.

Gov. De la Cruz, supported and assisted the PCTC in its pioneering effort in institutionalizing the Crisis Management for Local Governments and for specifically allowing the province of Bulacan to serve as the pilot project in said exercises as part of the PCTC Capacity Building Program.

Other PCTC awardees were Senior Supt. Artemio Hicban, Police Officer of the Year for Operations; Supt. Gracito Bing Barangan, Senior Officer of the Year for Administration; Chief Insp. Ronald Anonuevo, Junior Officer of the Year for Operations; Senior Insp. Edwin Quilates, Junior Officer for the Year for Administration; SPO2 Luis Andal, Employee of the Year (uniformed category); and Myla Dy, Employee of the Year (non-uniformed category).

Police Deputy Director General and PCTC executive director Florencio Fianza earlier reported to the President that several intelligence exchanges and case management fora were regularly conducted with local and foreign counterparts to further ties in the collaborative effort in combating the growing menace of transnational crimes. These crimes include terrorism, money laundering, kidnapping, trafficking of firearms, human and illegal drugs, illegal recruitment, and violations of intellectual property rights.

Present during the awarding rites were Russian Ambassador Anatoll Vladimirovich Nebogatov, Ambassador Phiane Philakone of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Ambassador Din Tich of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Malaysian Ambassador Mohd Taufik Mohd Noor, French Ambassador Renee Beyret, and Saudi Arabia Charge d' Affaires Fahad Bin Bkheet.

Also present were the attaches and PCTC counterparts from various countries.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 7, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514043241/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may07.htm>

The President's Day: May 9, 2003

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- **Statement of the President on Cha Cha**
- **Statement of the President on SARS**
- **Statement of the President on PIATCO**
- **Statement of the President on PEA-Amari**
- **Statement of the President on opening of classes**
- **GMA satisfied with response to SARS threat**
- **GMA honors eight T.O.W.E.R. awardees**
- **White House announces GMA state visit to the U.S.**
- **Balikatan civic projects benefit townfolk**
- **Dureza quits as peace negotiator but stays as Presidential Assistant for Mindanao**
- **Gracia Burnham cites bravery of soldiers who died to rescue Abu Sayyaf hostages**
- **GMA urges ERC to order MERALCO to immediately release lump-sum refund to small power users**

Statement of the President on Gracia Burnham revelation

Under any circumstances, the information given by Mrs. Burnham is a very serious matter. We cannot leave this story hanging, as it has grave implications on the image and stature of our Armed Forces. As Commander-in-Chief, I will not allow the military to live under the cloud of public doubt. This is why we must get into the root of this matter soonest. Let us not make this issue a media or political feast. As in the past, the DND-AFP will fully cooperate in this investigation. Let us all join hands in search of the truth, so that the innocent can be spared and any guilty parties, punished. Let us give justice both to Mrs. Burnham and to our Armed Forces.

Statement of the President on Cha Cha

I have already said what I have to say on this matter. We must ensure that elections will be held in 2004. We must respect the desire of the people to have the direct power to install their leaders. I will resist all attempts to breach this principle.

Statement of the President on SARS

The effectiveness of our effort against SARS is proven and unrelenting. I commend all those involved in this valiant fight, including our health authorities and workers, local leaders and communities and most of all, our vigilant public. We will continue to work for a SARS-free clearance from WHO as a reward for the effort. With transparency combined with compassion, superior coordination and solidarity, we will defeat this menace. Once more, I would like our people to remain calm, but fully alert. Review the preventive measures prescribed by the health department and religiously observe these. The key to fighting this disease is individual diligence and discipline. Be accountable for yourself and for the welfare of others.

Statement of the President on PIATCO

The Government will operate the NAIA terminal III under three policy guidelines: First, the safety and security of all travelers and facilities against terrorism is of paramount concern; second, the interest of the public must be fully taken into consideration in determining terminal fees and other charges; and third, the grant of business concessions to third parties will be treated with utmost transparency and fairness. These guidelines will be followed in the roadmap for the opening and operation of the terminal once we have the green light from the High Court.

Statement of the President on PEA-Amari

Let the axe fall where it may. I am certain that all officials mentioned at one time or another by the media to have had something to do with this contract would welcome a thorough and conclusive probe. Let us pursue the cases to the end so that the innocent may be cleared and any culprits can be held to account for their deeds. Let us use this chance to show our people that we are determined to uphold good governance and sound business practices. In this manner, the credibility of our Government and our nation will ring through across the domestic and international business community.

Statement of the President on opening of classes

Any decision on this issue shall be guided first, by the health and safety of our millions of students; and second, feasibility and practicality. I would like our health and education authorities to undertake quick consultations with the private education sector as well as teachers organizations and even some PTAs so that we can have a clear view of the field of issues and concerns, and the options we can take. All stakeholders will be involved in this decision.

GMA satisfied with response to SARS threat

Despite the absence of high-tech gadgets and equipment in the prevention of SARS or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today she is satisfied with the way the country has responded to the threat of the dreaded killer disease.

In her weekly television program, *The Working President*, the Chief Executive cited a World Health Organization report congratulating the Philippines for its good response to the SARS problem.

“Kaya nga isa tayo sa mga bansa na kahit na pumasok na ang SARS—kasi hindi natin maiiwasan dahil mayroon tayong overseas Filipinos – ay kontrolado pa rin (That is why we are one of the few countries, which despite few SARS cases—have managed to control the spread of the disease),” the President said.

She said that it is important for the people to know the truth “for them to stay alert but calm.”

She told program host Jolina Magdangal when the disease was just starting to spread, Hong Kong and Singapore were touted as the best prepared and the Philippines among the least countries to be able to contain the disease.

But according to her, events of the past weeks showed otherwise, that “we are the least hit by the killer pneumonia while Hong Kong and Singapore were among those with a sizable number of SARS cases.”

She attributed this to the Filipinos’ hygienic ways.

“Yan ang pinakamagaling na paraan kung paano makakaiwas ng SARS. Hindi yung mga maskara, maskara (That’s the most effective way of preventing the spread of the disease. Not masks),” she said.

The President took pride in the fact that the Philippines is not among those listed by WHO as SARS countries.

“Kasi ‘yung Pilipinas pitong kaso, sampung kaso at yung sa sampung kaso, dalawa ang namatay. Pero yung pito, gumaling na at saka yung isa, kasalukuyang gumagaling. So hindi laganap. (This is because the Philippines has only seven cases, 10 cases. And in these 10 cases, two died, but the seven others were able to recover and get well. The other one is already recovering. So it’s not widespread), the President said.

The Working President features the different activities of the President and other documentaries on government agencies, projects and programs.

It is aired Thursdays on RPN 9, 10-11 a.m. and NBN 4, 6-7 p.m.; Fridays on IBC 13, 11:30 p.m.-12:30 p.m.; Saturdays on NBN 4, 8-9 a.m. and/or 8-9 p.m. (replays); ANC 21, 8-9 a.m.; Pinoy Channel (The Global Cable, Inc.)

9-10 a.m.; RPN 9, 11-12 mn; Sundays on Radyo ng Bayan stations, 7-8 a.m.; Pinoy Channel, 9-10 a.m.; NBN 4, 10-11 p.m. (irregular); Mondays on ICS-TV 56(Destiny Cable) 11 –12 nn; and Tuesdays on ICS-TV 56, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

GMA honors eight T.O.W.E.R. awardees

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated eight TOWER (The Outstanding Workers of the Republic) awardees and thanked the Rotary Club of Manila for its annual search for outstanding “blue collar” workers of the country.

The TOWER awardees, who were presented to the President at the State Dining Room of Malacañang this morning, were recognized as among those legions of skilled workers who constitute the backbone of the country’s industrial capacity.

According to TOWER Awards 2003 Chairman Bienvenido Laguesma, the awards program transcended the confines of the Rotary Club’s concern because of its nationwide significance in uplifting the Filipino workers’ morale and social status leading to greater prestige at the workplace while enhancing individual career opportunities and industrial peace.

The TOWER 2003 Awardees, who were each given trophies and a cash prize of P50,000 during an awarding ceremonies held at the Centennial Hall of the Manila Hotel on May 8, 2003, were the following:

- Mark Andrada, Senior Assembly Technician in the Moog Controls Corporation, Baguio City;
- Pablo Davis, Plant Electrician in the Pagadian City Water District;
- Jerry Lapara, Mechanic in the Del Monte Philippines, Bukidnon;
- Roberto Nabo Non Revenue Water Operative 2 in the Manila Water Company, Inc.;
- Roberto Pangan, winding/twisting head mechanic autoconer in the Indo/Phil Acrylic Manufacturing Corporation;
- Romeo Pascua, machinist in the Mobile Equipment Department of the Philex Mining Corporation in Benguet;
- Enrico Sapitan, electrician Class B in the Indo/Phil Textile Mills, Inc.; and
- Alfredo Surigao, mechanic in the Philippine Phosphate Fertilizer Corporation, Isabel, Leyte.

Founded in 1975, the TOWER Awards were suspended for ten years but was revived in 1996 in response to the call to revitalize excellence and productivity at the workplace and energize collective skills of our workers for global competition.

Aside from the Rotary Club of Manila, the supporters of the TOWERS Awards includes Metrobank Foundation, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, International Labour Organization, San Miguel Corporation, Chinese Filipino Business Club, Occupational Health and Safety Center, Shoemart Foundation, Nestle Philippines, Sybase Philippines, the Manila Electric Company, Century Park Hotel, Technological University of the Philippines, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, Central Colleges of the Philippines and the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines.

White House announces GMA state visit to the U.S.

The White House today announced that President George W. Bush would welcome President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for a state visit to Washington, D. C. on May 19, saying that it is an expression of gratitude to the country’s support to the US in the global fight against terrorism.

In a press briefing at the White House, Press Secretary Ari Fleischer said that President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush would host a state dinner at the White House in honor of the visiting President.

During the visit, the two leaders would also hold bilateral talks at the Oval Office.

The President's state visit to the United States was originally scheduled last April but this was postponed due to the outbreak of the war in Iraq.

"The Philippines is a close friend and stalwart ally in the war on terror, and the President and the First Lady will host the (Philippine) President for a state visit and a state dinner later that evening," Fleischer said.

Fleischer said that by hosting the state visit, President Bush just wanted to express the gratitude and appreciation of the American people and himself to President Arroyo and to the Filipino people.

According to Fleischer, the President's state visit is only the third that President Bush has hosted since he assumed office in 2001. Bush earlier received as state visitors only the leaders of Mexico and Poland.

When asked why the Philippine President is being given this "rare honor" of being welcomed for a state visit, Fleischer said: "This is the President's way of saying, thank you, to the government of the Philippines, to President Arroyo and to the people of the Philippines for their stalwart efforts in fighting the war on terror, for being such a good and reliable ally to the United States."

The President was one of the first world leaders who supported the US-led global campaign against terrorism launched after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

The Philippines was also a member of the US-led "coalition of the willing" in the war in Iraq although it did not send combat troops.

Fleischer said the Philippines is an area of the world that has not received much notice in the fight against terrorism because the focus was on Afghanistan or Iraq or other places.

"The Philippines have suffered mightily at the hands of terrorists, and the Philippine government and President Arroyo have shown great courage in taking on the terrorists inside the Philippines, and particularly on some of the more remote islands in the Philippines," Fleischer said, referring to the terrorist Abu Sayyaf in Mindanao.

Last year, the US sent about 1,000 special forces to help train Philippine police and military authorities in fighting the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan and Zamboanga under the Balikatan 02-1.

The Balikatan 03-1, also to be participated in by US special forces, is scheduled to be held sometime this year in Jolo.

The President's state visit to the US has a four-fold objective, namely: to further enhance RP-US cooperation in security and counter-terrorism; to expand trade and investment cooperation; to highlight importance of the Philippines to US political and business leaders; and to advance the welfare of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans in the US.

This will be the second time that the President would meet with President Bush at the White House.

On Nov. 20, 2001, President Bush also received the President at the White House during a working visit to the US.

The two leaders also met at the 10th Economic Leaders' Meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation held last October 27, 2002 at Los Cabos, Mexico.

Balikatan civic projects benefit townfolk

Apart from the two weeks of intensive military training, the Balikatan 03 exercise that officially ended today produced socio-civic projects by US servicemen and AFP troops that benefited thousands of Filipinos living in remote areas.

“Together with the AFP, we have renovated some buildings, working together to exchange procedures and doctrines that will lead to the betterment of us both. It’s important for us to stress that this has been a cooperative effort aimed at helping the people of the Philippines. The goal is to show the people that both forces care and will help when we can,” said US Army Lt. Col. Stephen Mortimer, Engineer Civic Action Project officer-in-charge.

As in previous Balikatan training exercises, the two forces have developed a variety of civil affairs projects which advanced the quality of life of Filipinos living in remote places, showing that the military exercise between the US and the Philippines is not purely military in nature but also involves humanitarian projects.

Among the civic projects undertaken by both forces during the Balikatan 03 exercises are:

- Construction of two-classroom school building in Talisay, Tagaytay through the joint efforts of the Naval Construction Brigade, Philippine Navy Seabees and the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 28th ,US Navy;
- Construction of a three-classroom school building and the renovation of the Tamakaw Elementary School canteen in Amadeo, Cavite;
- Humanitarian projects that include medical and dental missions in various areas in Luzon. In Talisay, Tagaytay alone, more than 10,423 people received help. There were 7,591 medical check-ups, 1,401 dental check-ups, and 803 eye examinations. A temporary veterinary clinic was also set up for people who brought their animals for health checks and rabies shots. Other sites that operated during the community relations component of Balikatan 03 included health missions conducted in Amadeo, Cavite, Mabalacat and in Nueva Ecija among others.
- A farewell dinner-fund raising project for the street children of Pampanga, held at the Holiday Inn Resort, Clark Field. The proceeds of the project were donated to the Bahay Bata Foundation. The foundation takes care of around 21 street children, aged 7 to 18 years old, making sure that their health and educational needs are adequately provided.

On the military aspect of the exercise, Balikatan 03 was designed to better train Philippine and US air, ground and naval forces to handle any contingencies, emergencies or disasters which may arise throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Balikatan 03, according to Marine Capt. Burrell Parmer, Exercise Balikatan 2003 Public Affairs Officer, is not related to the on-going counter-terrorism training in the southern Philippines. The exercise is participated in by 2,900 Philippine troops and 1,300 US military personnel.

“This is a regular scheduled event. The armed forces of both countries need to conduct joint military exercises to ensure interoperability. This exercise will ensure a well-coordinated response when the need arises,” Parmer said.

The first phase of Balikatan 03 involved the training of a combined/joint task force headquarters staff and personnel on crisis planning and execution on an operational level that focused on peace enforcement operations.

The second phase consisted of cross-training, field training and humanitarian civil assistance exercises aimed to enhance interoperability between the AFP and US forces.

Training exercises such as live fire exercises, sniper training, reconnaissance, artillery and first-aid training, are expected to improve the fighting capability of the AFP against terrorist cells operating in the Philippines.

The Balikatan joint training exercise is a continuing process aimed to help better train troops against the threat of lawlessness and terrorism and is part of the Philippines’ long-term security cooperation with the US. The recently

concluded Balikatan 03 did not only bring benefits to the country in terms of national security, but economic and social benefits as well.

As in the past, training events for the exercise were held at three venues in Luzon: Clark Special Economic Zone, Fort Magsaysay and in the vicinity of Ternate in Cavite. Exercise Balikatan 03 is the 19th of a series of exercises involving the Philippines and the United States, dating back to 1981.

Dureza quits as peace negotiator but stays as Presidential Assistant for Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today formally accepted the resignation of Jesus Dureza as chairman of the government peace panel negotiating with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The President said Dureza would now concentrate on his role as Presidential Assistant for Mindanao and concurrent chairman of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCO).

“In fact, he was so identified with the peace panel that people didn’t know he was my Presidential Assistant for Mindanao and my chairman of the Mindanao Development Council,” the President said.

The President said Dureza has to give more emphasis now on his role as chairman of MEDCO and Presidential Assistant for Mindanao.

“Everybody has been asking me to put a Mindanao czar, I do have a Mindanao czar, that’s Jess Dureza,” the President said.

The President said there is no rush to look for the appropriate replacement for Dureza because the exploratory talks with the MILF scheduled to start today in Malaysia have been deferred.

“What we have to rush is the economic development of Mindanao,” the President stressed.

Presidential Chief of Staff Rigoberto Tiglao said that what the President would want now is to exert all efforts in stabilizing security and in speeding up completion of development projects and other initiatives in Mindanao.

“Secretary Dureza has lots of experience on this and the President actually asked him to start focusing on that,” Tiglao said.

Tiglao said the resignation is just a formality as the President and Dureza had thoroughly discussed the matter.

Gracia Burnham cites bravery of soldiers who died to rescue Abu Sayyaf hostages

American missionary Gracia Burnham cited the bravery of Filipino soldiers as she stressed that she had never alleged any collusion between the Philippine military and the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in her book “In the Presence of My Enemies” that described her experiences at the hands of the ASG in Basilan.

“I do not like that word – allegations. I am not pointing an accusing finger at anyone,” Burnham said in a statement released today by the United States Embassy Public Affairs Section.

“I will let my book speak for itself. We were told many things by the Abu Sayyaf; some of them true and some of them lies,” she said.

“If there was collusion between the military and the Abu Sayyaf, God is the righteous judge and someday that will be made right,” she added.

Burnham said the “bad guys” were the Abu Sayyaf. She recalled that she and her husband Martin “were aware that many Philippine soldiers died as they attempted to end our captivity.”

“The goal of those brave soldiers was to rescue us, and nothing more. We want their loved ones to know that we appreciate the sacrifice they made for us and we honor their memory,” she said.

In a related development, John Miller, legislative director of the Office of US Senator Sam Brownback, hinted that media might have misquoted Ms. Burnham in a recent interview over American television about her book.

Miller provided the office of National Security Adviser Roilo Golez a transcript of excerpts from Burnham’s interview over Fox News Network.

In the excerpts, Fox News host Colmes asked Burnham the latter’s comment on claims that the Philippine military was in cahoots with the ASG and wanted to split the ransom money with the terrorists.

Burnham’s reply was: “That was what I was told, and I always preface that in my book by ‘That was what I was told.’ I didn’t really accuse anyone.”

Burnham also told Colmes that she did not believe any collusion between the military and the ASG.

She said she thought the military “were doing all they could to locate us,” recalling the gunbattle when husband Martin was killed. “And I think their agenda was to get us out of there safe.”

GMA urges ERC to order MERALCO to immediately release lump-sum refund to small power users

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) to order the Manila Electric Company (MERALCO) to immediately release the lump-sum refund to small power consumers.

“I urged the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) to order a lump-sum refund for Meralco’s more residential consumers,” the President said during a briefing in Malacañang.

In her Labor Day message last May 1, the President assured the nation that there would be full compliance and implementation of the Supreme Court’s final ruling that Meralco should refund the amount of P28.1-billion that the company had overcharged its consumers.

“The refund justifies the long wait for justice by our people,” the President said.

The President said the ERC should find the best formula to give back to the poor consumers the financial relief given them by the Supreme Court.

“But we must do this at the soonest possible time. Justice has been served and we must not let our people wait,” the President stressed.

Presidential Chief of Staff Rigoberto Tiglao said the refund would be made likely within the month primarily to those consuming zero to 100 kilowatts per month.

“The President wouldn’t want any delays here. She would want the checks issued for the refund as soon as possible. If the technical aspects are resolved, MERALCO could very well issue a check and put it in the bills by next week or maybe in the next two weeks,” Tiglao added.

Meanwhile, the ERC and the MERALCO have assured the public that the checks for the refund to small electric users would be ready by June in time for the opening of classes.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 9, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514043338/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may09.htm>

The President's Day: May 10, 2003

10 MAY 2003

- **President's radio address to the nation**
- **GMA wants to leave behind legacy after term**

President's radio address to the nation

Magandang araw sa lahat ng ating mga taga-pakinig.

Ang sunud-sunod na pag-atake ng mga rebeldeng MILF sa mga sibilyang komunidad ng Maigo, Lanao del Norte, at Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, gayundin sa isang *evacuation center* sa Pikit, North Cotabato ay maliwanag na mga akto ng terorismo na hindi natin dapat ipagwalang-bahala. Kailangang managot ang liderato ng MILF sa mga karahasang ito at isuko sa gobyerno ang mga may kagagawan.

Maliwanag ding pagyurak ito sa hangad nating pagpapatuloy ng *peace talks* kaya patunay ito ng kawalan ng sinseridad ng MILF na makamit ang kapayapaan. Nagkakamali ang MILF kung inaakala nilang makakakuha sila ng *concessions* sa usapang pangkapayapaan dahil sa mga kaganapang ito.

We shall not allow the peace talks to be held hostage by the threat of terror. We shall pursue an all out legal offensive against the leaders of the MILF while conducting punitive action against the direct perpetrators of terrorist acts.

Dapat itakwil ng walang pasubali ng MILF ang terorismo bilang paraan sa pagkamit ng kanilang mga layunin kung nais nilang maka-iwas sa kaparusahan. Hindi lulubag kailanman ang ating galit sa mga pumapatay o sumasalanta sa mga taong walang kalaban-laban.

Ang gobyerno ay hindi maaring balewalain ang pagdanas ng mga inosenteng pamayanan ng di makataong pamiminsala. Hindi natin papayagang maganap ang terorismo na nagkukunwaring bahagi ng pakikipag-laban para sa kalayaan. Isusulong lamang natin ang kapayapaan sa ilalim ng batas at kautusan ng Konstitusyon.

Kaya naman, inatasan ko na ang ating *peace negotiators* na ipabatid sa Malaysian government ang ating hangaring ipagpaliban ang *exploratory talks* sa Kuala Lumpur hanggang makatiyak tayo ng mas mabuting kalagayan para isulong ang prosesong pangkapayapaan. Idudulog din natin ang panig ng pamahalaan sa harap ng Malaysia at Indonesia, sa *Organization of Islamic Conference* o OIC sa buong daigdig ng Islam.

We shall deploy all the local instruments of the state to end this conflict and bring peace to the homes of our people. Meanwhile, I call on everyone to be vigilant and alert against terrorist trepidation and acts of cruelty against civilians.

Tinatawagan ko lalung-lalo na ang mga komunidad na madaling masakal sa kalaban na palakasin pa ang kanilang mga depensa laban sa terorismo. Paghusayin ang kanilang *crisis management plans* at higpitan ang pakikipag-ugnayan sa ibang bayan para matyagan ang pagkilos ng mga terorista.

Hinihiling ko ang ating buo at tapat na pagmamatyag sapagkat ang terorismo ay malakas ang loob. Hindi sapat ang pagkilos ng pamahalaang nasyonal lamang. Ang pakikipagtulungan at pagbabantay ng buong komunidad at lahat ng pamahalaang lokal ay kailangan upang ang ating bansa ay mailigtas para sa mga mamamayan. Ang banta ng terorismo ay kailangan ang puspusang kilos ng buong pamahalaan hanggang sa hanay ng barangay para subaybayan ang mga nakakahinalang tao, gawain, at kagamitan.

But, I also ask forbearance from the Christians of Mindanao. Do not take the law into your own hands and harm innocent Muslim communities with anger. I will apply the full force of the law against any form of vigilantism. This

is not a fight between Muslims and Christians. It is a fight between the evil forces of terror on one side and all civilized and peace-loving Filipinos on the other.

Ginagawa ng gobyerno ang lahat para harapin ang krisis na ito pero hindi tayo dapat maging kampante at luwagan ang ating pagbabantay. Suportahan natin ang inyong pamahalaang lokal at ang *crisis management council* nito sa kanilang pagpapatupad ng *contingency plans* laban sa terorismo.

We shall combine military actions, stringent legal measures, full diplomatic pressure, and community preparedness to bear upon the MILF threats. I've instructed that all the terrorist acts of the MILF be fully documented and be brought before the OIC and especially before the OIC Committee of the Eight that is charged with monitoring the Mindanao problem. We will not allow the MILF to continue fooling the Islamic world. It is an insurgent organization with legitimate aims engaging in murdering innocent civilians.

Madalas kong sabihin na lahat ng ating pagsisikap na umunlad ang ating bansa ay mababale-wala kung hindi tayo magkakaroon ng kapayapaan sa Mindanao. Kaya naman sa simula pa lamang ng aking panunungkulan bilang Pangulo, pinag-tuunan na natin ng pansin ang paghahatid ng kapayapaan at kaunlaran sa Mindanao pero huwag nating hayaang masayang ang ating mga pagsisikap dahil sa paghahasik ng takot ng iilang rebelde at terorista.

Sa ating pagkaka-isa nakasalalay ang kapayapaan at seguridad ng ating bansa. Kaya hinihiling ko ang inyong mahalagang tulong, magsama-sama tayo at magtulungan na wakasan ang kaguluhan at bigyang katuparan ang pangako ng Mindanao. Ang tagumpay ng Mindanao ay tagumpay ng ating bansa at ng buong sambayanan. Ang ating pagkaka-isa sa ilalim ng isang bandila ang maghahatid sa atin tungo sa mapayapang pamumuhay at sa isang matatag at matibay na Republika.

Magandang araw muli at maraming salamat po.

GMA wants to leave behind legacy after term

When President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo steps down from office next year to give way to her successor, she wants to leave behind three things as her legacy to the nation – a strong Republic, a healed nation, and a clean, modern 2004 election.

The President revealed this Thursday (May 8) during the weekly television program, *The Working President*, which is celebrating its 100th episode.

In the program aired over NBN 4, the Chief Executive told program host Jolina Magdangal that for the nation to stamp out poverty, it must have a strong Republic founded on a robust economy where jobs are aplenty and prices of basic commodities are stable.

“Kaya nga inilunsad natin itong roll-on roll-off (nautical highway) para magmura yung mga bilihan na nanggagaling sa Mindanao patungong Luzon (That is why we launched this roll-on, roll-off nautical highway to bring down prices of basic goods),” she said.

To strengthen public institutions, the President said the government has raised the salaries of judges, policemen and the soldiers because they are among the lowest paid “when I sat as President.”

She also expressed hope that the wounds of division she said she inherited when she came into power would be healed.

She urged the Filipino people to work for a clean and honest election next year, saying a modernized system of elections is one important reform that she wants to leave behind as a legacy to the nation.

The President took the occasion to thank the Filipino people for their continued trust in her government despite the bad times, as shown in the latest Pulse Asia survey which gave her high approval ratings.

“Nagpapasalamat ako dito dahil sa kabila ng napakahirap na panahon ngayon hindi lamang sa Pilipinas kungdi sa buong mundo ay yung tiwala naman ng taong bayan ay tuloy-tuloy pa rin (I would like to express my gratitude to the people for their continued trust despite the bad times not only here but also worldwide),” the President said.

She added that surveys are important to her because they serve as her guide in formulating important decisions.

“Alam naman natin na minsan mataas, minsan mababa. Ang importante ay ginagawa natin ang ating trabaho (We know that sometimes our approval ratings are high, sometimes low. What is important is that we are doing our job),” she added.

The Working President features the different activities of the President and other documentaries on government agencies, projects and programs.

It is aired Thursdays on RPN 9, 10-11 a.m. and NBN 4, 6-7 p.m.; Fridays on IBC 13, 11:30 p.m.-12:30 p.m.; Saturdays on NBN 4, 8-9 a.m. and/or 8-9 p.m. (replays); ANC 21, 8-9 a.m.; Pinoy Channel (The Global Cable, Inc.) 9-10 a.m.; RPN 9, 11-12 mn; Sundays on Radyo ng Bayan stations, 7-8 a.m.; Pinoy Channel, 9-10 a.m.; NBN 4, 10-11 p.m. (irregular); Mondays on ICS-TV 56 (Destiny Cable) 11 –12 mn; and Tuesdays on ICS-TV 56, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 10, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514043347/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may10.htm>

The President's Day: May 11, 2003

11 MAY 2003

- **Datumanong hails Congress moves to pass bill raising pays of justices, judges**
- **H.O. does not recommend travel bans to RP**

Datumanong hails Congress moves to pass bill raising pays of justices, judges

Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong has hailed the approval on third reading of Senate Bill No. 2018 authored by Senator Francis Pangilinan.

The bill sought to standardize or increase the salary of justices and judges to a level commensurate to the dignity of the court and the gravity of the task.

It likewise looked forward to bringing about immediate reforms and changes resulting in the better and more efficient dispensation of justice in the country.

Datumanong said that once approved into law, the legislative action would entice brilliant lawyers and practitioners to join the judiciary.

He said there were a number of unfilled court vacancies in many judicial districts in Mindanao and the Visayas, a reason why there has been a growing backlog of unresolved cases in those areas.

In supporting the bill's passage, the Justice Secretary noted the length of time the salary of judges and court personnel have remained in its present level.

This had spawned non-interest among qualified lawyers to join the judicial branch of government, thus jeopardizing the delivery of judicial services and derailing the prevention of crime.

Senate Bill 2018, once approved, would provide the courts the dignity and respect they deserve, Datumanong said.

W.H.O. does not recommend travel bans to RP

The World Health Organization (WHO) today stressed that it "does not recommend any restrictions on travel to the Philippines," because of the dreaded Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

In a statement reaching Malacañang, the WHO's Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response (CSR) unit said the WHO had considered the cluster of SARS cases in the country as "well contained."

"There appears to be no increased transmission risk in the Philippines," the CSR noted.

As of May 10, the Philippines has reported a cumulative total of 10 probable SARS cases, with two deaths, the WHO-CSR statement said.

Health authorities have determined that all 10 cases were part of a chain of transmission linked to a single imported case. All cases were placed in isolation in hospital.

The WHO-CSR added that the contacts of the 10 cases have been traced, and authorities were confident that all contacts have been identified and placed in isolation.

The last two cases that could have transmitted infection were isolated on April 30. All contacts have completed their period of observation and none has developed SARS, the agency said.

The cluster of SARS cases in the Philippines began with the importation of a case who returned to the Philippines from Toronto, Canada. The imported case died from SARS, as did her father.

Two of the remaining eight patients have been discharged while the others are still in the hospital, the WHO-CSR said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 11, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514043357/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may11.htm>

The President's Day: May 12, 2003

12 MAY 2003

- **Statement of the President on terrorist bombing**
- **Statement of the President on SARS**
- **Statement of the President on PIATCO**
- **GMA leads commemoration of centennial anniversary of death of Mabini**
- **Palace calls on participants to Youth Fellowship Program to be role models in Society**
- **President's statement in Siocon**
- **President's statement in Koronadal**
- **Palace body to decide soon on reported PIATCO offer to negotiate on NAIA-3 issue**
- **GMA dares MILF to show true color, tread path to peace**
- **GMA asks media to ban terrorist propaganda**
- **GMA earmarks P905.3M for rehabilitation of conflict-affected areas in Zambo del Norte**
- **GMA visits 3 Mindanao provinces in one day**

Statement of the President on terrorist bombing

There is an obvious link between the attack on isolated civilian communities on one hand, and urban bombings on the other, both of which are terrorist acts. Time is running out for the MILF to prove its sincerity in the peace process. It must cut the double talk and make a clear statement on whether it is allied with the Abu Sayyaf and foreign terrorist groups such as the Jemaah Islamiyah or the Al Qaeda, or unequivocally reject them. The MILF can no longer hide behind a veil of legitimacy under the growing suspicion that it is involved in the entire web of terrorism, domestically and regionally. We shall hold the option of peace talks open, while we hunt down the bombers of Koronadal and step up our punitive action against terrorist bands victimizing innocent communities.

Statement of the President on SARS

The World Health Organization already spoke on our behalf and I have instructed the DFA to communicate this finding to countries hosting our OFWs. It is unfair for some countries to include the Philippines in travel bans or advisories but this could be a result merely of miscommunication or the lack of information. We are working with the WHO on this issue and we will ensure that the jobs of our OFWs are protected.

Statement of the President on PIATCO

The government is ready to handle all attendant problems in this case under effective guidelines of transparency, fairness and full protection of the public interest.

GMA leads commemoration of centennial anniversary of death of Mabini

Simultaneous flag-raising and wreath-laying ceremonies in Pandacan and Tanauan City in Batangas will usher today's nationwide commemoration of the Death Centenary of Apolinario Mabini with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice President Teofisto Guingona as guest of honors respectively.

The President, through Proclamation 377, has declared a day of remembering for the national hero also known as the Sublime Paralytic for leaving "an enduring legacy to our people."

The Proclamation means all flags of government buildings and installations throughout the country will be flown at half-mast.

The President has appointed the National Historical Institute under chair Ambeth Ocampo and Executive Director Ludovico Badoy to spearhead the commemoration under the theme, “Mabini: Sandigan ng Matatag na Republika.”

The Chief Executive will lead the celebration at the Mabini Shrine in Pandacan. She will be introduced in her speech by Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople.

Postmaster General Diomedio Villanueva will also present the Mabini Centenary Stamps and Commemorative Medal following the welcome remarks by Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

In attendance at the Mabini Shrine in Tanauan City with Vice President Guingona will be Batangas Governor Hermilando Mandanas, Rep. Victoria Hernandez-Reyes, Tanauan Mayor Alfredo C. Corona, the Kaanak ng Bayaning Pilipino, Descendants of the Heroes of the Filipino-American War and other provincial and city officials.

Mabini served in the First Republic Cabinet as President of the Council of Secretaries and as Secretary of Foreign Affairs. He penned most of President Emilio Aguinaldo’s decrees.

An important document he produced was the “Programa Constitucional de la Republica Filipina,” a proposed constitution for the first Philippine Republic. An introduction to the draft of the Constitution was the “El Verdadero Decalogo,” written to arouse the patriotic spirit of the people.

Various programs are in store for today’s commemoration, including a Paligsahan sa Makabayang Pag-awit at the Leandro Locsin Auditorium in Intramuros, an “Alay Kay Mabini” concert at the Mabini Shrines in Pandacan and Tanauan, and a stage play on Mabini’s Life and Heroism also in both shrines.

A history quiz is scheduled at the San Sebastian Library of Arts in Lipa City, photo exhibits at SM Megamall and awarding of Mabini medals to selected students from 17 DepEd regions of academic excellence.

Palace calls on participants to Youth Fellowship Program to be role models in Society

Malacañang today called on the 100 participants to the Presidential Youth Fellowship Program to be the role models in society in the fight to restore morality and decency in government.

Participants to the First Presidential Youth Fellowship Program under the National Youth Commission (NYC) were chosen from among the top university and college graduates nationwide to provide a venue for the young people to directly help the government in the implementation of the administration’s eight-point agenda.

From May 11 to 19, the participants would be given lectures on the eight-point agenda of the government. Afterwards, they would undergo a two-week internship in the different government offices, including the Office of the President.

During the second day of the fellowship program in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye congratulated the chosen presidential youth fellows consisting of very intelligent, very active and very promising young men and women.

“Rightfully, we can consider all of you as role models whom the other youths can emulate,” Bunye said.

Bunye told the participants that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo believes in transparency and full accountability. “She keeps on reminding us that public office is a public trust, and all government officials must at all times be accountable to the people. This core belief enshrined in our Constitution is one of several guiding principles upon which our President is building a strong Republic,” Bunye said.

In addition to transparency, Bunye said the President believes that the people must be bold in realizing the national ambition to win the fight against poverty within the decade; improve moral standards in government and society in

order to provide a strong foundation for good governance; and change the character of our politics in order to create social ground for true reforms.

“Our politics of personality and patronage must give way to a new politics of party programs and process of dialogue with the people,” Bunye said.

Bunye also told the young leaders that the President believes in leadership by example and in promoting solid traits such as work ethics and a dignified lifestyle and performance rather than grandstanding.

Bunye said the government’s goal of transparency in its transaction could be best attained by keeping the people informed.

“The President believes very strongly that an informed citizenry is an effective and empowered citizenry. And what better way to keep the people informed of the programs of government than to literally and figuratively open its doors and corridors to the people,” Bunye said

Bunye told the young participants that the open house and open door fellowship program would provide them the exposure and training and gives flesh to the administration’s policy on transparency.

“We hope that you will emerge from this program with a better understanding, appreciation and acceptance of what President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her administration stand for, and what good governance is all about. We wish you Godspeed as you eventually go back to your respective communities as our ambassadors of goodwill,” Bunye said.

President’s statement in Siocon

I admire the people of Siocon (Zamboanga del Norte) and Maigo (Lanao del Norte) for their valiant effort to pick up the pieces of their lives. While we grieve for the victims of terrorism, there is a time for rising up again and restoring what have been destroyed.

We must never allow terrorism to permanently damage the institutions of our community, the institutions of law and order, solidarity, and economic progress. To do so would mean a surrender to evil, and enable it to strike again with impunity.

I have come here to help in the immediate task of community restoration.

We have already released the resources to repair the damaged facilities. I have ordered the release of P5 million for the immediate reconstruction of your *palengke* (market). I understand that Gov. Isagani Amatong is starting to clear the area to pave the way for the immediate start of the construction.

The infrastructure program will be looked into by the GEM program of the USAID like some farm-to-market roads and the upgrading of your pier facilities.

I have also requested Smart to put up a temporary cell site to assist in the communications needs of the community.

Ang mga programa alang sa kauswagan sa (Programs for the) SSSB region is about P800 million worth.

We are also seeing to the immediate needs of the families of the victims. I have directed the Quedancor and Land Bank to provide start-up capital for small enterprises.

I salute the soldiers and policemen who gave up their lives in the defense of the community.

To support the young children of the eight policemen and army personnel who were killed, we have approved the scholarship trust fund in the amount of P400,000 so that their children will have the opportunity to go to school.

It is important to us to get the pace of normal livelihood and business moving.

Terrorism is the worst form of dictatorship. It aims for the total submission, total subjugation and total defeat of human freedom.

We shall strengthen the military and the police units in Siocon and Maigo to protect the people.

But it is important for all of us to show the enemy that we are not going to be cowed or intimidated, that we will answer their worst by doing our best – in terms of community vigilance, in terms of economic recovery and most of all, in terms of caring for each other.

President's statement in Koronadal

This is a tragic scene that has repeated itself in Mindanao over the past months.

It is a sad price we have to pay to fight terrorism and once more, I condole with the families of the victims. I am deeply aggrieved by these continuing acts of inhumanity.

We have warned our people about this but we know that the innocent would never expect such a depredation to be committed upon a most peaceful community.

This is blackmail of the highest order. This is an attempt to force us to seek peace in the hope that we can buy time, and allow the terrorists to spite us even more.

We have patiently tried the road of principled peace talks but we have been rebuffed by bombing after bombing.

There are well-meaning leaders who believe that we must take that road at all costs, but I cannot take the perpetual risk of putting the life of Filipinos in graver peril.

There is an obvious link between the attacks on isolated civilian communities, on the one hand, and urban bombings, on the other, both of which are terrorist acts.

Time is running out for the MILF to prove its sincerity in the peace process.

It must cut the double talk and make a clear statement on whether it is allied with the Abu Sayyaf and foreign terrorist groups such as the Jemaah Islamiya or the Al-Qaeda, or unequivocally reject them.

The MILF can no longer hide behind a veil of legitimacy under the growing suspicion that it is involved in the entire web of terrorism, domestically and regionally.

Even as we hold the option of peace talks open, we will hunt down the bombers of Koronadal and step up our punitive action against terrorist bands victimizing innocent communities.

The stakes are escalating. I ask our people to step up their vigilance in tandem with the punitive operation now being undertaken by the government.

All local government units are put on notice to step up contingency plans and assume full vigilance.

I ask the media for full cooperation in the war against terrorism, to now desist from giving space or time for terrorist statements or overtures that plead a false cause, or are aimed to confuse and mislead our people. Let us not air terrorist propaganda in the guise of serving the end of objectivity.

Palace body to decide soon on reported PIATCO offer to negotiate on NAIA-3 issue

Malacañang today said that an inter-agency committee would meet within the week to decide on the reported willingness of the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (PIATCO) to negotiate with the government in resolving the issue of the NAIA-3 terminal project.

In his regular press briefing in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said, however, that what the government has been saying all along is that the earlier the matter is taken out of court, the better for all of us.

“Enough time and enough opportunities have already been wasted,” Bunye said.

In a statement released earlier, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the government is ready to handle “all attendant problems” in the PIATCO case under effective guidance of transparency, fairness and full protection of the public interest.

Bunye said that Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza “is very much on top of the situation” and would have something to report to Malacañang after the scheduled meeting of the committee on May 15.

He said that aside from Mendoza, the other members of the committee are Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz, and Justice Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee.

“I believe during their next meeting, they may have a recommendation to the President,” Bunye said.

Mendoza has also said that the NAIA-3 could be opened to the public in four months time after the government formally takes over the facility from PIATCO.

GMA dares MILF to show true color, tread path to peace

KORONADAL CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today dared the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to show its true color and to tell the world if it is a terror group or if it rejects terrorism.

In a statement here, the President said “(the MILF) must cut the double talk and make a clear statement on whether it is allied with the Abu Sayyaf and foreign terrorist groups such as the Jemaah Islamiya or the Al-Qaeda, or unequivocally reject them.”

The MILF had been tagged as responsible for last Saturday’s bomb blast at the public market here. The blast killed and wounded at least 50 people.

The President said the atrocity was “blackmail of the highest order, an attempt to force us to seek peace in the hope that we can buy time, and allow the terrorists to spite us even more.”

She noted how the government had patiently tried the road of principled peace talks, “but we have been rebuffed by bombing after bombing.”

While there were sincere leaders who believed that the road to peace should be taken at all cost, the President insisted that she could not take the perpetual risk of putting the life of Filipinos in graver peril.

She cited the obvious link between attacks on isolated civilian communities and urban bombings, tagging them as terrorist acts.

She challenged the MILF to prove its sincerity in the peace process.

“Time is running out for the MILF to prove its sincerity in the peace process,” she said.

“The MILF can no longer hide behind a veil of legitimacy under the growing suspicion that it is involved in the entire web of terrorism, domestically and regionally,” she noted.

The President vowed that “even as we hold the option of peace talks open, we will hunt down the bombers of Koronadal and step up our punitive action against terrorist bands victimizing innocent communities.”

As this developed, she rallied the people to step up their vigilance in tandem with the government’s all-out punitive action against the terrorists. She said the “stakes are escalating.”

She placed all local government units on notice to step up contingency plans and assume full vigilance, in the wake of the terrorist attacks.

GMA asks media to ban terrorist propaganda

KORONADAL CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today appealed to print and radio/TV entities to ban terrorist groups from using the press and broadcast facilities as propaganda tools.

In a short message, the President sought the “full cooperation” of media “in the war against terrorism.”

She enjoined media “to now desist from giving space or time for terrorist statements or overtures that plead a false cause, or are aimed to confuse and mislead our people.”

“Let us not air terrorist propaganda in the guise of serving the end of objectivity,” she said.

The President visited this booming city in South Cotabato today to personally look into the grim aftermath of last Saturday’s bombing at the public market here that left at least 50 persons either killed or wounded.

In a statement, the President said the bombing was “a tragic scene that has repeated itself in Mindanao over the past months... a sad price we have to pay to fight terrorism.”

She condoled with the families of the victims, saying she was “deeply aggrieved by these continuing acts of inhumanity.”

GMA earmarks P905.3M for rehabilitation of conflict-affected areas in Zambo del Norte

SIOCON, Zamboanga del Norte—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that she has earmarked a total of P905.3 million for rehabilitation projects in conflict-affected areas in Zamboanga del Norte, particularly the Siocon, Sibuco, Sirawai and Baliguian complex.

During a visit here, the President met with local officials of Zamboanga del Norte led by Governor Isagani Amatong.

“We bleed for the victims of terrorism but there is a time for rising up again and restoring what has been destroyed,” the President told some 4,000 residents of this town, which was ravaged by the May 4 rebel attack that left 22 people dead and scores injured.

Earlier, the President also declared the towns of Pikit and Carmen in North Cotabato as areas for rehabilitation.

The Mindanao National Initiative or Mindanao NATIN Program would provide P85.3 million worth of support to the projects in the SSSB area while P820 million would come from the Official Development Assistance (ODA) funds.

In a recent forum at the Manila Hotel attended by Muslim leaders, the President announced an initial P5.5-billion funding for Mindanao NATIN program to be implemented within 14 months for projects in Muslim areas in Mindanao.

On top of this, there is also the \$1.4 billion of ODA funds for projects to be implemented in the next three to five years.

The Mindanao NATIN Program would provide:

- 2-million livelihood support through micro and small and medium enterprises (SME) credit, distance learning and demand-driven skills training programs;
- 9 million for small scale projects such as warehouses, dryers, health centers, school buildings, training centers, deep wells, and pedestrian bridges; and
- 2 million worth of local allocation for the ZAMBAS Integrated Agricultural Development Program for year 2003.

The P820-million ODA for major infrastructure projects include the solar power technology support to agrarian reform communities (ARCs), \$43.55 million; and the Western Mindanao Community Initiative (DAR-IFAD) with \$14.79 million.

GMA visits 3 Mindanao provinces in one day

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The energetic President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today visited three provinces in Mindanao to show to the people that her administration is really sincere in its campaign to fight poverty and terrorism particularly in this region.

The President arrived at the Edwin Andrews Air Base in Zamboanga City around 8:30 in the morning via Lear jet and then transferred to a Bell helicopter to visit Sirawai town in Zamboanga del Norte.

In Sirawai, the President presided over a command conference at the headquarters of the 44th Infantry Division, 1st Infantry Tabak Division. After her meeting with the military officials, she flew to Siocon, also in Zamboanga del Norte.

Upon her arrival in Siocon, the President visited the wake of four policemen—SPO1 Nestor Dizon and SPO2s Manuel Tagaloguin, Espiridion Cardenas, and Sabeniano Timusa. The four were among the eight police officers killed by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels during the May 4 siege in Siocon.

The President gave P100,000 financial assistance each to the families and scholarship grant to the children of the police and military officials killed during the MILF attack.

The President also announced that the Palarong Pambansa would still be conducted in Lanao del Norte although the final venue and date are still to be evaluated.

The President then went to Koronadal, South Cotabato and visited the Koronadal public market where innocent civilians were killed during a terrorist bombing on Saturday.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 12, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514043407/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may12.htm>

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Statement of the President on MILF

The Government is nearing a decision point on whether to declare the MILF a terrorist organization, and to take the necessary operational and diplomatic measures to strengthen this prospective policy. We are holding this decision in abeyance upon the recommendation of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security, until after the forthcoming OIC Conference of Foreign Ministers to be held towards the end of this month.

Meanwhile, the security of our civilian communities is our utmost concern. Punitive actions will continue and peace talks remain suspended. We will treat those who attack civilians as plain terrorists.

Statement of the President on SARS

So far we are winning the fight against SARS. Every Filipino must continue to take responsibility for the health and welfare of the entire national community. Everybody has a stake in making the Philippines SARS free.

Statement of the President on lifestyle checks

Investigations and lifestyle checks are ongoing on those who are suspected of corruption. We will not tolerate any corrupt officials in the government. We will go after all thieves and punish them accordingly. The people are squarely behind us.

Gov't nearing decision on whether to tag MILF as terrorist, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the government is nearing a decision on whether to declare the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) a terrorist organization and to take the necessary operational and diplomatic measures to strengthen such prospective policy.

In her speech marking the death centenary of Apolinario Mabini at the Mabini Shrine in Malacañang Park, the President said the government is also in consultation with its friends who want peace in the country, especially in Mindanao.

The President explained that the government is holding this decision in abeyance upon the recommendation of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS), until after the forthcoming conference of the foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to be held later this month.

In citing the Philippines' friends in the search for peace in the South, the President singled out Malaysia for continuing to patiently help the country achieve "principled peace" in Mindanao.

"Even as we fight terrorism together, we want to thank our foreign friends, especially Malaysia, whose ambassador is here, and I gave him our thanks today for continuing to patiently help the Philippines achieve principled peace here in Mindanao," the President said.

She reiterated her statement made in Mindanao yesterday that "time is running out" for the MILF to prove its sincerity in the peace process.

"Punitive actions will continue and the peace talks remain suspended," she added.

The President stressed that the security of the civilian communities is of utmost concern.

The Chief Executive said the government will treat those who attack civilians as plain terrorists.

"It (MILF) must cut its double talk and make a clear statement on whether it's allied with the Abu Sayyaf and foreign terrorist groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah or Al-Qaeda, or unequivocally reject them," she said.

She said the MILF can no longer hide behind the veil of legitimacy under the growing suspicion that it is uninvolved in the entire web of terrorism domestically and regionally.

GMA designates Alingod as Acting Press Secretary

Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, by authority of the President, has designated Press Undersecretary Milton Alingod, a veteran journalist, as Acting Press Secretary for the period from April 20, 2003 to May 30, 2003.

Alingod, who was appointed Press Undersecretary on January 30, 2003, also concurrently serves as executive director of the Philippine Broadcasting Service-Radio Television Malacañang (PBS-RTVM), a position he held since December 2002.

Before his Malacañang stint, Alingod was vice president for news of the GMA Network, Inc. (Channel 7), from May 1993 to August 2002.

Alingod started his career as a news writer of the defunct DZMT, the radio station of the old *Manila Times*.

From the DZMT, Alingod moved on to become the news editor, news director and station manager of DZHP, the radio station of the then *Philippines Herald*.

Later as a sportscaster of the Voice of the Philippines, Alingod covered such prestigious international sports events as the Southeast Asian Games, the World Basketball Championship, Asian Basketball Championship and the Jones Cup Basketball Championship.

After the declaration of martial law, Alingod became a special assistant and general manager for radio of the Office of Media Affairs (OMA), the forerunner of the Office of the Press Secretary.

He was later appointed as director of the Bureau of Broadcast, the broadcast arm of the OPS.

Since the appointment of Press Secretary Hernani Braganza early this year, Alingod has been designated OPS officer-in-charge whenever the former went on official leave.

Malaysia backs RP condemnation of MILF attacks

Malaysia today supported the Philippines in condemning the recent successive attacks of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) against civilians in Mindanao.

Ambassador Mohamed Taufik, who attended the death centenary of Apolinario Mabini at Malacañang Park as a member of the diplomatic corps, said Malaysia respect the decision of the Philippine government in questioning the MILF's real identity – if it is allied with terrorist groups or not.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, in Koronadal City Monday (May 12), said the MILF must cut its double talk and make a clear statement on whether it is allied with the Abu Sayyaf and foreign terrorist groups such as Jemaah Islamiya or the Al-Qaeda, or unequivocally reject them.

Taufik said: “We support whatever its (the Philippines) decision because the MILF is not a Malaysian organization, neither is it an Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) organization and I do not think we have much to say in what is essentially a Filipino domestic issue.”

Taufik also said Malaysia seriously hopes the MILF would disprove what they have been up to. “Of course, after Siocon, they admitted it was a technical mistake in attacking civilians. Well, any action against civilians clearly is an act of terrorism.”

“And so I think time is running out so we hope that the MILF would seriously consider and see what they want themselves to be regarded,” Taufik added.

He also reiterated that Malaysia does not support efforts of any party in the Philippines to seek secession or whatever. “With the MILF, I presume if it is what they want, it's quite clear that we have told them time and time again, any solution to the problem should be in the context of the Philippine Constitution.”

Taufik noted that the OIC as a whole has committed itself to respect the territorial integrity of the Philippines.

The Malaysian envoy further noted that the OIC does not recognize the MILF although it is interested in what is happening to Muslim minorities in any part of the world.

GMA accepts credentials of 3 new envoy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today accepted the credentials of the ambassadors of Sri Lanka, Singapore and Argentina in simple ceremonies in Malacañang.

Ambassador Ariya Bandara Rekawa of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Lady Ambassador Lim Kheng Hua of the Republic of Singapore, and Ambassador Mario Schuff of the Argentine Republic, arrived one after the other before noon in Malacañang.

Assistant Secretary Jose Abeto Zaide, chief protocol of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), then accompanied the newly designated ambassadors before the President for the presentation of their credentials.

“I hope you will be successful during your tenure,” the President told the ambassadors.

For their part, the ambassadors wished the President good health and promised to further improve cooperation and bilateral relations between the Philippines and their countries during their tour of duties.

GMA likens today's Filipino health workers to Mabini

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today likened today's Filipino health workers to national hero Apolinario Mabini, the brains of the Philippine Revolution, who despite his handicap, served to free Filipinos.

The President, who made the comparison during the death centenary of Mabini at the Mabini Shrine at the Malacañang Park, said just like Mabini, the Filipino health workers are the heroes in the battle against the dreaded Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

“Sila ang ating mga bayani ng mga araw na ito (they are the heroes of today),” she said.

“*Kaya kung pinaparangalan natin si Mabini, bigyan din natin ng parangal ang ating mga health workers na napakagaling at may malasakit* (if we are honoring Mabini today, we should likewise pay tribute to our health workers who are facing battles against diseases around the world),” she said.

“Because of them, so far, we’re winning the fight against SARS,” she said.

The President said what the firefighters and the New York police were in 9-11, our health workers are the heroes in the battle against SARS, not only in the Philippines but in Hong Kong, Singapore, and wherever we have health workers all over the world,” she said.

“Every Filipino must continue to take responsibility for the health and welfare of the entire national community. Everybody has a stake in making the Philippines SARS-free,” she said.

Mabini is one of the brightest and famous national heroes. Despite his disability, he served as beacon in Philippine history and culture. Born of poor parents, he served as the meaningful leaders of the Philippine revolution. He supported his law studies by taking on odd jobs. He eventually became a lawyer.

Mabini also served in the cabinet of the President Aguinaldo as president of the council of secretaries, and secretary of foreign affairs.

“He was the (Executive Secretary) Bert Romulo and the (Foreign Secretary) Blas Ople combined,” she said.

During his term, Mabini was able to create several towns, provinces and courts and eventually the nucleus of the Philippine Constitution.

He was banished in Guam and eventually died at the age of 39.

Among the officials in attendance during the ceremonies were National Historical Institute Executive Director Ludovico Badoy, Manila Mayor Jose “Lito” Atienza, Jr., Tourism Undersecretary Evelyn Pantig and Metro Manila and Development Authority Chairman Bayani Fernando.

Before delivering her speech, the President laid a wreath at the bust of Mabini. She also led the flag-raising ceremony.

Badoy also presented to the President the Mabini Centenary Stamps and commemorative medal.

GMA orders speedy work on South Luzon Expressway infra

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the fast tracking of vital transportation support projects such as the two segments of the South Luzon Expressway — the Calamba-Sto. Tomas road and Alabang viaduct and the Lipa-Batangas City road.

The 7.48-kilometer road project from Calamba to Sto. Tomas will be implemented by the Philippine National Construction Corporation (PNCC), by virtue of PD 1113, as amended. The project costs P1.6 billion. The rehabilitation of the Alabang viaduct is included in the segment.

The construction of the 20-kilometer Lipa-Batangas City segment, including the right of way, costs about P2.2 billion. This is under the franchise of the Study Infrastructure Development Corporation (SIDC).

Briefing the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Executive Committee in a meeting in Malacañang, Public Works and Highways Undersecretary Teodoro Encarnacion said the implementing parties agreed to work within the PNCC franchise so as not to disturb the present direction of the projects.

The National Development Corporation (NDC) will provide project financing through a loan for the design and construction, including the right of way, to PNCC.

Actual construction will be undertaken within 12 months — from September 2003 to September 2004.

The Lipa-Batangas City road will be made operational under the Toll Concession Agreement between the SIDC and DPWH. The actual construction will take place on October 2003 up to March 2004.

The NEDA Execom also discussed DPWH foreign-assisted high impact projects, 50 percent of which are road networks all over the country.

The DPWH said the projects are being fast tracked without sacrificing the quality of work.

In Metro Manila, roads and bridges worth some P6.8 billion are being implemented and scheduled to be completed before the term of the President ends in 2004.

PAGC looking into charges against BIR officials

Malacañang today said the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) is already looking into the allegations made against some officials of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

“Chairman Dario Rama of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) is already on the look out as far as the investigations of this particular matter is concerned,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said during a media briefing in Malacañang.

Bunye said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has clearly mandated the PAGC to inquire into the lifestyles of the government officials, especially those who have been appointed by the President.

The President earlier said investigations and lifestyle checks are ongoing on those suspected of corruption.

“We will not tolerate any corrupt officials in government. We will go after all thieves and punish them accordingly. The people are squarely behind us,” the President said.

Bunye said BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. has already decided to leave the investigations to the PAGC to avert insinuations of a possible whitewash.

“Well, what we know is that Chairman Rama is already stepping in as far as this investigation is concerned. And we also monitored the report that the BIR Commissioner is leaving it to the PAGC. They prefer a neutral body to investigate the BIR officers,” Bunye said.

RP bats for OIC observer status, may send representative to OIC Khartoum meeting

The Philippines may send a representative to attend the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Khartoum, the Sudan from June 25 to 27.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye stressed this today as he disclosed moves to impose on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) a two-week deadline to make a categorical stand on whether or not they want to pursue the peace talks.

The MILF had been tagged as responsible for a series of bombings in southern Philippines.

The government is contemplating on labeling the MILF as a terrorist group in the wake of deaths and injuries of innocent civilians in the bombings and armed attacks on peaceful communities.

In his regular press briefing, Bunye said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and other officials “are nearing a decision” on sending a representative to the OIC foreign ministers’ meeting.

He said the Philippines is “batting for observer status” in the influential 56-member Islamic states grouping, but “that has not been granted yet.”

The mechanics of sending a representative to the OIC meeting is being threshed out by the Department of Foreign Affairs, “but it is an ideal situation if we could be granted observer status” within the OIC, he added.

At the same time, Bunye said the government has given the MILF two weeks, to expire on June 1, to show its “sincerity or honest effort” to push through with the Mindanao peace process.

He said that President Macapagal-Arroyo — during her visits Monday (May 12) to Koronadal City, South Cotabato and Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte – dared the MILF to make a categorical stand on the peace talks.

“If they want to pursue peace, they will have to dissociate themselves from known terrorist organizations like the Abu Sayyaf, the Jemaah Islamiya and the Al-Qaeda,” he reiterated.

He also stressed that the MILF would have to police their ranks, turn over the perpetrators of the Mindanao bombings and refrain from committing similar atrocities in the future.

If the MILF shows a change of heart or indicates good faith in their interest to pursue peace, then the government may further defer or put aside proposals of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security to brand the rebels as a terrorist group, he said.

He clarified that the COCIS discussions were “centered on the objective evaluation of the activities of the MILF... whether there is a basis for actually declaring them as a terrorist organization.”

“There is a possibility of foreclosing the (Government-MILF) peace talks, if the MILF is eventually declared as a terrorist organization,” but this would not necessarily prevent future negotiations to happen, he added.

Bunye likewise clarified that the President’s call on media to ban propaganda from terrorists was an “appeal and we are not thinking of any possible sanctions.”

What the government wants is to deliver its message of its “sincere effort to have a peaceful solution of the situation,” he said.

GMA to leave May 17 for state visit to U.S. — Palace

Malacañang today announced that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will leave Saturday, May 17, for a one-week state visit to the United States, to be highlighted by a meeting with US President George W. Bush in Washington, D. C.

In his regular press briefing in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said the President, who would be taking the regular Philippines Airlines flight, will arrive in Los Angeles, California on the same day.

During her overnight stay in Los Angeles, the President would meet with the members of the Fil-American community in the city and surrounding areas following a brief visit to Cardinal Mahony of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels.

Bunye said the President will then proceed to Washington where she will be welcomed by President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush in the White House.

In an earlier announcement, the White House said President Bush would welcome President Macapagal-Arroyo as an expression of the American people's gratitude to her, the Philippine government and the Filipino nation "for their stalwart efforts in fighting the war on terror, for being such a good and reliable ally to the United States."

Bunye said that during her visit to Washington, President Bush would host a state dinner for her and the official Philippine delegation on May 19. Also on that date, the US State Department would tender a state lunch for the President and the Philippine delegation.

While in Washington, the President will have business meetings with Shengman Zhang, vice president for policies and programs of the World Bank; Peter Voicke, head and managing director of International Finance Corp.; and Hoerst Kohler, managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

She is also scheduled to meet Sen. Richard Lugar, chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee and hold a round table conference with the US-ASEAN Business Council.

From the US capital, the President would fly to New York where she will meet with American business leaders.

The President will also be conferred an honorary doctorate degree of laws by the Fordham University.

The conferment, to be held May 21 at the McNally Amphitheater of Fordham, will highlight her brief stint in New York, which will also see her attending luncheon meetings with various business groups as well as possible one-on-one meetings with contractors such as Western Wats and Vision X International.

One of those scheduled to call on the President at the Waldorf Astoria while she is in New York is Maurice Greenberg, chairman and chief executive of AIG, the parent company of Phil-Am and officials of Prudential, Convergys and Ford.

From New York, the President flies back to San Francisco to meet with some members of the Fil-American community there. She departs San Francisco for Manila on May 24.

Bunye said the talking points for a possible bilateral agreement with the United States are still being finalized by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

GMA orders DFA, DOLE to extend all possible assistance to Filipino victims in Riyadh bombings

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Labor and Employment to extend all possible assistance to the Filipino victims of the terrorist car bombings in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Monday.

The President, who received a report on the terrorist attacks in the Saudi Arabian capital from Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, also extended her condolences and sympathy to the families of the Filipino victims of the bombings.

Philippine Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Bahnarim Guinomla informed the DFA that at least two Filipinos were killed in a series of attacks and explosions at a housing complex in Riyadh.

Some Filipinos were also reportedly injured in the incident.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 13, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20081201132747/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may13.htm>

The President's Day: May 14, 2003

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- **Statement of the President on Riyadh bombing**
- **Statement of the President on SARS**
- **Statement of the President on MILF**
- **Statement of the President on lifestyle checks**
- **GMA names Aguiluz special envoy to Gulf Cooperation Council**
- **June 13 declared special non-working day, June 12 regular working day**
- **A surprise reunion at AMA graduation**
- **GMA swears in 74 newly-promoted AFP officers**
- **Gov't ready against possible terrorist attacks**
- **Be models of electronically-enabled RP, GMA urges graduates of AMA**

Statement of the President on Riyadh bombing

I sympathize with the families of the victims in the Riyadh bombing. This is a risk inherent to the deployment of millions of Filipinos worldwide. It is also a risk we carry for being part of the global coalition against terrorism. The world has known for a long time that the tentacles of terrorism stretch across borders and can only be destroyed by international action. Our embassy in Saudi Arabia will work closely with Saudi authorities in Riyadh to get at the root of this incident and obtain justice for the victims. The OWWA will see to the welfare of their bereaved families. This tragedy shows the utter helplessness of the civilians against the agents of terror. We are experiencing this in our own country where we now in the thick of a punitive campaign against terrorists in Mindanao. We will not relent in this campaign until we achieve justice for the victims of senseless murder.

Statement of the President on SARS

We shall continue to work with the WHO to comply with all international standards to counter the SARS. So far we are winning the fight, both in containing the threat internally and to prevent its entry or exit from the Philippines. Everybody has a stake in making the Philippines and the world SARS free. Prohibitions being imposed against the mobility of our OFWs are unfair and misplaced. I direct all our embassies to step up the information campaign and diplomatic measures to protect the jobs of Filipinos and ensure their freedom to travel.

Statement of the President on MILF

The MILF must renounce links with international terrorists, surrender the terrorists who murdered innocent civilians, and stop all forms of terrorism. The people would like to read this from the lips of the MILF leadership. Anything short of these will be considered half measures, which will not do. Punitive actions will continue and we will escalate political and military measures as necessary. This is not a fight against Muslims. This is a fight against terror being waged by all decent and civilized Filipinos. We will not acknowledge false offers of peace and succumb to political pressure. To retreat now would only invite more depredations. I have the duty to protect the national interest from greater harm.

Statement of the President on lifestyle checks

Investigations and lifestyle checks are ongoing on those who are suspected of corruption. We are undertaking institutional and procedural reforms to reinforce good governance. Proactive measures, prosecution and public support are the key to success in this long-term effort.

GMA names Aguiluz special envoy to Gulf Cooperation Council

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the appointment of Dr. Amable Aguiluz V, founder and chairman of the AMA Education System, as her special envoy to the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The council is composed of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Speaking at the first synchronized webcast graduation of the AMA Education System at the Araneta Coliseum, the President asked Dr. Aguiluz to go to Saudi Arabia to extend the President's condolence to Filipinos killed in Monday's bombings in Riyadh.

"This is a risk inherent in the deployment of millions of Filipinos worldwide. It is also a risk we carry for being part of the global war against terrorism," she said.

"The world has known for a long time that the tentacles of terrorism stretch across borders and can only be destroyed by international action," she said.

The President directed the Philippine Embassy in Saudi Arabia to work closely with Saudi authorities in Riyadh to get at the root of the incident and "obtain justice for the victims."

The Chief Executive likewise directed the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) to see to the welfare of the bereaved families of the bombing victims.

Reports said more than 30 people, including two Filipinos, were killed in suicide bombings that rocked three expatriate housing compounds in Riyadh.

The President lamented that the tragedy showed the utter helplessness of civilians against agents of terror.

"We are experiencing this in our own country where we are now taking punitive actions against terrorists in Mindanao," the President said.

She stressed she would not relent in the campaign until justice is achieved for the victims of senseless murder.

The President said the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) must renounce links with international terrorists.

Surrender the terrorists who murdered innocent civilians and stop all forms of terrorism," the President stressed, saying that the people would like to read this from the lips of the MILF leadership.

Anything short of this, she declared, would be considered half measures which would not do.

She said that punitive actions would continue and political and military measures escalated as necessary.

The President stressed that this is not a fight against Muslims. "This is a fight against terror being waged by all decent and civilized Filipinos," the President said.

"We will not acknowledge the false offers of peace or succumb to political pressure," she said.

She added that to retreat now would only invite more depredations. "I have the duty to protect the national interests from greater harm."

June 13 declared special non-working day, June 12 regular working day

It's going to be another long weekend for the working class on the week of Independence Day next month.

Thanks to the administration's holiday economics, families who have been longing to find time for themselves and travel together can do just that as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared Friday, June 13, as a special non-working day and Thursday, June 12 as a regular working day.

The President, through Proclamation 373, however said "all activities and celebrations in observance of Independence Day shall remain to be observed on June 12 to enable all government officials and employees to participate fully in the activities and celebration for the historical commemoration."

She directed the Department of Labor and Employment to issue appropriate circulars to implement the proclamation in the private sector.

In her proclamation, the President said a longer weekend "encourages families to travel and get together with a view to strengthening their relationship towards a more productive society."

"A longer weekend promotes domestic tourism and enables employers to plan their work schedules effectively and efficiently, resulting in improved productivity," she said.

In another proclamation, the President also declared Oct. 31, a Friday, as a special non-working day throughout the country for the public sector.

This, according to Proclamation 374, would give the people full opportunity "to properly observe the day with all its religious fervors which invariably requires them to travel to and from different regions of the country."

All Saints Day, Nov. 1, falls on a Saturday.

Heads of departments, offices, instrumentalities or government-owned or controlled corporations (GOCCs) may, if required by the exigencies of public service, direct their employees to observe regular working hours and provide regular services to the public on Oct. 31.

Also exempted by the proclamation are employees of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Bureau of Customs and other government agencies/instrumentalities that impose deadlines on the transacting public for payment of taxes and those that provide police, security, fire protection, custodial, rescue, emergency, medical and other similar services.

A surprise reunion at AMA graduation

For Ana Marie Liamzon, it was overwhelming enough that no less than President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was there when she stood on stage to deliver her response in behalf of some 12,000 graduates of the AMA Computer University today.

After all, the presence of the country's highest official taking time out from hectic routine to be with the graduates, was for her already a big, big honor.

But when her dad, an overseas Filipino worker in Dubai whom she had not seen for 18 years, appeared on stage to personally greet her, she got the grandest surprise gift of all.

Ana Marie, chosen by school officials to represent this year's batch, acknowledged the great support and sacrifice of her parents for her education as she tried to contain her tears as she had a grand reunion with her family on stage of the Big Dome.

It was a heart-tugging scene witnessed by the President and the AMA graduates and their parents during the synchronized graduation held at the Araneta Coliseum, Folk Arts Theater, Cebu Grand Convention Center and Davao Convention Center.

AMA Computer University flew Mr. Liamzon to Manila, all expenses paid, for this event.

Ana did not know that her father will be appearing personally to be with her. After delivering her message and after calling her Mommy on stage, the host, Marie Kaimo, announced that Ana has a message from her father in Dubai.

While delivering the message to her daughter, Daddy Liamzon walked in from back stage to the surprise of her family.

The President, in her speech, related that in United States where she studied, as soon as a student graduates, all she or he wants is to get away from his old home and live by himself alone, independent of his parents.

“Here we witnessed that the student graduates acknowledge the great support of their parents and they dedicate their education to their parents. Family life continues beyond graduation,” the President said.

Greeting all the graduates and their parents represented by Mr. Liamzon, “Malaking sakripisyo para makapag-aral sa magandang universidad ang kanyang anak. Ganoon din ang sakripisyo ng lahat ng mga mga magulang na nagtratrabaho at nagsakripisyo,” the President said.

Through AMA’s webcast facilities, the event was also beamed live through the internet, accessible to more than 650-million internet users worldwide.

Distinguished guests from AMA’s international partners also arrived to honor this year’s graduates. Present were Dr. Allan Fisher, president and CEO of iCarnegie, Inc., a subsidiary of the prestigious Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, USA, the No. 1 Computer Science school in the world.

AMA’s partnership with iCarnegie is expected to boost AMA’s computer science curriculum and provide its students the most advanced tools in software systems development through e-Learning and other online facilities.

The National Computing Center of the United Kingdom (NCC-UK), AMA’s London-based partner in its Double Diploma program, also sent its representative, Michael Haigh, Head of Quality and Standards.

AMA’s partnership with the NCC-UK entitles graduates with a second international diploma recognized in more than 80 countries worldwide. This Double Diploma system, another pioneering program of AMA, gives students the striking advantage of competitiveness and high-employability in the Philippines and abroad.

AMA Education System, has an annual student population of 150,000 in its 200 campuses in the Philippines and in other parts of the world.

Since its establishment in 1980, AMA has graduated more than 160,000 students who are now gainfully employed in top IT companies all over the world.

GMA swears in 74 newly-promoted AFP officers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today sworn in 74 newly-promoted generals and flag officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in simple ceremonies in Malacañang.

Inducted to the rank of major general were erstwhile Brigadier Generals Raul Relano, Glenn Rabonza, Reynaldo Rivero, Samuel Bagasin, Neon Ebuena, Pedro Cabuay Jr., Jose Reyes, Allan Cabalquinto, Diosdado Tabamo, Arcadio Seron, Ralph Flores, Hermogenes Esperon Jr., Triponio Salazar, and Delfin Lorenzana.

Promoted to rear admirals in the Philippine Navy were former Commodores Edgardo Israel and Antonietto Ferrer.

Promoted to brigadier generals were former Colonels Victor Corpuz, Edgar Calvo, Amador Alojado, Edwin Galzote, Edgar Elona, Eduardo Lena, Jacinto Cordero Jr., Vladimir delos Trino, Edwin Vargas, Pedrito Magsino, Ricardo Nobleza, Dionisio Torina, Roberto Dimayuga, Manuel Ibanez Jr., Segundo Dimapilis, Rafael Romero, Jaime Viernes Jr., Romeo Alamillo, Exequiel Cruz, Gabriel Habacon, Pedro Ramboanga Jr., Ferdinand Bocobo, Robert Gervacio, Sergio Candelario Jr., Severino Estrella, Christie Datu, Antonio Romero II, Valentino Prudencio, Charles Hotchkiss, Jose Nano, Carlito Gamit, Ericson Aurelio, Agustin Dema-ala, Benedicto Corona, Cesar Tiongson, Antonio Seville, Efren Orbon, Cardozo Luna, Alexander Aleo, Benito Ramos, Ignacio Illenberger, Santiago Casauay Jr., Silverio Ilagan, Marcelo Santos, Alexander Yano, and Efren Veran.

The new commodores in the Philippine Navy were former Captains Quirico Evangelista Jr., Normando Naval, Amado Sanglay, Constancio Jardiniano, Franklin Mangonon, Alfredo Abueg Jr., Victor Parawan, Rufino Lopez Jr., Ceferino Dacanay, Edsel Lumawag, Tirso Danga and George Uy.

In the public sector, also appointed were Agnes Devanadera as undersecretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and Alonso Tan as director of the Department of Agriculture (DA) Fisheries/Private sector.

Among those who witnessed the mass oath-taking were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, AFP chief of staff Gen. Narciso Abaya, Presidential Adviser on Military Affairs Secretary Arturo Carillo, and Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr.

Gov't ready against possible terrorist attacks

The police, the military and local government units are ready to either prevent or ward off any attack the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) may launch in the wake of possibilities that the latter may be classified as a terrorist group.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye today stressed this as he noted that the terrorist "attacks are expected and anticipated."

Bunye, however said the government remained hopeful that the MILF would return to the negotiating table to thresh out a lasting, meaningful and peaceful resolution to the Mindanao problem.

He said the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security, after careful deliberation, decided to give the MILF at least two weeks to show they are sincere in pursuing the peace process.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had earlier dared the MILF to make a categorical and unequivocal declaration that the rebel group is not allied with any of the terrorist groups like Abu Sayyaf, Jemaah Islamiya or Al-Qaeda.

The President also demanded that the MILF turn over the perpetrators of the bombings in Mindanao – particularly those in Davao City, Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte and Koronadal City, South Cotabato.

She likewise challenged the MILF to stop committing further atrocities against innocent civilians and peaceful communities in the South.

Bunye said the MILF should show the "indication that they are prepared to talk."

"That would probably pave the way for the resumption of the exploratory talks" between the government and the separatist group, he said.

He also raised the likelihood that the MILF issue might be discussed during the President's visit to Washington next week.

“Perhaps, not specifically, not in very specific terms. But it is expected that regional security cooperation will be discussed during the state visit,” he added.

Be models of electronically-enabled RP, GMA urges graduates of AMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today challenged the graduates of AMA Education System to continue to be model citizens of an electronically enabled Philippines.

In a speech at the synchronized graduation of some 12,000 students of the AMA Education System at the Araneta Coliseum, Folk Arts Theater, Cebu Grand Convention Center and Davao Convention Center, the President said that as government install more ICT and ICT-based projects in the different programs of effective governance, investment promotion, agriculture modernization and poverty alleviation, the demand for ICT workers, especially those graduating from an excellent school like AMA is bound to increase.

The Chief Executive said the graduates of AMA have what it takes to succeed. “I ask you to help others do the same,” she said, stressing that as model citizens, they should never lose sight of their equally important roles in the fight against poverty.

To some of the graduates who will be looking for jobs after graduation, the President reminded them of the jobs fair at the SM Megamall under the auspices of the Department of Labor and Employment. This was started last April and will end on June 10, this year.

Available are some 100,000 jobs, the President said, out of which some 16,000 have been applied for.

“So there are still 84,000 jobs being offered for new graduates,” the President said.

The President also told the graduates of her determination to make ICT ensure clean and honest elections from 2004 onwards.

“I am determined to lead and support all efforts, as I have made a budget available from many sources, to ensure that the national elections next year will make full use of computerized canvassing of returns and thereby minimize if not totally eradicate the cheating that’s usually done through the traditional mode,” the President said.

The President said she will continue to depend on the graduates unremitting excellence and patriotism.

Graduates of AMA University, you are blessed with an excellent education, the President said.

According to Dr. Amable Aguiluz V, founder and chairman of the AMA Education System, for the first time in the history of AMA and of Philippine education, the first nationwide graduation among AMA’s campuses in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao was held.

Through the power of the internet and AMA’s webcast facilities, the event was also beamed live over the world, thus allowing an estimated 600 million people to view the graduation proceedings.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: May 14, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514043503/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may14.htm>

The President's Day: May 15, 2003

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- **GMA announces passage of bill on trafficking of women, children**
- **GMA challenges women execs to be crisis managers**
- **GMA calls on rebel-returnees to forget about violent past and lead new life**
- **GMA creates inter-agency task force to wipe out drug trafficking in country**
- **Press Statement of Secretary Rigoberto D. Tiglao, Presidential Chief of Staff**
- **GMA inducts Brother Dizon as new CHED chairman**

GMA announces passage of bill on trafficking of women, children

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that both houses of Congress had just passed the bill against the trafficking of women and children.

The President made the announcement after she accepted from women legislators and local chief executives the Manila Declaration on Gender-Responsive and Good Governance that articulates the priority issues, principles and actions pertaining to women in governance and decision-making.

The three-day summit was convened by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), in collaboration with the Lady Local Legislators League (4L), Lady Municipal Mayors Association of the Philippines (LMMAP), Philippine Councilors League (PCL), and the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP).

The declaration was crafted during the three-day National Summit of Women and Local Chief Executives and Legislators that ended today at the Manila Pavilion Hotel.

The President received the declaration from Tandag, Surigao del Sur Mayor Mary Elizabeth Delgado, LMMAP president; 4L president and Board Member Mariant Villegas; City of San Fernando Mayor Mary Jane Ortega, LCP secretary general; and PCL treasurer Councilor Corazon del Mundo.

The President was supposed to sign the bill into law during the summit but this was deferred as many women leaders also wanted to be present during the signing of the law that protects the rights of women and children.

"I would have wanted to sign the bill into law today right here in this summit, except that many women leaders, who are not part of this summit meeting, want to be present at the signing," the President said.

"As a woman political leader of the Philippines, I'm one with you in the commitment to build a more humane, just and peace-loving constituency free of gender biases," the President said.

The NCRFW was established under the Office of the President on Jan. 7, 1975 to review, evaluate and recommend measures, including priorities to ensure the full integration of women for economic, social and cultural development and ensure further equality between men and women.

During the term of President Macapagal-Arroyo, the NCRFW is focused on three priority issues:

- Promoting women's economic empowerment;
- Upholding women's human rights; and
- Promoting gender-responsive good governance

International partners that sponsored the event were the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

The international development partners, represented by UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator Terence Jones, also presented to the President a joint statement of support to the Philippine government and its partners in their effort to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

GMA challenges women execs to be crisis managers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today challenged women executives to be crisis managers ready to confront all kinds of social and security concerns, particularly against the spread of terrorism and the dreaded Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The President said terrorism strikes anywhere, from the remotest barangays in Mindanao to the capitals of the world.

“The world in the post-Iraq period has achieved greater strategic stability. But this has driven militant cells to deeper desperation,” the President said during the closing of the National Summit of Women Local Chief Executives and Legislators at the Manila Pavilion Hotel.

The President said all Filipinos must be always vigilant, including the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who must work with their host communities to secure themselves and their loved ones.

“We must show the terrorists that humanity will not be cowed, that life goes on and that they will be brought to justice. We will intensify our intelligence work at home and strengthen international security cooperation,” the President said.

The President said the government is currently engaged in a “punitive campaign” against terrorists responsible for specific atrocities, particularly against innocent civilians.

“The campaign will be selective and limited to these terrorist cells. Women executives, this is a challenge to you, to us, not only as executives but as women executives,” she said.

The President cited the role of Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat and South Cotabato Governor Daisy Avance Fuentes who has been taking the leadership in the fight against terrorism in their respective areas.

“They are at the forefront and sometimes it is said that they have shown their leadership. But they have to show it by being better than the men just to be treated equally in the field of the fight against terrorism,” the President said.

On the threat of SARS, the President said the World Health Organization’s (WHO) forthcoming decision to remove the Philippines from the list of SARS-prone countries “will serve as a trophy for the efforts our people have done in controlling the spread of the virus.”

While we await this eventuality, the President said the security measures against SARS must go on with the same intensity until the threat has been decisively diminished.

The President said this is where women local government leaders surely stand out because it is second nature for women to keep their surroundings clean.

“But we go beyond just what is our trait as women. The local government official as crisis manager must lead whether it’s terrorism or whether it’s SARS,” the President said.

The President said the success of the women executives in the fight against terrorism and SARS is also part of the fight for the advancement of women.

“This is a time for all women executives to show that we are equal to those threats. Therefore, let’s continue to bond together to advance the cause of women as vanguards in building a strong and caring nation,” the President said.

GMA calls on rebel-returnees to forget about violent past and lead new life

STA. CRUZ, Laguna—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the rebel returnees to forget about their turbulent past and turn a new leaf in their lives as she renewed her pledge to eradicate poverty in order to finally win the war against terrorism.

“Kalimutan na natin ang inyong marahas na kahapon. Hindi kayo kasama doon sa ating mga kalabang organisado (Let us now forget your violent past. You are no longer a part of our organized enemy,” the President said in her remarks in a ceremony here welcoming back to society a total of 123 rebel returnees.

The homecoming of the former combatants of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) marked the end of a successful military offensive and the start of a socio-economic program in the 33 rebel-infested barangays in seven municipalities of this province.

The President told the returnees that now that they are free, they should start a new and prosperous life.

She said that one of the things that really gives her a feeling of fulfillment as President and as the mother of the nation is to welcome our countrymen who want to return to normal life.

“Ako ay nasisiyahan sapagkat ito ay tanda rin ng ating mga pagsisikap tungo sa pagkakaisa at kapayapaan dahil ito ay nagtatagumpay (I am happy because this is a signal that our efforts in forging peace and unity are succeeding),” the President said.

She said that because of her gratitude, she has ordered various government agencies to provide the rebel returnees with a package of benefits that would help them lead a productive life.

The President said that she was aware that poverty is the root of rebellion and terrorism in the country.

“Kaya nilalabanan natin hindi ang mga rebelyon, hindi lamang ang sindikatong krimen, hindi lamang ang terorismo, nilalabanan natin ang kahirapan (That is why we are not fighting rebellion, nor the crime syndicates or terrorism; what we are fighting is poverty),” the President said.

GMA creates inter-agency task force to wipe out drug trafficking in country

STA. CRUZ, Laguna—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced the signing of an executive order creating a multi-agency task force that would help the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in eliminating illegal drug syndicates in the country.

In her remarks at the ceremonies here welcoming 153 rebel-returnees back to the folds of the law, the President said that other government agencies should help the PDEA and the Dangerous Drugs Board headed by Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. in wiping out illegal drug syndicates, especially in the Southern Tagalog region.

The President said that in the Southern Tagalog provinces, the drug problem is more critical than rebellion, adding that there is now a need to have a concerted effort in wiping out this problem.

Under the executive order, the President also ordered the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) to earmark P1 billion from lotto receipts to be used by the task force in the fight against drug trafficking.

He said that earlier, she ordered the Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA) to set aside P1 billion for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Middle East affected by the war in Iraq.

He President has also ordered the PCSO to set aside P1 billion to combat the dreaded severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) even if only two Filipinos have been confirmed to have died from the disease.

“So, if we can provide P1 billion for the OFWs in Kuwait and the Middle East, and another P1 billion for SARS that has only affected eight with two deaths, what more for illegal drugs that had already victimized many people particularly, in Southern Tagalog,” the President said in Filipino.

The President said it had already been proven that illegal drug syndicates respect no race, religion nor ideology.

She also said that her administration's poverty-alleviation program would be stepped up since poverty is the root cause of terrorism, rebellion and other syndicated crimes.

The President said that the government would intensify its intelligence work and strengthen security cooperation with other countries to defeat terrorism either in Mindanao or elsewhere in the country.

Press Statement of Secretary Rigoberto D. Tiglao, Presidential Chief of Staff

In order to intensify and accelerate her administration's war against illegal drugs, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the organization of task forces within the Philippine National Police, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Customs, and the Office of the President. She ordered the creation of a standby fund of P1 billion for these units' operations, to augment funds from their mother agencies.

The P1-billion standby fund will come from the revenues of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office' lotto operations.

In her Executive Order No. 206 signed this morning, the President stressed the “urgent need to pursue a forceful, intensive, and unrelenting campaign against drug trafficking and the use of illegal drugs, whether syndicated or at street-level.”

The President noted in her executive order that the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) – the lead agency under the Comprehensive Dangerous Drug Act of 2002 tasked to wage the campaign against illegal drugs – is presently in a transition period, and still has to develop its institutional capacities. Thus the need for the modernization of the task forces, the main one of which will be organized by the PNP.

The PDEA will exercise operational supervision and provide technical support to the main task force created by the PNP. In the case of the task forces, the President herself will determine whether the Dangerous Drugs Board or the PDEA will exercise operational supervision.

GMA inducts Brother Dizon as new CHED chairman

BINAN, Laguna – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today swore in Brother Rolando R. Dizon, De La Salle University System president, as the new chairman of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

Brother Dizon replaces Dr. Esther Garcia as CHED chair. His term is from June 1, 2003 to July 20, 2006.

The induction rites were held during the blessing of the De La Salle University-Canlubang campus. DLSU-Canlubang, which sits on a sprawling 50-hectare property, is the eighth campus of the DLSU System.

The President motored here from Sta. Cruz, Laguna where she welcomed 123 rebel returnees back to the fold of the law.

Immediately upon her arrival, she unveiled the commemorative marker and witnessed the blessing of the Milagros R. del Rosario building of DLSU-Canlubang.

In his message, Brother Dizon assured the President that he will do his best to improve the quality of graduates of the country's tertiary institutions.

Brother Dizon has extensive educational management experience from the primary to the tertiary level. He earned his doctorate in international development education from Stanford University as a Fulbright scholar.

He was a Ten Outstanding Young Men awardee for education and was a recipient of various awards and recognition for his socio-civic involvements.

Brother Dizon is a founder of various civil, professional, fraternal, religious or business organizations such as the Citizen's National Network Against Poverty and Corruption, Federation of Catholic Schools Alumni Associations, Philippine Catechetical Apostolate and Religious Foundation, Inc. and Caucus for Poverty Reduction, among others.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 15, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20051126085148/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may15.htm>

The President's Day: May 16, 2003

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- **GMA leaves tomorrow for state visit to U.S.**
- **GMA hands over P120,000, vows more aid to kin of OFWs killed in Riyadh bombings**
- **MILF showed true terrorist color in past three months**
- **Rebel returnees get package of benefits**
- **GMA graces text2teach launching**
- **TOR for planned Balikatan in Sulu similar to Basilan exercise**

GMA leaves tomorrow for state visit to U.S.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will leave tomorrow for an eight-day state visit to the United States to further strengthen RP-US partnership in security and counter-terrorism and to expand the level of cooperation in trade and investments between the two countries.

The President said that her Washington visit is deemed crucial since the world has changed after the March 20, 2003 US-led action against Iraq ushering in a new global environment that requires a fresh perspective on regional political and economic security.

Earlier, the White House announced that US President George W. Bush would welcome President Macapagal-Arroyo for a state visit as an expression of gratitude to the country's support to the US in the global fight against terrorism.

In his announcement, White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer said that in welcoming the Philippine President, President Bush would like to thank President Macapagal-Arroyo, the people and the government of the Philippines "for their stalwart efforts in fighting the war on terror, for being such a good and reliable ally to the United States."

The President will leave tomorrow night for Los Angeles, California, the first leg of her state visit, through the regular flight of the Philippine Airlines.

After an overnight stay in Los Angeles where she will address a gathering of the members of the Filipino-American community in the West Coast, the President will fly to Washington, D. C. the following day.

Upon arrival at the Dulles Airport in Washington, D. C. the President, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and some of the members of her official party would be flown to Washington Monument Grounds by two helicopters provided by the US government.

The President and the First Gentleman would then motor to the Blair House, the official guesthouse of the American government for visiting foreign dignitaries, where she will stay during her Washington visit.

The following day, Monday (Tuesday in Manila), President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush would formally welcome the President and the First Gentleman in arrival ceremonies to be held at the South Lawn of the White House, after which President Bush would escort the visiting President to the Oval Office for a bilateral meeting, the highlight of her state visit.

Immediately after their meeting at the Oval Office, the two leaders and their respective panels would hold an expanded bilateral meeting at the Cabinet Room in the White House.

During the bilateral talks, the two leaders are expected to discuss defense and security cooperation, especially in the fight against terrorism, and other issues affecting the two countries.

The two leaders are also expected to talk about the humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Iraq, which is being participated in by the Philippines.

The Philippines was among the 20 countries that supported the US-led “coalition of the willing” in the war against the tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussein although it did not send combat troops to the war.

As part of its international commitment, the President has approved the sending of a 175-man peacekeeping and humanitarian mission, composed mostly of medical staff, to help restore normalcy and stability to Iraq.

She has said that stability in the Middle East is crucial to global stability and for the Philippines, this is particularly important because this means the long-term safety of some 1.5-million Filipino workers in the region.

During her talks with Bush, the President is also expected to touch on such sensitive issues as preferential trade arrangements, intellectual property protection, and equal benefits for Filipino World War II veterans.

The US Department of State will host a state lunch for the President and her official delegation after her talks with President Bush at the White House.

President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush would then tender a state dinner at the White House for the visiting Philippine leader and her official party.

On her second day in Washington, leaders of US financial institutions would call on the President at the Blair House, among them Shengman Zhang, vice president for policies and programs of the World Bank; Peter Voicke, head and managing director of the International Finance Corporation; and Horst Kohler, managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

In between her official engagements, the President would be interviewed by NBC News’ Andrea Mitchell and Wolf Blitzer of CNN International.

The President would also call on Senator Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, at his office in the US Senate. Mr. Lugar is an old friend of the Philippines.

A number of government-to-government memorandums of agreement (MOAs) and private sector agreements would be signed by the Philippine and American panels during the Washington leg of the President’s visit to the US.

This would be the second time that President Bush meets with President Macapagal-Arroyo at the White House. On Nov. 20, 2001, President Bush also welcomed the President to the White House during a weeklong working visit to the US.

The two leaders also met at the 10th Economic Leaders’ Meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) held last October 27, 2002 in Los Cabos, Mexico.

From Washington, D. C., the President will proceed to New York where she will meet with US business leaders and receive a honorary doctorate degree of laws at the prestigious Fordham University.

GMA hands over P120,000, vows more aid to kin of OFWs killed in Riyadh bombings

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today handed over P120,000 each to the families of three overseas Filipino workers (OFW) who were killed during the recent bomb attacks by terrorists in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The President spared time to condole with the families of deceased OFWs Serafin Hernandez, Getulio Templo and Rogelio Pababero at the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) office in Pasay City despite a hectic schedule.

She told the Hernandez, Templo and Pababero families that the checks represented the insurance gratuities and benefits of the late Filipino expatriates.

She said the bereaved families would also be eligible for the scholarship program, entrepreneurship development training, repatriation and airport assistance and others.

She disclosed that relatives of the workers could avail themselves of scholarships that the AMA Computer College is offering.

The President took time to reiterate her belief that the OFWs serve not only as modern-day heroes but “martyrs” of the land.

She cited her government’s determination to seek the best for OFWs.

OWWA Administrator Virgilio Angelo said Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas had ordered labor officials in Riyadh to closely coordinate with Saudi authorities to work out the earliest repatriation of the bodies of Hernandez, Templo and Pababero.

Angelo said labor officials have also been negotiating with the employers of the three OFWs for the release of monetary claims, including unpaid salaries.

MILF showed true terrorist color in past three months

Is the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) a secessionist group or a band of terrorists out to sow havoc in war-torn Mindanao?

Events of the past three months and documents recovered from the capture of the Buliok complex in the Liguasan Marsh area tend to belie the rebel groups’ claims that they are not allied with any of the terrorist groups like the Abu Sayyaf, Jemaah Islamiya or Al Qaeda.

While the government has been consistent in its policy of keeping its doors open to the peace process, the MILF has been clandestinely building up its armed capability and influence in its areas of operation as well as conniving with criminal elements in kidnapping operations.

In particular, it was monitored that the MILF gives kidnap for ransom gangs (KFRGs) and extortion rings training support and sanctuary in the Liguasan Marsh in exchange for money.

MILF documents in the area last February 13 confirmed a standing plan by the MILF to conduct bombing operations.

The documents showed that the MILF has conducted training on bomb-making, particularly the pencil bomb type explosives, and demolition techniques.

The group has also recruited minors as combatants, signed a deal to buy military hardware from a foreign source and generated substantial funds from foreign and local supporters.

From all of these findings, it seems that the MILF has been preparing to launch terrorist activities while deceiving the government on the peace talks.

Declassified military information shows that MILF hostile actions have escalated after the Buliok operations and prior to the signing of the joint statement for the cessation of hostilities last March 28.

A total of 251 MILF-caused hostile incidents were recorded, resulting in the death of 70 civilians and the wounding of 222 others.

The most notable incidents were the massacre of 19 hapless farmers in Kalawit, Zamboanga del Norte last February 19; the bombing of Cotabato airport on February 20 resulting in the death of one soldier, wounding of six civilians and conflagration of 15 commercial establishments; and in front of the Davao international airport on March 4 killing 23 people and wounding 127 others.

MILF actions also resulted in the destruction of 54 NAPOCOR towers, causing significant disruption of business activity and millions of pesos in revenue loss.

Despite the signing of the joint statement, the MILF continued to conduct armed offensives targeting communities and public installations.

The MILF had conducted 142 armed attacks in Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, Davao City, Davao Oriental, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga Sibugay.

The bulk of these attacks were in the form of harassments, bombings/sabotage and raids not only against military and police positions but also civilian communities and urban centers particularly in Central and Western Mindanao.

The most notable of these are the bombing of the Sasa Wharf in Davao City on April 2 which killed 19 innocent civilians and wounded 39 others; the execution of 13 civilians on board a passenger jeep following a road blockade in Maigo, Lanao del Norte last April 24; and the attack on the municipality of Siocon in Zamboanga del Norte last May 4 resulting in the death of 10 civilians, six policemen, five soldiers and the wounding of 29 others.

Because of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) active defense posture in the first four months of the year, MILF-initiated armed atrocities escalated to 426 incidents, a dramatic 171 percent increase compared to the 157 recorded for the whole year of 2002.

What is discernible, according to the AFP's declassified information, is that the civilians are the ones absorbing the brunt of MILF atrocities, particularly after the Buliok incident.

This did not escape the eyes of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who personally condoled with the victims of the recent Koronadal bombing which again had civilians as victims.

While the government, she said, is hopeful that the MILF would return to the negotiating table to thresh out a lasting, meaningful and peaceful resolution to the Mindanao problem, she dared the rebel group to make a categorical and unequivocal declaration that it is not allied with any of the terrorist groups like the Abu Sayyaf, Jemaah Islamiya or Al Qaeda.

The President also demanded that the MILF turn over the perpetrators of the bombings in Mindanao, particularly those in Davao City, Siocon, and Koronadal.

She likewise challenged the MILF to stop committing further atrocities against innocent civilians and peaceful communities in the South and show an indication that they are prepared to talk.

"Anything short of these will be considered half measures, which will not do," the President said. "Punitive action will continue and we will escalate political and military measures as necessary. This is not a fight against Muslims. This is a fight against terror being waged by all decent and civilized Filipinos."

She also said that the government would not acknowledge false offers of peace and succumb to political pressure.

“To retreat now would only invite more depredations,” she said. “I have the duty to protect the national interest from greater harm.”

Rebel returnees get package of benefits

STA. CRUZ, Laguna – Aware that poverty is the root of rebellion and terrorism in the country, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered all government agencies to provide rebel returnees a package of benefits that would help them lead a new and productive life.

The President gave the order during a homecoming ceremony at the Laguna Cultural Center here for 123 former dissidents from the CPP-NPA who returned to the folds of the law.

She told the rebel returnees to forget about their turbulent past and turn a new leaf after distributing a financial assistance of P4,500, a sack of rice, free lots and construction materials to build their houses, health cards and life insurance.

“Thank you for your decision to bring your faith to the justice of our government,” the President said in her welcome remarks. “*Kalimutan na natin and inyong marahas na kahapon. Hindi kayo kasama doon sa ating mga kalabang organisado* (Let us now forget your violent past. You are no longer a part of the our organized enemy).”

The President announced that Secretary Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) has already received an assurance from General Manager Felixto Cataquiz of the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) that the agency would provide free lots and lumber for the construction of houses to 123 rebel returnees.

She also informed the former rebels that PhilHealth president Francisco T. Duque, Jr. would give them free PhilHealth cards to help them in their medical check-up, medical consultation and operation, if necessary.

While the President made her speech, Duque distributed certification and health cards to all rebel beneficiaries.

The President also said that all rebel returnees who want to farm would be given coconut seedlings to start their livelihood project.

She also asked the former rebels wishing to become fishermen to form a cooperative so they could be given fish nets and permit from the LLDA to operate fish pens in Laguna Lake.

The President reiterated that the kind of benefits she would provide to all rebel returnees is the same thing she wants to give to all marginalized sectors in the province of Laguna.

The President ordered Secretary Jose D. Lina, Jr. of the Department of Interior and Local Government to locate all poor fisherman and farmers in his hometown to help and provide them the same benefits and assistance given to all rebel returnees.

“They need to locate and help them so that they cannot be easily brainwashed by the communist rebels to join and fight against the government,” the President said.

The Cabinet secretaries and other top officials who accompanied the President were Corazon Juliano-Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development; Angelo Reyes of the Department of National Defense; Teresita “Ding” Deles of the National Anti-Poverty Commission; Eduardo Ermita of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process; Lina; Michael Defensor of the HUDCC; Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Narciso Abaya; Philippine

Chairman Ma. Livia “Honey Girl” de Leon; PhilHealth president Francisco Duque III; and general manager Felixto Cataquiz of the LLDA.

GMA graces text2teach launching

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today witnessed the launching of the *text2teach*, the initial Philippine-wide pilot project of BridgeIT that would allow public elementary schools gain access to international learning materials with the use of mobile technology.

At the launching at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati City, the President began the simulation process of the project by pressing and sending T2T from a Nokia Globe cellphone.

Immediately after, a two-minute presentation was run showing the simulation process from the time a teacher sends a request from a cellular phone until a satellite feed downloads her requested module into a digital recorder connected to a television set in the classroom.

BridgeIT is a global program developed jointly by Nokia, the International Youth Foundation (IYF), Pearson and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The Ayala Foundation spearheaded the *text2teach* in the country in cooperation with the Department of Education (DepEd) and local partners Globe Telecom, Nokia-Philippines, SEAMEO INNOTECH, PMSI-Dream Broadcasting, and service provider Chikka Asia.

text2teach would enable teachers to use Nokia-supplied mobile phones to request more than 80 full-length videos, each of which introduces and illustrates a key component of the Philippine science curriculum.

The project implementation would begin in June for Grades 5 and 6 students of 40 schools in selected areas in Quezon City, Batangas, Laguna and Cotabato City.

The IYF has begun training 80 teachers to use the technology that would initially benefit more than 10,000 students nationwide.

The Philippines was selected as the pilot venue for BridgeIT because of its good telecommunications infrastructure, the Filipinos’ good command of English, and the government’s focus on education as a means to overcome poverty.

The Philippine pilot would provide a “blueprint” for replicating programs in other less developed countries.

Among those who graced the launching were DepEd Secretary Edilberto de Jesus, Presidential Assistant for Poverty Alleviation Victoria Garchitorena, Transportation and Communications Undersecretary Virgilio Peña, Ayala Corporation president Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, and Nokia executive vice president Veli Sundback.

TOR for planned Balikatan in Sulu similar to Basilan exercise

Malacañang today said the terms of reference (TOR) of the projected conduct of a Balikatan in Sulu would be similar to the joint US-RP military exercises in Basilan last year.

Presidential Management Staff chief Secretary Silvestre Afafe Jr. said the consensus was reached between the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS), the leaders of Congress, and officials from the province of Sulu during a consultation meeting this morning in Malacañang.

Afafe said the consultation was in relation to the planned conduct of the Balikatan in Sulu sometime by the end of June or mid-July.

“I cannot announce the details of the consultation except that a consensus has been reached on a, let’s say, a consensus has gelled between the Office of the President, the LGUs (local government units) concerned and the leaders of Congress on a new set of terms of reference,” Afable said. “The terms of reference would basically be the same as the Balikatan that was held in Basilan last year.”

In terms of principle, he said the new TOR would contain provisions that would adhere to constitutional standards, and the United Nations resolutions on the fight against terrorism.

“And this term of reference would be made public once they are finalized upon mutual agreement between the Philippines and the US government,” he added.

Afable said the TOR in the Balikatan in Basilan last year provided that US troops would not be involved in any offensive combat operations.

“They can only fire back in self-defense,” he said.

He said Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo presided over the meeting.

Others in attendance were Senate President Franklin Drilon, House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Senator Ramon Magsaysay, Sulu Governor Yusuf Jikiri, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Governor Parouk Hussin, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, National Security Adviser Secretary Roilo Golez, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Eduardo Ermita, and others involved in the security establishment.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: May 16, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514043528/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may16.htm>

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- **GMA to work out anti-poverty campaign with US officials**
- **GMA signs into law NGC housing, land use act**
- **President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's statement on Mindanao punitive operations**
- **GMA orders selective military attacks against terrorists in Mindanao**

GMA leaves today for eight-day state visit to U.S.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is scheduled to leave tonight through a regular Philippine Airlines flight for Los Angeles, California, the first leg of her eight-day trip, which includes a state visit to the United States, to further strengthen RP-US partnership in security and counter-terrorism and to expand the level of cooperation in trade and investments between the two countries.

The President has said that the state visit is deemed crucial at this time since the world has changed after the March 20, 2003 US-led action against Iraq ushering in a new global environment that requires a fresh perspective on regional political and economic security.

Earlier, the White House announced that US President George W. Bush would welcome President Macapagal-Arroyo for a state visit as an expression of gratitude to the support the Philippines gave to the US in the global fight against terrorism.

In his announcement, White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer said that in welcoming the Philippine President, President Bush would like to thank President Macapagal-Arroyo, the people and the government of the Philippines "for their stalwart efforts in fighting the war on terror, for being such a good and reliable ally to the United States."

After an overnight stay in Los Angeles where she will address a gathering of the members of the Filipino-American community in the West Coast, the President will fly to Washington, D. C. the following day.

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During the bilateral talks, the two leaders are expected to discuss defense and security cooperation, especially in the fight against terrorism, and other issues affecting the two countries.

The two leaders are also expected to talk about the humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Iraq, which is being participated in by the Philippines.

The Philippines was among the 20 countries that supported the US-led “coalition of the willing” in the war against the tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussein although it did not send combat troops to the war.

As part of its international commitment, the President has approved the sending of a 175-man peacekeeping and humanitarian mission, composed mostly of medical staff, to help restore normalcy and stability to Iraq.

She has said that stability in the Middle East is crucial to global stability and for the Philippines this is particularly important because this means a long-term safety of some 1.5 million Filipino workers in the region.

During her talks with Bush, the President is also expected to touch on such sensitive issues as preferential trade arrangement, intellectual property protection, and equal benefits for Filipino World War II veterans.

The US Department of State will host a state lunch for the President and her official delegation after her talks with President Bush at the White House.

President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush would then tender a state dinner at the White House for the visiting Philippine leader and her official party.

On her second day in Washington, leaders of US financial institutions would call on the President at the Blair House, among them Shengman Zhang, vice president for policies and programs of the World Bank; Peter Voicke, head and managing director of the International Finance Corporation; and Horst Kohler, managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

In between her official engagements, the President would be interviewed by NBC News’ Andrea Mitchell and Wolf Blitzer of CNN International.

The President would also call on Senator Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, at his office in the US Senate. Mr. Lugar is an old friend of the Philippines.

A number of government-to-government memorandums of agreement (MOAs) and private sector agreements would be signed by the Philippine and American panels during the Washington leg of the President’s visit to the US.

This would be the second time that President Bush has met with President Macapagal-Arroyo at the White House. On Nov. 20, 2001, President Bush also welcomed the President to the White House during a weeklong working visit to the US.

The two leaders also met at the 10th Economic Leaders’ Meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) held last October 27, 2002 in Los Cabos, Mexico.

From Washington, D. C., the President will proceed to New York where she will meet with US business leaders and receive a honorary doctorate degree of laws at the prestigious Fordham University.

GMA’s U.S. state visit crucial after the March 20 U.S.-led action on Iraq

The state visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to the United States, which starts tomorrow, is deemed crucial at this time since the new global environment brought about by the March 20 US-led action against Iraq requires a new perspective on regional political and economic security.

The President said that this new perspective must take into consideration the millions of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who are contributing to the development of economies in countries around the world.

She said the continuing threat of terrorism and the tensions in the Korean peninsula could further exacerbate the situation and would need more concerted efforts on the part of the countries in the Asia Pacific.

The President said that strong relations with the United States would contribute to regional prosperity and stability, especially in addressing the threat of terrorism.

“A way to support continued engagement with the US must be found at a time when there are strong forces in the region working against this relationship,” the President said.

According to the President, the March 20 US-led action against Iraq has led many nations, especially in the Arab world, to believe that the US action was an unjustified aggression against a Muslim country.

She said that unfortunately, many groups “with very dangerous agendas,” have already capitalized on this development and have tried to ignite some religious tensions around the world.

Given the region’s religious diversity, the Asia Pacific nations should be resolute in their efforts to promote peace and order within their borders and throughout the region, the President said.

The President said that definitely nations like the Philippines, will have to continue to seek military assistance from the US so that the fight against terrorism, as well as against poverty, be won.

GMA only the third head of state that Bush had welcomed to the White House for a state visit

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who leaves tonight for an eight-day state visit to the United States, is only the third head of state that US President George W. Bush had welcomed to the White House for a state visit since he assumed office in early 2001.

Although there had been a number of foreign heads of state and government who visited Washington, D. C., and had audience with President Bush, only Mexican President Vicente Fox and Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski have been welcomed by Bush as state visitors.

Fox made a state visit to Washington on Sept. 5-6, 2001 while Kwasniewski was state guest of the United States last Jan. 8, 2003.

After the US-led war on Iraq, the President is the fourth to be welcomed by Bush at the White House, after British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar.

The three leaders were the main allies of the US in the “coalition of the willing” that toppled the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq.

The Philippines was among those that openly supported the US-led coalition although it did not send combat troops to the war.

As part of its international commitment, the Philippines, however, is sending a 175-member peacekeeping and humanitarian mission to Iraq. The contingent, composed mostly of medical staff, will leave for Baghdad soon.

When asked in a recent press briefing at the White House why the President of a small country like the Philippines is given the “rare honor” of being welcomed for a state visit, US Press Secretary Ari Fleischer said that this was

President Bush's way of thanking the Philippines and the Filipino people for their unequivocal support to the US-led fight against global terrorism and for "being such a good and reliable ally."

The President was one of the first world leaders who expressed full support to the global campaign against terrorism that was launched by the US after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

GMA announces rescue of Abu Sayyaf hostages

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has announced the rescue at dawn today of the remaining Jehovah Witness hostages of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf.

"*May progreso ang laban sa terorismo ngunit hindi pa tapos* (There is progress in our continuing fight against terrorism)," the President stressed during the signing of Republic Act 9207 or the National Government Center (NGC) Housing and Land Utilization Act at the Commonwealth Elementary School in Quezon City.

"Let's not take anything for granted in our vigilance against terrorist reprisals," she said as she urged the Filipino citizenry to watch over their communities and be accountable for each other.

She cited the close cooperation of local government units and the national government through synergistic linkages in the anti-terrorism campaign.

She asked the people to be calm but fully alert in their homes and their places of work and livelihood.

The battle against terrorists could not be won overnight and it demanded the utmost sense of duty and concern for each and every Filipino, she added.

"This is not a fight of the government alone, it is a fight of all our people and the whole world," she said.

On the dreaded disease called SARS, the President said the opening of classes would demand among the people another round of alertness to protect the health of students.

"We already scored big against SARS and we must follow through," she said.

She pointed out that all schools and related sectors should focus on cooperation and unified action.

The President directed the Department of Health and the Department of Education to work closely with school administrators, Parent-Teachers Associations and student organizations, emphasizing that the information drive among students must be comprehensive and penetrating.

"Extraordinary precautions are needed," she said.

GMA to work out anti-poverty campaign with US officials

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she would remind top United States officials to be conscious of the fight against poverty which breeds terrorism.

Speaking at the signing of Republic Act 9207 or "The National Government Center (NGC) Housing and Land Utilization Act," the President said: *Kaya kung gusto nating tuluyang sugpuin ang terorismo, hindi dapat balewalain ang pagsisikap na mai-ahon sa kahirapan ang marami nating kababayan* (If we are to crush terrorism, let us strive to get many of our countrymen out of poverty)."

She asked the new NGC homeowners to share with her the prayer that her trip to the United States with Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia would be a success.

“Ito ay bahagi ng ating pagtahak tungo sa magandang kinabukasan (This is part of our moves towards a brighter future),” she said.

The President will be leaving tonight for an eight-day state visit to the United States.

She said her US trip is expected to further strengthen the RP-US partnership in security and counter-terrorism. It also aims at expanding the level of cooperation in trade and investments.

GMA signs into law NGC housing, land use act

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today signed into law Republic Act 9207, also known as the National Government Center (NGC) Housing and Land Utilization Act of 2003, confirming the disposition of the NGC site to bona fide residents.

“This forms a big part in the implementation of our priority programs for the urban poor,” the President said, stressing that she is doing everything to put into proper perspective various programs for housing despite the many problems facing the nation today such as terrorism and SARS.

The law finally resolved the status of residents in the NGC area. “They are no longer squatters in their own country because government is now giving them the opportunity to finally own the houses they have been living in for so long,” the President said.

Aside from confirming the legal status of the possession of lots that have long been disposed of in favor of the beneficiaries, the law also provides the:

- Creation of an NGC Administration Committee to administer and implement the land disposition. The committee is led by the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), the Presidential Commission on Urban Poor (PCUP), the Quezon City Local Government Unit, the National Housing Authority (NHA), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Public Works and Highways, and representatives from NGC Westside and Eastside;
- Designation of the NHA as trustee of the NGC Housing Program except the Commonwealth Enterprise Zone under the Home Guarantee Corporation; and
- Grant of tax exemption on the lands sold and to be disposed under the housing program.

After the signing ceremony, the President awarded 1,100 certificates of lot reservation and 100 medium-rise building units to qualified Quezon City beneficiaries.

The Chief Executive also distributed 907 Certificates of Project Qualification for beneficiaries who have qualified but have no community development plans yet.

In 1979, then President Marcos had reserved more than 400 hectares of private domain in Constitution Hills, Quezon City as the National Government Center site pursuant to Proclamation 1826.

In 1987, then President Aquino issued Proclamation 137 that excluded 150 hectares from the total area covered by Proclamation 1826 for disposition to qualified residents.

In a similar move, then President Ramos further expanded the area open for disposition through Proclamation 1169 by excluding more than 230 hectares from the coverage of Proclamation 1826.

The Supreme Court, however, rendered null and void President Aquino's proclamation and gave a ruling that a proclamation issued by then President Marcos could only be amended by an equally valid act of legislation.

The new NGC Housing law addressed that concern.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's statement on Mindanao punitive operations

Today I authorized the Armed Forces of the Philippines to employ selective aerial and artillery attacks to dislodge embedded terrorist cells that have attacked hapless civilian communities and murdered scores of innocent Filipinos in Mindanao.

This is in support of military operations that have been ongoing, in varying degrees of intensity, over the past week in the Zamboanga Peninsula, the Lanao provinces and Maguindanao.

We've decided to use extraordinary punitive forces not merely in view of tactical necessity, but to signify the determination of the government to bring terrorists to justice.

I ask Congress to stand behind the people and the government in this action. The local government units in the areas affected have been informed and many of them have heightened their vigilance against reprisals.

This is a time for all Filipinos to stand together, to fight and sacrifice together.

The relief agencies of government are on alert for a possible surge of evacuees in the affected areas. We shall work with local communities to provide food, shelter and medicine to temporarily dislocated families.

I encourage the private sector to gather resources for humanitarian assistance.

We have seen that terrorism strikes anywhere, anytime, from the remotest barangays in Mindanao to the capitals of the world. The world in the post-Iraq war period has achieved greater strategic stability, but this has driven militant cells to deeper desperation.

Our country has been under terrorist attack—sporadic, intermittent but nevertheless, deadly. Davao City has been bombed twice. Siocon and Maigo have been assaulted with impunity. Koronadal has been attacked. Christians and Muslims have been killed.

Filipinos have also been killed and wounded in a terrorist attack in Riyadh. We're victims in our own land and elsewhere. We must fight back now or face greater peril in the future.

All Filipinos must be vigilant wherever they are.

Secretary Renato de Villa, my adviser on strategic concerns, will help me coordinate the holistic approach to this campaign.

The holistic approach will encompass the political, diplomatic, military, cultural, economic, humanitarian, and information aspects of the campaign.

Regular information briefings on the tactical and humanitarian situation will be handled by the military division commanders teaming up with the regional directors of the DSWD.

I shall embark on a state visit to the United States tonight bearing in mind the need to bolster our strategic relationship with the United States as well as with our neighbors in the fight against terrorism as we face a new global horizon cast by post-war Iraq.

We have to continue to reach out to the Islamic nations through the OIC to press our principled stand against a common enemy, while seeking consensus for the security and welfare of Muslim Filipinos.

This is not simply a war of guns and bullets. It's a strategic war of will and vision. We shall tighten the noose of military operations, anti-poverty programs and diplomatic initiatives until the threat of terrorism is beaten.

We will nurture the seeds of a principled, secure and enduring peace. We will banish despair and bring a new light of hope.

We shall build the ramparts of the strong Republic in Mindanao.

I order our soldiers to carry on; I ask our people to stand behind them.

Thank you and May God bless us all.

GMA orders selective military attacks against terrorists in Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo authorized today the Armed Forces of the Philippines to employ selective aerial and artillery attacks to dislodge embedded terrorist cells that have attacked hapless civilian communities and murdered scores of innocent Filipinos in Mindanao.

The President, who is due to leave tonight for a state visit to the United States, said the order supported ongoing military operations, in varying degrees of intensity, over the past week in the Zamboanga peninsula, the Lanao provinces and Maguindanao.

"We've decided to use extraordinary punitive force not merely in view of tactical necessity, but to signify the determination of government to bring terrorists to justice," she said.

She asked Congress to stand behind the people and the government in this action, saying "this is a time for all Filipinos to stand together, to fight and sacrifice together."

She said local government units in the affected areas have been informed and many of them have heightened their vigilance against reprisals.

Relief agencies, the President said, have been placed on alert for a possible surge of evacuees in the affected areas.

The government, she said, would also work with local communities to provide food, shelter and medicine to temporarily dislocated families.

She encouraged the private sector to gather resources for humanitarian assistance.

"We have seen that terrorism strikes anywhere, anytime from the remotest barangays in Mindanao to the capitals of the world," the President said. "The world in the post-Iraq war period has achieved greater stability, but this has driven militant cells to deeper desperation."

She had asked Secretary Renato de Villa, her adviser on strategic concerns, to help coordinate the holistic approach to the campaign which encompasses the political, diplomatic, military, cultural, economic, humanitarian and information aspects.

Regular information briefings on the tactical and humanitarian situation would be handled by the military division commanders teaming up with the regional directors of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, she added.

The President said the government would continue to reach out to the Islamic nations through the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) “to press our principled stand against a common enemy, while seeking consensus for the security and welfare of Muslim Filipinos.”

“This is not simply a war of guns and bullets,” she stressed. “It’s a strategic war of will and vision. We shall tighten the noose of military operations, anti-poverty programs and diplomatic initiatives until the threat of terrorism is beaten.”

She added: “We will nurture the seeds of a principled, secure and enduring peace. We will banish despair and bring a new light of hope. We shall build the ramparts of the strong republic in Mindanao.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: May 17, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514043542/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may17.htm>

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- **COMELEC to hold seminars on Absentee Voting in Philippine Embassy, consulates in U.S.**
- **Filipinos in Los Angeles to join GMA in special mass, reception**
- **GMA arrives in Los Angeles on first leg of visit**
- **GMA says success of U.S.-led coalition against terror opens new perspective on global security**
- **S. to help fast track flow of funds from OFWs, reduce remittance costs**
- **Thousands of Fil-Ams give GMA warm welcome in L.A., join mass**
- **Fil-Ams in L.A. support GMA's anti-terrorism stand**

COMELEC to hold seminars on Absentee Voting in Philippine Embassy, consulates in U.S.

LOS ANGELES (via PLDT) — Philippine authorities here are ready to implement the Absentee Voting Law, which would allow qualified Filipinos in the United States numbering close to a million to vote in next year's national elections.

Philippine Consul General Marciano Paynor, in an interview here on the eve of the arrival of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for an eight-day state visit, said Commission on Elections (COMELEC) officials will start conducting a series of seminars on the implementation of the law in Philippine Consulates all over the US, and the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D. C. starting May 27.

Paynor said COMELEC representatives, assisted by Embassy and Consulate officials, will brief the numerous leaders of the Filipino community "to inform them of the nuances" of the Absentee Voting Law.

During the seminar, the COMELEC, Embassy and Consulate officials will discuss the details of the registration and the manner of the actual voting for the Filipinos.

Paynor said that with the COMELEC seminar, Philippine diplomatic officials would be able to determine the number of voters who will be involved in the electoral exercise and, subsequently, the number of polling places that would have to be set up.

"This is something that we need to do. We will need to thresh out, first of all, how do we register. After we shall have registered and found out the demographics, what is the concentration and so on and so forth," he said.

Paynor likewise noted that with the seminar, the manner of the actual voting — whether it will be computerized or manual — would be determined.

"These issues we do not know, and not until we are told by COMELEC officially what the manner of registration and voting would be, can we plan our course of action," he added.

The Consul General explained that as far as the experience of some Central American countries like Guatemala, Chile and Peru was concerned, absentee voting has been successful in the US and especially in Los Angeles.

Under the law, Philippine diplomatic officials will be deputized, just like the teachers back in the Philippines, to officiate the actual poll.

Paynor thus stressed the importance of the information drive undertaken by the Filipino communities on the absentee voting.

He said several Filipino community newspapers and radio stations are able to inform Filipinos on important announcements on the forthcoming elections – on how votes will be cast.

There are at least 20 Filipino-American publications, a Filipino television channel and at least two radio stations in California and other parts of the US.

Paynor also noted possible developments back in the Philippines that would affect the manner of elections overseas such as the expected passage of the Dual Citizenship bill — which would allow foreign citizens who were once Filipino citizens to likewise vote in the elections.

Filipinos in Los Angeles to join GMA in special mass, reception

LOS ANGELES (via PLDT) – Filipino-Americans here, who for months have been looking forward to the visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, finally get a chance to meet or even just get a glimpse of the Philippine leader Saturday night and Sunday morning (California time).

The President will make an overnight trip here Sunday (Manila time), her first stop on her way to Washington, D. C., for a state visit and meeting with United States President George W. Bush.

Upon her arrival in California, host to one of the largest Filipino communities in the US, the President will go to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels in downtown Los Angeles to join the Fil-American community for a special Mass.

As she always does whenever she travels abroad, the President will then meet with the overseas Filipino workers and professionals from California and nearby states.

Philippine Consul General Marciano Paynor said at least 3,500 tickets were given free of charge to Filipino and Fil-Americans who will attend the special Mass slated at 9 p.m. (Los Angeles time, 12 noon Sunday, Manila time) to be officiated by no less than His Eminence Cardinal Roger Michael Mahoney.

Paynor said the Cathedral can only fit 3,000 people and this is what prompted Philippine authorities to issue tickets to control the crowd.

“We had to give out tickets because there are more people asking for tickets than there are tickets available,” the Consul General said.

Paynor said the desire of the huge Filipino crowd is “really an honest and sincere wish to for them to see the President.”

Paynor noted that although the Cathedral can accommodate only 3,000 people, more than 5,000 Filipinos flocked a special *Simbang Gabi* (midnight Mass) last December arranged by Fil-Am community leaders.

The new Cathedral is bounded by Temple Street, Grand Avenue, Hill Street and the Hollywood Freeway.

The title of Our Lady of the Angel was adapted following the 1781 founding of the City, originally called El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora Reina de los Angeles.

The Consul General said that after the Mass, the President would mingle with the Filipino community leaders during a cocktail reception in a special venue at the Cathedral around 10:30 in the evening here.

“We have invited the leaders, the community leaders, basically. This is a mix and mingle with notable personalities,” he said.

Based on a study using a 1990 US census, Filipinos belong to the upper tier among ethnic groups in Los Angeles county in terms of socio-economic indicators.

While constituting the second largest ethnic group next to the Mexicans, a significant portion of the Filipino community is gainfully employed in white-collar and blue-collar occupations. A number of them hold managerial, executive and administrative positions in government, both federal and local.

Filipinos in the US workforce are engaged in a variety of professions such as doctors, nurses, engineers, accountants, teachers, information technology technicians, among others.

Others are in the service industry, working in hotels, aviation, insurance and brokerage firms, sales, restaurants, public utilities as well as in the entertainment industry.

There is also a growing number of Filipino-owned businesses such as nursing-home facilities, restaurants, advertising, travel agencies, consultancies and cargo handling.

After a brief rest at Beverly Wilshire Hotel and a breakfast meeting with young Filipino professionals here, the President will leave at around 9 a.m. Sunday (12 midnight Monday in Manila) for Washington, D. C. for the actual state visit and meeting with President Bush.

GMA arrives in Los Angeles on first leg of visit

LOS ANGELES (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived here Saturday night (Sunday morning in Manila) for an eight-day state visit to the United States.

She was accorded brief and simple arrival honors at the Los Angeles International Airport after her plane, a Philippine Airlines commercial flight from Manila, touched down at around 6:30 p.m. Saturday (9:30 a.m. Sunday in Manila).

On hand to welcome her and other members of her party, including First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo, were Philippine Consul General to Los Angeles Marciano Paynor and members of the Filipino community here.

The President will be given elaborate military honors appropriate for a state visitor when she arrives in Washington, D. C. on Monday.

Arriving ahead of schedule, the President proceeded to the Beverly Wilshire Hotel before proceeding to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels to attend a special Mass to be attended by more than 3,000 overseas Filipinos here.

After Mass, she will meet with His Eminence Cardinal Roger Michael Mahoney and then attend a reception with Filipino community leaders at the second level of the Cathedral.

She will spend the night at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel and, in the morning, board a chartered plane for Washington for the formal state visit.

The President's state visit to the US has a four-fold objective. These are: to further enhance Philippine-American cooperation in security and counter-terrorism; to expand trade and investment cooperation; to highlight the importance of the Philippines to US political and business leaders; and to advance the welfare of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans.

This will be the second time that the President would meet with President George W. Bush at the White House. Last November 2001, Bush received the President during a working visit.

The President is one of the first world leaders who supported the US-led global campaign against terrorism launched after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

The Philippines was also a member of the US-led coalition of the willing in the war in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the US last year sent around 1,000 special forces to help train Philippine police and military authorities in fighting the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan and Zamboanga under the Balikatan 02-1.

This year's Balikatan 03-1 will likewise be participated in by US special forces in Jolo, Sulu.

GMA says success of U.S.-led coalition against terror opens new perspective on global security

LOS ANGELES (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Saturday night here (Sunday in Manila) said the success of the United States-led coalition against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction has led to new perspectives on political and economic security of the world.

These are: that Asia must take greater responsibility for its own political and economic security and that strong relations with the U.S. will contribute greatly to regional stability and progress in Asia as well as greater success in addressing terrorism.

“Asian self-reliance will promote immediate and effective response to clear and present dangers before they get out of control,” the President said in her remarks following a special Mass for Filipino-Americans at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

The President said that for the Philippines, such new perspective must also take into account that there are over 7 million overseas Filipinos who are making significant contributions to the economic development of many countries.

“Filipinos and Filipino-Americans contribute remarkably to American life, not just in the economy but in the social sector as well,” the President said.

She noted that during her administration, the government was able to pass the Overseas Absentee Voting Act, “so that those who help their country may have a hand in shaping its future as well.”

The President noted that on the part of the Bush administration, the U.S. is launching a project to facilitate the flow of remittances from Filipino workers around the world back to the Philippines.

“This project will improve the lives of millions of Filipinos by lowering the cost of remittance transactions and making it easier for funds to flow to the Philippines from the U.S. and around the world,” she said.

She noted the pivotal role of OFWs in nation-building as she said Filipino-Americans constitute 34 percent of OFWs, “but you contribute 71 percent of foreign exchange remittances.”

“This contribution translates to education, housing and anti-poverty programs in the Philippines. That is why I always say that you are not overseas Filipino workers. Rather, you are overseas Filipino investors,” she said.

She said she renews her call for overseas Filipino investors to continue supporting the economy so that the aspiration of liberating the people from poverty could be fully realized.

She recalled that during her last visit to LA in October last year, she made an appeal to fellow *kababayans* to help her build a strong Republic in the Philippines.

Now, she said she is pleased to report that the Philippines has made great progress in that direction.

For instance, in strengthening the institutions of security, the government has contained the Abu Sayyaf threat.

She said that last night, before she left Manila, she welcomed back the last two hostages of the Abu Sayyaf Group.

“We are working with the United States on a new set of joint military exercises to finish off the threat,” she said.

The President also noted that with the economy, the Philippines is one of the few countries in the region expected to grow at least four percent this year.

Aside from First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo, the President was accompanied on the trip by Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Philippine Ambassador to the United States Alberto del Rosario, Philippine Consul General to Los Angeles Marciano Paynor, Jr., Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez, Representatives Teodoro Locsin Jr., and Monico Puentevella, President Adviser on Overseas Filipino Workers Heherson Alvarez, Presidential Adviser on Overseas Development Assistance Absorption Marita Jimenez, Presidential Adviser on the North Quadrangle Luis “Chavit” Singson, Olongapo City Mayor Kate Gordon and Batangas Gov. Hermilando Mandanas.

U.S. to help fast track flow of funds from OFWs, reduce remittance costs

LOS ANGELES (Via PLDT) — The United States government has committed to help fast track the flow of remittances of money from Filipinos in the US to the Philippines and, in the process, reduce the cost of remitting money.

This was announced today by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as she addressed a crowd of nearly 4,000 Filipinos here who gathered to catch a glimpse of the visiting Chief Executive.

The President said the US government gave its commitment even before she could set foot on Washington for the official start of her eight-day state visit.

She arrived here at 6:30 p.m. (California time) along with First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, daughter Evangeline Lourdes, son Diosdado “Dato” Arroyo and daughter-in-law Kakai Manotok-Arroyo, and a lean official delegation.

“On the part of the Bush administration, the United States is launching a project to facilitate the flow of remittances from Filipino workers around the world back to the Philippines,” she said.

The President said the plan, once carried out, shall “improve the lives of millions of Filipinos by lowering the cost of remittance transactions and making it easier for funds to flow to the Philippines from the United States and around the world.”

The details of the project are still being worked out, and no clear amount was given as to how much the remittance cost could go down.

Remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Asia, except Japan, are normally charged from a low \$1 to \$2 per \$100 transaction.

The rate varies since it is determined by the private banks through which the remittances are coursed.

Citibank, for example, charges a wiring fee of \$50 per transaction, regardless of amount, for money deposited to an account with the same bank in the Philippines, if the deposits are made abroad, particularly the US.

Presidential Adviser on OFWs Heherson Alvarez said a study to be conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) shall be undertaken to determine how to fast track the remittances and reduce the cost.

Government authorities are hopeful that remittances would dramatically go up once the reduction on cost is effected.

Inward foreign remittances last year reached \$7 billion, of which, the President said, 74 percent came from the US.

Thousands of Fil-Ams give GMA warm welcome in L.A., join mass

LOS ANGELES (via PLDT) — Close to 4,000 Filipinos here gave President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo a very auspicious and warm welcome Saturday night (Sunday in Manila) during a special Mass for the Philippine delegation and the Filipino communities at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

The President, who arrived an hour earlier than expected at Los Angeles after an almost 12-hour flight from Manila, is the first head of state to visit the new Cathedral following the formal blessing of the church last September 2002, according to His Eminence Cardinal Roger Mahony.

Before she proceeded to the church, she met the Cardinal at a conference room in the 5.6-acre (2.3 hectare) Cathedral complex.

Immediately after she entered the church wearing a piña barong-like pantsuit, the President was warmly applauded by the huge crowd.

The Cathedral has a capacity of 3,000 but the actual attendance reached almost 4,000.

The Philippine Consulate General in LA had to issue tickets to control the crowd because there were more people who expresses their desire to attend the Mass than the church can accomodate.

The new Cathedral rises in powerful blocks of architectural concrete. Soft earthen tones evoked the spirit of early California's adobe mission churches.

Visible behind the glass exterior windows, wide panels of alabaster form the interior windows at 27,000 square feet, the largest architectural use of alabaster in the world, according to church authorities.

Despite the huge crowd, the Mass was solemn and meaningful, with Filipino church hymns performed by the Filipino-American singers like Nonoy Alsaybar and Melody del Mundo and the Filipino Choir of Southern California, Gospel Philippines Missionary Choir USA and the Kayumanggi, a group of music students from various Southern California universities.

In her brief remarks after the Mass, the President noted that the vestment of Cardinal Mahony was specially made in the Philippines from piña fiber.

She also thanked the clergy for hosting such a kind gesture for her and the Filipino communities.

She said like churches everywhere, "this place feels like home."

"This large gathering of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans, including the more than 500 Filipino volunteers from this Cathedral alone attest to the deep faith of the Filipino people, wherever they are," she said.

She said churches are filled with the Filipino faithful, testifying to their deep and abiding trust in God.

The President noted that recent events call for a renewal of faith and a reaffirmation of such trust. “To the cowardly acts of terrorism and the threats of more war using methods and weapons of mass destruction, comes now the spread of a deadly disease whose nature and cure still eludes the scientists.”

“But progress is being made and not just in that front but in others. Perhaps the greatest progress has been in our attitudes to these threats. We have progressed beyond fear and wonder to action. Already, there are promising results,” she said.

The President noted that Filipinos and Filipino-Americans contribute immensely to American life, not just to the economy but in the social sector as well.

She noted that the Filipino experience in the US, particularly in Los Angeles, is a positive outcome of a time-honored friendship based on shared values and traditions.

“You find a natural home in your host country as you embrace and advocate the ideals of freedom, democracy and the free market,” she said.

She further noted that Fil-Ams thrive in LA, home to the largest concentration of Filipinos in the US because of a common political and economic bridge between the two nations across the Pacific.

“The pivotal role of overseas Filipinos in national-building cannot be overemphasized. Fil-Ams constitute 34 percent of overseas Filipinos, but you contribute 71 percent of foreign exchange remittances,” she said.

After the Mass, the President attended a cocktail reception at the Cathedral complex for the leaders of the Filipino communities. She acceded to countless photo opportunities.

Tomorrow, she will immediately fly to Washington for the formal state visit to the White House.

Los Angeles is home to the largest concentration of Filipinos in the US.

Based on U.S. census in 2000, there are 260,158 Filipinos residing in the county of LA alone.

The population is broken down in the Counties of L.A., Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Ventura.

Aside from Philippine government officials, the President was accompanied by First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel “Mike” Arroyo, daughter Evangeline Lourdes “Luli,” son Diosdado “Dato” and new daughter-in-law Kakai Manotok Arroyo.

Fil-Ams in L.A. support GMA’s anti-terrorism stand

LOS ANGELES (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo found herself in the company of Filipino-American friends who have consistently supported her stand against terrorism, when she met with members of the Filipino community here.

Applauding about 15 times during the delivery of the President’s speech, Filipino-Americans here displayed their positive reaction to the visiting President’s pronouncements on various issues, including the safe return of two hostages of the Abu Sayyaf.

Filipino-American Community of Los Angeles (FACLA) president Jose Baldonado and Federation of Filipino American Associations (FFAA) executive director Paul Blanco both aired their members’ support for the moves taken by the Arroyo administration in backing up the United States in its fight against terrorism, and in the war against Iraq.

Blanco and Baldonado shared the view that it was only right that the Philippines supported the US in its fight against Iraq, considering that terrorists have been the two countries' common enemy.

The Philippines has been battling against the Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which have recently launched massive attacks that left hundreds dead in Mindanao bombings.

Veterans' Federation of the Philippines head Jose Samonte, on the other hand, aired the sentiments of a small number of Filipinos here who expressed concern over the efforts of the US and the Philippines in the fight against terrorism.

Like most militants in the Philippines, Samonte expressed fear that the alliance between the US and the Philippines could place Manila at a disadvantage susceptible to terror attacks.

The President has many times argued that the attacks launched by extremist groups were in no way related to the RP-US anti-terrorism alliance.

She had cited the case of Indonesia in stressing that attacks were launched, regardless of whether a country is supportive of the US or not.

Samonte, however, admitted that majority of Filipino-Americans favored the actions taken by the government, and strongly supported the moves of the Bush administration in neutralizing terror cells.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 18, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514043607/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may18.htm>

The President's Day: May 19, 2003

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- **GMA state visit to boost RP-U.S. economic, financial and security cooperation**
- **GMA state visit to help push passage of the long-delayed Filipino Veterans' Equity Bill**
- **Drilon, De Venecia, other Congress leaders form part of GMA official entourage in state visit**
- **Sulu governor joins GMA in state visit to Washington, D. C.**
- **Assistance from U.S. financial groups to focus on Mindanao, says Camacho**
- **GMA state visit signals new era in RP-U.S. relations, says Philippine envoy to Washington, D. C.**
- **Gov't not closing door to peace with MILF — GMA**
- **Dean Devlin to push for passage of equity bill for Filipino war veterans, says GMA**
- **Fil-Ams in D. C. pay tribute to GMA**
- **GMA arrives in Washington for state visit**
- **'Washington Post' features GMA as rare invitee to Bush's state dinners**
- **MILF leaders start feeling the heat**
- **Filipinos in US commit to help develop SMEs in RP, provide assistance to those in distress**
- **Gov't focus on rehab efforts in Pikit**
- **Remarks by US President George W. Bush at the state arrival ceremony for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo** (*The South Lawn, White House, Washington D. C.*)
- **Remarks by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the state arrival ceremony.** (*The South Lawn, White House, Washington D. C.*)

GMA state visit to boost RP-U.S. economic, financial and security cooperation

WASHINGTON, D. C. (via PLDT) – The three-day state visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to the United States that formally starts here tomorrow, Monday morning (Monday evening in Manila), is expected to boost the financial and economic cooperation between the Philippines and the United States on top of renewed vigor in the two countries' security and defense alliance, particularly in the fight against terrorism.

In a pre-visit press briefing at the Willard Hotel here this morning (Sunday evening in Manila), Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said that in his initial discussions with officials of the US Department of Treasury and Department of Trade, they have pledged to continue to extend assistance to the Philippine government in its economic development program.

He said he briefed these officials on economic updates and the reform programs that the government had implemented, including measures to reduce the budget deficit.

Camacho was part of the advance team that facilitated the state visit here of the President.

He said that he had already met with officials of the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

When asked if the Americans expressed concerns on the peace and order situation in the Philippines, Camacho said that since there is a framework of cooperation in security and defense, the subject could not be avoided.

Camacho said that during the visit, the President would witness the signing of a number of government-to-government and private sector agreements that would generate billions of dollars in new investments for the country.

He, however, declined to name these agreements so as not to preempt the President.

But Camacho said that economic-related projects that would be finalized during the visit are those in the power sector, rural electrification, port construction, meat processing, and solar-powered irrigation systems in the countryside.

In the same briefing, Acting Press Secretary Milton Alingod also cited the political and security aspects of the state visit, particularly the alliance between the two countries in fighting global terrorism.

Alingod said that the visit is all the more auspicious in the light of continued terrorist activities in the Southern Philippines and the announced US desire to help train and equip Filipino troops so that the terrorist threat in the country can be finally eradicated.

Alingod said that the Philippines and the US have shared a long and proud history, standing shoulder-to-shoulder in conflicts from World War II, Korea and Vietnam and lately in the war against terrorism.

He said that since the closure of the American military facilities in 1991, the relationship between the two countries had moved to a more comprehensive and modern framework based on mutual respect and shared values.

According to Alingod, the state visit is a testament to the new enhanced relationship between the two countries and a recognition by the US and President Bush of the many successes of President Macapagal-Arroyo in reforming the Philippine economy and society and in her deep commitment to the war against terrorism.

Earlier, in a statement the President said that a new Asian perspective on political and economic security has emerged in the aftermath of the March 20 US-led action against Iraq.

This new perspective, the President said, must be based on the recognition that while Asia must take greater responsibility for its own political and economic security, it must also recognize that strong relations with the US will contribute greatly in the attainment of regional prosperity and stability.

In her talks with President Bush tomorrow at the White House, the two leaders are expected to tackle defense and security cooperation to include US assistance to the AFP modernization program, and specific anti-terrorism and anti-narcotics measures.

The President has said that there is a need for continuing US support for her administration's anti-poverty program that would include the following components:

- investment priorities to create jobs for the Filipino people;
- agricultural modernization program with social equity;
- social development; and
- improved public governance.

She said that poverty in the Philippines must be eradicated since poverty is the ultimate breeding ground for terrorism, which is now the world's number one scourge.

GMA state visit to help push passage of the long-delayed Filipino Veterans' Equity Bill

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) — The long-delayed recognition by the United States of the right of Filipino World War II veterans to equal benefits is being given a big boost with the state visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that formally starts here tomorrow (late Monday in Manila).

In an expanded bilateral meeting at the Cabinet Room at the White House, the President is expected to appeal to President Bush for help in pushing for the passage of Senate Bill No. 68, also known as the "Filipino Veterans Benefits Improvement Act," sponsored by Hawaii Sen. Daniel Inouye.

Leaders of the Filipino World War II veterans from various parts of the US have been invited to attend the arrival ceremonies for the President tomorrow at the South Lawn of the White House.

On the second day of her state visit, the President will have a breakfast meeting at the Blair House with Senator Inouye and Senator Ted Stevens, both steadfast supporters of the veterans' equity bill in the US Senate.

Another big break for the final approval of this bill was the introduction of another legislation in the US House of Representatives that would provide additional health care benefits for the Filipino veterans, all of them now in the twilight of their years.

The bill was introduced last week by Rep. Rob Simmons (R-Connecticut), chairman of the US House veterans' affairs sub-committee on health benefits.

The President said that benefits provided by the US government should apply to all veterans and their survivors regardless of their country of residence.

Earlier, Filipino World War II veterans in the United States appealed to the President to urge President Bush to support the Inouye bill that would provide equitable package of benefits to 11,000 US-based and 34,000 veterans in the Philippines.

In an open letter to the President, the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans (ACFV) said that her three-day state visit to Washington, D. C. "could be the historic opportunity to settle our Filipino WW-II veterans' claims once and for all."

If passed into law, the Inouye bill would allow Philippine-based veterans to receive \$43 million annually in medical benefits and \$100-a-month disability pension, while Filipino veterans in the US could get \$17 million every year.

"With your successful partnership with President Bush and the grassroots support of two million plus Filipino-Americans, we can win our veterans bill, a legacy of your administration," the coalition said.

Early last year, in a visit to Manila, US Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony Principi assured the President he would exert his best efforts in pushing for the speedy passage of the equity bill.

Drilon, De Venecia, other Congress leaders form part of GMA official entourage in state visit

WASHINGTON, D. C (via PLDT)—The leaders of both the Senate and the House of Representatives have shown their unqualified support for the objectives of the three-day state visit here of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that formally starts tomorrow (late Monday evening in Manila).

Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., and Congressmen Teodoro Locsin, Oscar Moreno and Monico Fuentesbella are part of the official delegation of the President that would attend state functions, including the state dinner hosted by U.S. President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush at the White House.

From the Executive Department, the members of the official entourage include Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, Jr., Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez, Jr., Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez, Philippine Ambassador to Washington, D. C. Albert del Rosario, and Ambassador Roberto Romulo for International Competitiveness.

The local governments were represented in the official delegation by Batangas Governor Hermilando Mandanas, Sulu Governor Yusoph Jikiri and Pampanga Vice Governor Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo.

Both Senate President Drilon and Speaker de Venecia would sit in with other Cabinet members in the expanded meeting with President Bush and his Cabinet at the White House where the two sides would discuss issues of vital interests to their two countries.

The two congressional leaders would also join the President at the state luncheon hosted for her tomorrow by the US State Department and later at the state dinner at the White House.

Sulu governor joins GMA in state visit to Washington, D. C.

WASHINGTON, D. C. (via PLDT)—Sulu Governor Yusoph Jikiri is part of the official entourage of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her state visit to the United States to emphasize the need for a strong RP-US alliance in the fight against terrorism, especially in Mindanao.

Jikiri and the other Muslim leaders in Sulu have earlier signified their approval for the holding soon of the Balikatan 03-1, a joint Philippine-US military training, in the Sulu.

The Balikatan military exercises are aimed at wiping out the threat of terrorist groups, like the Abu Sayyaf, and other criminal elements in Mindanao.

Like in the Balikatan 02-1 held last year in Basilan, the Sulu Balikatan will also have its socio-civic component that would include the construction of roads and other infrastructure projects as well as livelihood programs.

Aside from helping train Filipino troops, the United States, notably the US Aid for International Development (USAID), had also pledged to improve the lives of the rural poor and former combatants in Mindanao.

The inclusion of the Filipino Muslim leader in the official delegation of the President would also show that despite cultural differences, there is solidarity and brotherhood among Muslim and Christian Filipinos.

In his briefing for the Philippine media this morning at the Willard Hotel here, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said that one of the major topics he discussed with American financial institutions was the continued US assistance to projects in Mindanao aimed at improving the lives of Muslim Filipinos, especially those in the former conflict areas.

Assistance from U.S. financial groups to focus on Mindanao, says Camacho

WASHINGTON, D. C. (via PLDT)—Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho today said that the focus of assistance by American financial institutions is on the development of Mindanao, especially in conflict areas in Muslim Mindanao.

In a pre-visit press briefing held this morning (Sunday evening in Manila), Camacho said that the World Bank (WB) has led a consultative group for Mindanao.

“The focus of this WB-led consultative group is to harmonize all the different official development assistance (ODAs) for the rehabilitation and development of Mindanao,” Camacho said.

Camacho has been a part of the advance team that has facilitated the state visit here of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

He said the World Bank has always been a strong partner of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration in its poverty alleviation program.

Camacho also said that the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector component of the WB, has been very active in the Philippines. "Its pipeline on the Philippines is very heavy," he said.

He also clarified the reported sale of government properties in the United States, saying that there are ways of disposing these properties without necessarily selling them.

Camacho cited as example the "redevelopment" of the Philippine property in Roponggi, in Tokyo, which has now become economically viable after it was developed by the private sector but still remains as government property.

GMA state visit signals new era in RP-U.S. relations, says Philippine envoy to Washington, D. C.

WASHINGTON, D. C. (via PLDT)—Philippine Ambassador to the United States Albert del Rosario today said that the state visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo "signals a new era in Philippines-US relations."

In a statement, del Rosario said that Philippine-American ties are no longer characterized by patronage nor transaction-driven based purely on consideration of compensation.

The relationship between the two countries, according to del Rosario, has developed into a "vigorous and quality partnership" based on shared values, mutual respect and mutual benefit.

Del Rosario said this transformation did not happen overnight as he credited the "forward-looking" foreign policy of the President for shaping and accelerating this process.

According to del Rosario, the state visit of the President "is a very much-awaited event by the Filipino-American community because it brings pride to them as a people and dignity to their native country."

Del Rosario said that this is only the third state visit accorded so far by US President George W. Bush since he assumed office and the second time that the American leader has invited the President to visit him at the White House.

In November 2001, President Bush also invited the President to the White House during a weeklong official visit to the US.

The Filipino-American community is scheduled to host a dinner tonight (early Monday morning in Manila) for the President and her official entourage.

Tomorrow, President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush would officially welcome the President at the White House where they will hold talks at the Oval Office.

Gov't not closing door to peace with MILF — GMA

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said here Sunday night (Monday in Manila) that her administration is not closing its doors to a possible peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

During a briefing with the media at the Willard Hotel here, the President said that in her administration, "there is always room for peace for those who turn their backs on terrorism."

"They can come individually, or they can come in groups, or they can come as one whole group. But I said they must turn their backs on terrorism publicly," she said.

"They must surrender those among them who are guilty of the terrorist attacks that have repulsed Philippine and world opinion and they must not only stop but also explicitly renounce terrorism," the President added.

She said that although she called on the MILF to prove that it is not linked to known terrorist organizations or undertaking terrorist activities, she said she didn't set a June 1 deadline for the MILF.

"The reported June 1 deadline for the group to renounce terrorism never came from me," the President said.

"In any case, declaring or not declaring doesn't really mean much. The important thing is that we are engaging punitive actions against those who committed terrorist acts," she said.

The President noted that the individuals who committed terrorist acts "are terrorists and we are running after them."

"It doesn't mean much whether a specific organization with a proper noun is declared terrorist or not, because whatever their affiliation, if they commit terrorism, they violate the law and we run after them," she said.

The President earlier said she is awaiting the result of the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) before deciding on declaring the MILF a terrorist group.

Before departing Manila for a state visit to the US, the President ordered the military to "launch aerial and artillery attacks on embedded terrorist lairs in Mindanao."

She said the order is the most forthright way to achieve peace after all warnings have come to naught.

"We will exact retribution for the slaughter of innocent civilians, and we shall not relent in our pursuit to annihilate terrorists with the help of allies in the region and the world. Our people must be calm but remain fully alert against reprisals. Threatened communities must put their contingency plans in action. We shall provide relief for those who are temporarily displaced by punitive operations," the President said.

"Compassion for the people shall be balanced against the use of force against evil," she added.

Dean Devlin to push for passage of equity bill for Filipino war veterans, says GMA

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced here Sunday night (Monday in Manila) that Dean Devlin, the Filipino-American producer of Hollywood blockbuster movies like "The Patriot," "Independence Day" and "Godzilla," will help in pushing for the passage of the long-awaited equity bill for Philippine World War II veterans.

Speaking before the Filipino community gathering at the Capitol Hilton Hotel, the President said Devlin is willing to produce a video that would seek support for the Filipino veterans bill.

Devlin's plan surfaced, the President said, during a dinner meeting with the producer at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Los Angeles.

The President said Devlin earlier produced a video documentary on Filipino veterans and revealed that he's willing to do another to help the veterans' cause.

The President also announced that there will be a film festival showcasing the movies of four Filipino-American Hollywood artists such as Devlin, Lou Diamond Phillips, Tia Carrere and Rob Schneider.

"Many Filipino do not know that these icons in mainstream Hollywood are Filipino-Americans," the President said.

She noted that the film festival would be held during the Philippine-American Friendship Week in July. Proceeds of the festival could go to the lobby funds for the equity bill.

“This is a great way to showcase Philippine-American ties. We should be proud of those Hollywood stars and big Hollywood producers who are very, very proud of their mothers who are Filipinos,” she said.

The President said she would raise the issue of the equity bill for Philippine veterans during her talks with President George W. Bush.

She said she is confident that at least as a beginning, President Bush will support legislation, extending full rate service-connected disability compensation, eligibility for burial at national cemeteries, burial benefits for new scouts lawfully residing in the United States, full rate dependency and indemnity compensation to the survivors of new scout, commonwealth army veterans and guerillas who lawfully reside in the US and the reauthorization for the regional veterans affairs in Manila.

“As a beginning, these benefits will come with an appropriation of \$75 million,” she said.

The President also announced that she has appointed Jerry Adevos, the son of famous guerilla Terry Adevos, to be the representative to the US of the Philippine Veterans Administration.

Under the appointment, Adevos is tasked to coordinate lobby efforts for veterans legislation.

Fil-Ams in D. C. pay tribute to GMA

WASHINGTON, D. C. — Filipino-Americans here today paid visiting President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo a tribute, citing her “courage, intelligence and foresight” in leading the Philippines.

Speaking in behalf of the 700 representatives from various Filipino-American organizations all over the United States, Irene Natividad, head of the Philippine American Foundation, cited the President’s resolve in improving the peace and order situation and the country’s economy.

“You have been determined in stamping out violence against Filipino civilians at home from Mindanao to Manila,” Natividad said.

She also cited the fact that the President was among the first Asian leaders to express support to the US-led war against Iraq.

Natividad likewise noted the accomplishments of President Arroyo’s administration in “trying to turn around the economy by instituting fiscal reforms and inviting investors from all over the world to invest in the Philippines.”

“Most importantly, this President has been working to address poverty in the Philippines which is the root cause of conflict and terrorism,” she stressed.

Natividad noted that it is not only the Filipino-American community that recognizes the accomplishments of the Arroyo administration, but even the US government, which has exhibited this recognition with an invitation for a state visit.

“She is only the third to be honored during the tenure of this (US) President,” Natividad said.

Filipino-American businesswoman Loida Nicolas Lewis, on her part, noted that while the President has been determined to fight the war in Mindanao, she has not neglected the plight of the civilians victimized by violence.

She said the media have failed to convey to the public “that behind that firmness, behind that sense of justice, you are also merciful and compassionate. You are bleeding for the thousands of victims suffering in violence without education and without hope.”

GMA arrives in Washington for state visit

WASHINGTON, D. C. (via PLDT)—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her official delegation arrived at the Dulles International Airport here at about 5:00 p.m. (5:00 a.m. Monday in Manila) from Los Angeles, California, the first leg of her state visit to the United States.

The President and her official party, that included Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., were welcomed at the airport by Ambassador Donald Ensenat, US chief of protocol, and Philippine Ambassador to the US Albert del Rosario.

The President's official entourage, which included some Cabinet members and congressmen, took a chartered aircraft on their flight to the US capital from Los Angeles.

From the airport, the President, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and 18 other members of her party were ferried by two helicopters provided by the US government to Fort McNair where a preliminary welcome ceremony was held for them.

The formal arrival ceremonies will be held Monday at the South Lawn of the White House where the President will be welcomed by President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush.

At Fort McNair, the President was accorded with simple welcome ceremonies that included the playing of the national anthems of both countries.

She was also introduced by Ambassador Ensenat to the ambassadors of the ASEAN member-countries and other US officials.

Before being escorted to their vehicles for the motorcade to Blair House where she will stay during her visit here, the President shook hands with about a hundred members of the Filipino-American community here.

Later in the evening, the Filipino-American community hosted a black tie dinner for the President and her party at the Capitol Hilton Hotel.

'Washington Post' features GMA as rare invitee to Bush's state dinners

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT)—The highly-prestigious *Washington Post*, featured in its Sunday edition the state dinner that US President George W. Bush would tender Monday at the White House for visiting President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In her article entitled "When's Dinner? In May," *Post* staff writer Roxanne Roberts said that in contrast to his predecessors, Bush has only hosted three state dinners for the past three years of his presidency, or only once a year.

With the article's subtitle, "On W's Formal Menu, Everything is Rare," Roberts said that "if you're not invited to this one, don't hold your breath."

She said that Bush's dislike for formal events is an open secret "and terrorism and war have certainly put a damper on glitzy presidential socializing."

But even so, Roberts said, this was a sharp departure from the traditional displays of international friendships that characterized previous US governments.

She said President Reagan hosted more than 50 state dinners during his eight years in office; President Bush's father held more than 20 dinners in just four years; and President Clinton over 30 during his two terms.

The only other two world leaders who have been accorded state dinners by Bush were Mexican President Vicente Fox in 2001, and Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski in 2002.

According to Roberts, Monday's state dinner at the White House is Bush's way of saying "thank you" to President Macapagal-Arroyo, to the Philippine government and the Filipino people for their "stalwart efforts" in fighting terrorism and as a reliable ally of the United States.

"The President wants to express the gratitude and appreciation of the American people and himself by hosting a state visit," Roberts quoted White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer as saying in an earlier press briefing.

In a brief item on its World News section, the *Post* also published an AP wire report that said the President Macapagal-Arroyo has authorized the Philippine military to use bombing and artillery attacks on terrorist cells in Mindanao.

The wire report said that the President made the announcement in live television interview just hours before she left for the state visit to the US.

"Arroyo did not name the targeted groups, but communist guerrillas, the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Abu Sayyaf militant groups are all active in the region," the wire report said.

MILF leaders start feeling the heat

Feeling the heat.

That probably best describes the on-the-run Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) at the onset of the punitive military attacks on selected rebel lairs in Mindanao today as the Armed Forces of the Philippines revealed several surrender feelers from top rebel commanders.

Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Roy Kiamco confirmed in a press briefing that MILF commander Asis Marumadla, alias Kumander Tropikal, has already surrendered to the commanding officer of the 47th Infantry Battalion in Maguindanao.

Marumadla, commander of the Third Battalion of the 103rd Brigade of the Bangsa-Islamic Armed Forces, surrendered with four assorted high-powered firearms, according to Kiamco.

Kiamco said other surrenderees, whose names were withheld for their safety, were also received in Davao, far from the target areas, and Lanao, along with their firearms.

"In Maguindanao, there are also feelers but in the Lanao area, there are already firearms in the possession of our people who have received the surrenderees," Kiamco explained.

The Southcom chief refused to mention any specific timetable for the crackdown ordered by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on armed groups that have been staging terrorist acts in Mindanao.

Instead, what he is happy about is how civilians are making things easier for the military to hunt the rebels because of their cooperation.

"If they (the rebels) continue to stay there, with the people's participation, I would say the operation would be accelerated and it would be faster," he said.

In the same briefing, Kiamco reported the capture of the headquarters of MILF Brigade Commander Bravo and Division Commander Yaya Luksa Datu in Munai.

Munai is a rebel base where Bravo, Yaya Luksa Datu and their men withdraw after every terrorist act they make in the populated communities.

“Most of them were the ones identified by the civilians as the ones who committed the atrocities in Maigo,” revealed Kiamco. “So after the atrocities they committed and when the government forces were making a counter-attack, these two guys were the ones who gave the go-signal to go up the mountains and Munai is the direction of their withdrawal.”

Filipinos in US commit to help develop SMEs in RP, provide assistance to those in distress

WASHINGTON, D. C.—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today witnessed the signing of two agreements aimed at boosting the development of small and medium enterprises (SME) in the Philippines, and providing assistance to distressed Filipino nationals in the United States.

Under the first agreement, the Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce of the Metropolitan Washington D. C. area (PACC-DC) committed to undertake a program to support the development of SMEs in the Philippines.

The commitment was embodied in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the PACC-DC and the Counterpart International, Inc., (CPI), an organization composed of members of the Filipino community here.

Under the MOU, the PACC-DC commits to undertake projects selected from a list to be provided the CPI.

The second agreement signed between Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople and National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NAFFAA) chair Loida Nicolas-Lewis and Philippine-American Bar Association of Greater Washington, D. C. Inc. president Miriam Bustamante provides for a framework by which the Consular Posts in the US could collaborate with interested Filipino-American community organizations in providing protective consular assistance to Filipinos in distress.

“It aims to address the constraints and limitations on the resources of the government in providing consular assistance to Filipino nationals by involving the vast network of Filipino-American organizations,” a briefing paper on the agreement stated.

A Liaison and Joint Working Group shall be established to provide a better channel of communication between Consular Posts and the community organizations to be able to provide more dependable assistance to distressed Filipinos.

The second MOU also provides the grant of free legal assistance as well as the establishment by community organizations of a Legal Assistance Fund to “address recurring problem of lack of government resources to provide concrete legal assistance to distressed Filipino nationals.”

Gov’t focus on rehab efforts in Pikit

The government’s rehabilitation efforts in war-affected areas in Pikit, North Cotabato and Pagalungan, Maguindanao continue amid the heat of ongoing punitive military actions against the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the terrorist Abu Sanyaf kidnap-for-ransom group.

National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) lead convenor Teresita Deles said relief and rehabilitation efforts included the construction of the road straddling Pikit and Pagalungan, major entry points of residents in the two adjacent towns to the Liguasan Marsh.

“The construction of the road is ongoing and almost to be completed so that the Liguasan Marsh will be accessible,” Deles said during a briefing in Malacañang.

Deles, who heads the rehabilitation in Pikit, said that while the hostilities are ongoing, concerned government agencies proceeded with the infrastructure project under guard by government troopers to ensure that work could continue and livelihood projects put in place.

She added the land tenure instruments for occupants to enable ownership or control of their respective areas in the Liguasan Marsh are being reviewed.

During the briefing, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman said the agency has focused relief and rehabilitation efforts in Pikit which was declared earlier as a zone of peace by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Soliman said relief operations continue in evacuation centers in Pikit even as some residents in affected barangays have started harvesting produce from their areas.

“We already began buying from the internally displaced people (IDP) who have returned,” she said.

She added that some P100,000 worth of mongo beans and P350,000 of “pangos” (dried fish) have been bought from the farmers in the Liguasan Marsh.

“So instead of sardines and noodles, we’re already giving out mongo beans and pangos fashioned and harvested by the IDPs themselves,” Soliman said.

She added the Department of Agriculture (DA) also handed out 25 bancas to affected residents in the Liguasan Marsh.

Among those present during the briefing were Philippine National Police chief Gen. Hermogenes Ebdane, Presidential Chief of Staff Rigoberto Tiglao, Sec. Renato de Villa, and Armed Forces spokesman and vice chief of staff Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia.

Remarks by US President George W. Bush at the state arrival ceremony for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (*The South Lawn, White House, Washington D. C.*)

Madam President, Attorney Arroyo, members of the Philippine delegation, members of Congress, and distinguished guests: On behalf of the American people, Laura and I welcome you to the United States.

This is the first state visit by the leader of an Asian country during my administration. You honor the American people with your visit, because our two nations share special ties of history and friendship and family. And we share a commitment to the defense of democracy and the advance of freedom.

Just over a century ago, Americans and Filipinos worked side by side to liberate the Philippines. Nearly half a century later, in a world war, our soldiers fought and died together in places like Bataan and Corregidor. And on this foundation of common sacrifice, America and the Philippines built an alliance that remains strong, an alliance that is essential to the peace of the Pacific.

In this new century, both our nations are threatened by terrorism, and we are determined to fight that threat until it is defeated. Our diplomats, and law enforcement and intelligence officers are working arm-in-arm to disrupt terror plots, to cut off terrorist financing, and to bring the terrorists to justice.

President Arroyo has welcomed American troops to train and advise their Philippine counterparts in Philippine-led anti-terror operations. And she has been a leader in building broader cooperation against terror throughout the Asian Pacific region.

Madam President, for all you have done to make our world safer, America thanks you.

Last week's terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia that killed innocent civilians from the United States, the Philippines, and many other nations, remind us that the war on terror continues. The world's free nations have the courage and the determination to fight this war. And together, we will defeat the forces of global terror.

President Arroyo also recognizes the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. And she spoke with strength and conviction of the need to disarm the Iraqi dictator and to liberate the Iraqi people. Now the Philippines is helping Iraq take its place among free nations by sending military police and medical personnel. The President and I both recognize that a free and secure Iraq is good for the Philippines, is good for America, and is good for the world.

We share great goals in the world. We are committed to opening markets in Asia and around the world to bring more people into an expanding circle of development and prosperity. And we are committed to adding the moral and material resources of our countries to the global fight against poverty and hunger and disease.

The partnership between our nations is sustained by the friendship between our peoples. More than 2 million Americans trace their ancestry back to the Philippines, and they enrich our national life. Many Filipino Americans serve in our military, and I'm proud to recognize one of them today. Army Lieutenant General Edward Soriano is one of the highest-ranking Filipino Americans in the history of America's military. He brings pride to both our countries, and we honor his service in the cause of freedom.

The Philippines was the first democracy in Asia and has a proud tradition of democratic values, love of family and faith in God. President Arroyo, you are carrying this tradition forward, and I'm proud to call you friend. Today the First Lady and I are honored to welcome you and Attorney Arroyo to America and to the White House. Mabuhay!

Remarks by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the state arrival ceremony. *(The South Lawn, White House, Washington D. C.)*

President Bush, Mrs. Bush, Vice President Cheney, Mrs. Cheney, Secretary Powell, Mrs. Powell, Secretary Rumsfeld, General Myers, officials of the U.S. government, excellencies of the diplomatic corps, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, President Bush, for inviting me to this state visit. It only confirms that relations between our two countries are deeper and warmer today than they have been in a very long time.

Today our two countries have a revitalized and maturing alliance, rooted in shared history, shared values, a common interest in global peace and prosperity, and a real commitment to combating terrorism and advancing freedom.

Our alliance abides strong as ever, even as the world today requires a new perspective on political and economic security in Asia Pacific. This new perspective must recognize that while Asia must take greater responsibility for its own political and economic security, it must also recognize that strong relations with the U.S. will contribute greatly to regional peace and prosperity, stability and security, especially from terrorism.

Thus we, your friends, must find a way to support continued and active engagement with the U.S. at a time when there are some forces in my region working against such a relationship. Although wisdom counsels commitment, in the face of terror the temptation to disengage is strong. We must fight that temptation, because the answer to fear is confrontation. Indeed, we must close ranks and stand firm against terrorist threats, however grave, however armed, and from whatever quarter.

To spare themselves, some countries might prefer an accommodation with terrorism. The Philippines has chosen to fight terrorism. We compensate for such modest means as we command with an unshakable resolve to defeat terrorism once and for all, and with faith in the justice of our cause and our friendship with the United States.

Our war on terrorism has made significant gains, but the threat is far from over. The war is not yet won. But it will be won, there can be no doubt. How long and at what cost are the only things in doubt. As the terrorist attack in Riyadh, which took both Filipino and American lives, shows, for the Philippines, the new perspective on economic and political security in Asia Pacific must take into account the over seven million of our men and women who, in

seeking a better life abroad, contribute greatly to the development of economies around the world, not least that of the United States.

I am proud of these Filipino Americans. I am proud of the contributions that Filipinos and Filipino Americans make to the American economy and society. In a quiet, but equally substantive way, we can compare it to the contribution made by Philippine World War II veterans to the defense of our common freedom and security.

I also take pride in the robust economic and trade ties that bind the Philippines and the United States. The Philippines is pursuing long-needed economic reforms. The current and continuing reforms will strengthen the Philippine republic. They will make easier Philippine and American economic cooperation, and they will promote the cost of fighting world poverty.

I appreciate the help of President Bush in our work to alleviate poverty and other socio-economic ills from which terrorism draws its strength. Like the fear on which it feeds, terrorism can be contagious, and it will not be contained unless we agree on a comprehensive approach for defeating it in Southeast Asia.

And so, in looking forward to discussing that comprehensive approach, I look forward to my talks with President Bush and his officials in this administration. And I hope President Bush reciprocates this visit by accepting a state visit to the Philippines towards the end of this year. Thank you.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 19, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20081201114252/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may19.htm>

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GMA, Pres. Bush promote global anti-poverty bid

WASHINGTON D. C. – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and United States President George W. Bush Monday morning (Monday evening in Manila) equally noted the imperative need to wage an aggressive campaign against poverty as a way to counter global terrorism.

In a short speech following remarks by President Bush during state arrival rites at the White House's South Lawn here, President Macapagal-Arroyo cited the "robust economic and trade ties that bind the Philippines and the US."

She disclosed that the "Philippines is pursuing long-needed economic reforms" aimed to strengthen the Philippine republic.

"They will make easier Philippine and American economic cooperation and they will promote the cause of fighting world poverty," she said.

The President thanked President Bush for helping in the alleviation of global poverty and other socio-economic ills "from which terrorism draws its strength."

In welcoming President Macapagal-Arroyo as a state visitor, President Bush said the US and the Philippines are committed to "adding the moral and material resources of our countries to the global fight against poverty and hunger and disease."

The US President said America and the Philippines shared "special ties of history and friendship and family" and "great goals in the world."

He also disclosed the US commitment to open markets in Asia and around the world to bring more people "into an expanding circle of development and prosperity."

In their remarks, President Macapagal-Arroyo and President Bush traced the long-standing friendship between the Filipino and American people.

The Philippine Chief Executive thanked the US President for the invitation to visit the US that, she said, “confirms that relations between our two countries are deeper and warmer today than they have been in a very long time.”

She said “our two countries have a revitalized and maturing alliance, rooted in shared history, shared values, a common interest in global peace and prosperity, and a real commitment to combating terrorism and advancing freedom.”

On the other hand, President Bush said the partnership between the US and the Philippines “is sustained by the friendship between our two peoples.”

He cited the Philippines as the first democracy in Asia with a proud tradition of democratic values, love of family and faith in God.

He lauded President Macapagal-Arroyo for “carrying this tradition forward.”

“I’m proud to call you friend,” he beamed as he and US First Lady Laura Bush expressed their honor to welcome the Philippine President and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo into the White House.

GMA, Pres. Bush cite strong RP-US alliance against terrorism

WASHINGTON D. C. – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said strong relations with the United States would greatly contribute to regional peace and stability in the Asia Pacific, especially in the war against terrorism.

“While Asia must take greater responsibility for its own political and economic security, it must also recognize that strong relations with the U.S. will contribute greatly to regional peace and prosperity, stability and security, especially from terrorism,” the President said in her remarks during her arrival at the White House.

She said the Philippines is among the few countries in the region that has chosen to fight terrorism squarely alongside with the US particularly at this time when the country is also faced with such threats.

“The Philippines has chosen to fight terrorism. We compensate for such modest means as we command with an unshakeable resolve to defeat terrorism once and for all, and with faith in the justice of our cause and our friendship with the United States,” she added.

Although the Philippines has made some significant gains, the President said the war on terrorism is far from over.

On the other hand, President George W. Bush said the US and Philippine law enforcement agencies are working together to disrupt terror plots, cut off terrorist financing, and to bring the terrorists to justice.

Bush said President Macapagal-Arroyo has welcomed American troops to train and advise their Philippine counterparts in anti-terror operations aside from building broader cooperation against terrorism in the Asia Pacific region.

“Madam President, for all you have done to make our world safer, America thanks you,” he said.

He added the terrorist attack last week in Saudi Arabia that killed innocent civilians from many countries including Americans and Filipinos is a glaring reminder that the war against terrorism is far from over.

President Bush also recognized President Macapagal-Arroyo’s conviction to disarm Iraq of its suspected weapons of mass destruction and to liberate the Iraqi people.

“Now the Philippines is helping Iraq take its place among free nations by sending military police and medical personnel. The President and I both recognize that a free and secure Iraq is good for the Philippines, is good for America, and is good for the world,” he said.

Fil-Am organizations to help consular offices in providing assistance to distressed Filipinos

WASHINGTON, D. C. (via PLDT) – The vast network of Filipino-American organizations throughout the United States is now being harnessed to provide assistance, including free legal services, to Filipino-Americans in their times of need.

This was the substance of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed here Sunday (early Monday in Manila) by Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, Loida Nicolas Lewis, national chairman of the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NAFFAA); and Miriam Bustamante Riedmiller, president of Philippine-American Bar Association of Greater Washington, D. C.

The MOU was signed in the presence of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the Capitol Hilton Hotel here shortly after her arrival yesterday for the Washington D. C. leg of her state visit to the United States.

Ople said that the MOU would provide the general framework by which Philippine consular posts in the US could collaborate with interested Fil-Am community organizations in giving assistance to distressed Filipinos in their respective localities.

Through this MOU, Ople said, consular and other forms of assistance to distressed Filipinos could be provided on a wider scope since the Fil-Am organizations are going to backstop the consular offices, which, admittedly, have limited resources.

The MOU has set up a liaison and joint working group that would thresh out in detail the steps that would be taken in order to achieve the goals of the MOU and provide a channel of communication between the consular posts and the community organizations.

Ople said that the provision of free legal assistance under the MOU is most welcomed since a number of Filipino-Americans, especially those who are financially strapped, could ill-afford the high cost of legal services in the US.

He said that thousands of aging Filipino World War II veterans would largely benefit from this MOU which in a sense, according to him, is an extension of the innate *bayanihan* spirit of the Filipinos.

Pres. Bush says U.S. working to treat RP as non-NATO ally

WASHINGTON D. C. (via PLDT) — United States President George W. Bush Monday here announced that his government is moving to include the Philippines as one of its non-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies.

In his opening statement during the joint press conference of the two leaders at the East Room at the White House, Bush said he was pleased to inform President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during their meeting at the Oval Office that the U.S. plans to designate the Philippines as a non-NATO ally.

“The step will allow our countries to work together on military research and development and give the Philippines greater access to American defense equipment and supply,” Bush said.

The American President also said that the non-NATO status would put the Philippines “right up there” with Australia, Egypt and Israel.

Bush said these countries are major non-NATO allies, “which means that it will be easier for us to answer requests of military equipment to provide parts and equipment.”

“To make sure that the defense capabilities of the Philippine military are modern, you know, that choppers fly, choppers are maintained, choppers move, when the President orders up a strike, it happens quickly, all this does is facilitate the capacity to interact on a better basis, on a priority basis.”

Bush also announced that there would be a comprehensive review of the needs of the Philippine military.

“That means the military is gonna be involved with your military, in such ways that determine needs and assess whether or not we got the capacity to help meet those needs,” Bush said.

In noting the long-standing U.S. and Philippine relations, Bush said the relations of the two countries has become “stronger today than at any time of our recent history.”

Pres. Bush renews U.S. commitment to help in RP anti-terrorism campaign

WASHINGTON D. C. — President George W. Bush Monday morning (Monday evening in Manila) reiterated the strong commitment of the US to help the Philippines in “defeating terrorists operating in its own part of the world.”

President Bush also reaffirmed his offer of assistance in efforts of Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to push for the meaningful and lasting resolution of the Mindanao Problem.

But he stressed that “the US is committed to helping, when asked.”

On her part, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo thanked President Bush for the offer to assist in her country’s fight against agents of terror, saying that “the US leadership and engagement with the US makes the world a safer place for all of us to live in.”

President Macapagal-Arroyo noted how the “world came to help us” in the country’s erstwhile lonely fight against terrorists.

“I welcome the support of the world, and I welcome the support of the US in our war against terrorism,” she said.

In a joint press availability with President Bush and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the East Room of the White House, the US President said he and President Macapagal-Arroyo “reviewed last year’s highly successful deployment of US troops to the southern Philippines.”

“We agreed to a similar deployment in the near-term, in which US forces would support Philippine anti-terror operations,” he said.

In the past, US and Philippine armed forces have engaged in joint military exercises called *Balikatan* (shoulder-to-shoulder).

Balikatan included joint civilian-military actions that have resulted in socio-economic growth in communities where the exercises were conducted.

President Bush said he and President Macapagal-Arroyo also reviewed the developments with the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

He said the MILF should “abandon the path of violence.”

“If it does so, and addresses its grievances through peaceful negotiations, then the United States will provide diplomatic and financial support to a renewed peace process,” he pointed out.

He said that it depended on the MILF “in choosing peace as a peaceful reconciliation of issues.”

“If they continue to want to use terror and force, we will be involved to the extent that (President Macapagal-Arroyo) invites us to be involved,” he added.

However, US involvement would be “within the Constitution of the Philippine government,” President Bush stressed.

President Macapagal-Arroyo earlier said her administration is not closing its doors to a possible peace with the MILF.

“There is always room for peace for those who turn their backs on terrorism. They can come individually, or they can come in groups, or they can come as one whole group,” she said.

Before she left for the U.S., the President ordered selective aerial and artillery attacks on terrorist-embedded lairs in Mindanao.

The President noted that the individuals who committed terrorist acts (the killing of civilians) “are terrorist and we are running after them.”

Pres. Bush accepts GMA invitation to visit RP

WASHINGTON, D. C. – United States President George W. Bush has accepted the invitation of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to visit the Philippines this year.

President Bush said his visit to the country would coincide with the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) leaders’ meeting in Bangkok, Thailand before the year ends.

“I’m honored to accept President Arroyo’s generous invitation to visit the Philippines this fall, when I intend to travel to Southeast Asia for the APEC leaders’ meeting,” he said.

He said he would also be sending other senior US officers to Manila, starting with US Secretary of Energy Spence Abraham.

The acceptance was made after President Macapagal-Arroyo earlier invited the American President, shortly after her arrival at the White House Monday morning (Monday evening in Manila) at the start of her three-day state visit here.

“I hope President Bush reciprocates this visit by accepting a state visit to the Philippines towards the end of this year,” she said during state arrival ceremonies at the South Lawn of the White House.

Bush, America thank GMA, Philippines ‘for all you have done to make our world safer’

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) – “Madam President, for all you have done to make our world safer, America thanks you.”

With these words, United States President George W. Bush poured praise not only on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo but the entire Filipino nation.

Even before pouring out America's gratitude to an old friend and ally, Bush, official Washington and the American people welcomed the Philippine President with the pomp of a rare state visit — with full military honors and a 21-gun salute — at the South Lawn of the White House.

Bush and his wife, Mrs. Laura Bush, officially welcomed President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo as they arrived on board the presidential limousine. Also on hand were Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Colin Powell

The Honor Guard performed the "Raffles and Flourishes" and the "Hail to the Chief" ceremonies.

Filipinos, Filipino-Americans and Americans attending the ceremony warmly greeted the two Presidents by waving the flags of the two countries.

Meanwhile, the Philippine and US flags were hoisted by the Honor Guard around the South Portico of the White House.

Afterwards, President and Mrs. Bush escorted the President and Atty. Arroyo to introduce Vice President and Mrs. Dick Cheney, Secretary of State and Mrs. Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Richard Myers.

After the introduction, the two heads of state proceeded to the reviewing platform for the start of the military honors.

This was followed by the playing of the National Anthem of the Philippines by the Musical Troops while a 21-gun salute was executed. The playing of the United States National Anthem followed.

Afterwards, the two Presidents moved on to review the troops amid the cheers of the flag-waving crowd.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo was in a flaming red dress suit. Bush was in a blue suit and sky blue tie. Mrs. Bush was in sage dress suit.

The ceremonies were televised live by the US networks.

Bush has only deployed the pomp of a state visit on two previous occasions, to Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski and Mexican President Vicente Fox.

Jon King, CNN White House correspondent, told Manila reporters that the President's state visit is a very significant event for the United States.

He said President Bush is very gratified for the "quick and decisive" decision of Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo to support the war against terror.

In brief remarks, President Bush noted that Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo's state visit is the first by a leader of an Asian country in his administration.

"You honor the American people with your visit, because our two nations share special ties of history and friendship and family and we share a commitment to the defense of democracy and the advance of freedom," Bush said.

Bush noted that just over a century ago, Americans and Filipinos worked side by side to liberate the Philippines.

"Nearly half a century later, in a world war, our soldiers fought and died together in places like Bataan and Corregidor and on this foundation of common sacrifice, America and the Philippines built an alliance that remains strong, an alliance that is essential to the peace of the Pacific," Bush said.

Bush further noted that Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo has become a leader in building broader cooperation against terror throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Bush also said the partnership between the two nations is sustained by the friendship between the two peoples.

He said more than 2 million Americans trace their ancestry back to the Philippines and they enrich the national life.

Citing US Army Lt. Gen. Edward Soriano as one of the highest-ranking Filipino Americans in the history of America's military, Bush noted that many Filipino-Americans serve in the US armed forces.

"He brings pride to both our countries, and we honor his service in the cause of freedom," Bush said.

He said the Philippines is the first democracy in Asia and has a proud tradition of democratic values, love of family and faith in God.

"President Arroyo, you are carrying this tradition forward and I'm proud to call you friend. Today, the First Lady and I are honored to welcome you and Attorney Arroyo to America and to the White House. Mabuhay!," Bush said.

In her brief remarks, Macapagal-Arroyo thanked Bush for his invitation to the state visit.

"It only confirms that relations between our two countries are deeper and warmer today than they have been in a very long time," she said.

She said that today, the two countries have a revitalized and maturing alliance, rooted in shared history, shared values, a common interest in global peace and prosperity, and a real commitment to combating terrorism and advancing freedom.

"Our alliance abides strong as ever, even as the world today requires a new perspective on political and economic security in Asia-Pacific," she said.

Afterwards, the two leaders proceeded to the State Floor via the South Portico steps.

While the ceremonies were ongoing, Filipino government officials stood in attention at the left side of the lawn. Among them were Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Philippine Ambassador to United States Alberto del Rosario, Philippine Consul General to Los Angeles and Presidential Assistant on Foreign and State Visits Marciano Paynor Jr., Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez, Representatives Teodoro Locsin Jr. and Monico Puentevella, Presidential Adviser on Overseas Filipino Workers Heherson Alvarez, and Presidential Adviser on Special Projects Marita Jimenez.

Bush: GMA is tough when it comes to terror

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) – US President George W. Bush had only words of praise for visiting Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo when the two appeared before members of the media after their bilateral meeting at the White House.

"I've got a great deal of respect for your President, and her courage and her willingness to fight for security of the Philippine people and to defend freedom," Bush said.

He referred to Mrs. Arroyo as "a great example of leadership in a part of the world that is a dangerous part of the world."

Southeast Asia, including the Philippines and Indonesia, suffered from a number of terrorist attacks, including bombings that left hundreds of innocent civilians, including foreigners, dead.

Praising her actions against terrorist groups in the Philippines including the Abu Sayyaf, Bush said Mrs. Arroyo “is tough when it comes to terror. She fully understands that in the face of terror, you’ve got to be strong, not weak. She knows, like I know, that the only way to deal with these people is to bring them to justice.”

For this reason, Bush said his administration is looking forward to the continued cooperation between the Philippines and the United States, especially in addressing terrorism.

“We’ve got a lot of work to do, which means we’ve got to continue to work together to share information, cut off money, share intelligence, and hunt these people down and get them,” he said.

And that’s why I appreciate President Arroyo’s leadership,” Bush stressed.

He recalled that right after the September 11 terror attacks on the US, Mrs. Arroyo called him.

“There was no doubt in my mind where she stood. It was more than the condolence call. It was a let’s-get-after-them,” he said.

Pleased with Mrs. Arroyo resolve to join the US in putting an end to terrorism, Bush said he knew he “had a strong ally and a friend when it came to chasing these people down, which is precisely what we have to do. And she knows that. And that’s the strategy she’s employed.”

U.S. to provide 30 helicopters to AFP, says GMA

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT)—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced Monday (Tuesday in Manila) that the United States would provide 30 helicopters to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) as part of its continuing military assistance to the Philippines.

The President made the announcement at a press briefing at the Philippine Embassy here after her meeting with US President George W. Bush at the White House.

She said that the new helicopters would boost the fighting capability of the AFP, adding that the Philippine Air Force has now only nine helicopters.

The President said that in her meeting with President Bush, they have agreed to launch a comprehensive review of the security needs of the Philippines and how best the US could support to the AFP modernization program.

She said that the donation of 30 helicopters is part of Bush’s commitment to help address the pressing needs of the AFP, particularly in the area of mobility and spare parts.

A joint statement issued after their bilateral talks said that the two Presidents agreed that the US-Philippine security partnership has never been healthier as they emphasized the importance of US support for continuing efforts to improve the capabilities of the AFP.

The two Presidents also reaffirmed their commitment to destroy the Abu Sayyaf “once and for all.”

Toward this end, the two leaders agreed to hold another joint military exercise “in the near term” where the US would provide support to the AFP in its ongoing operations against the Abu Sayyaf.

In a joint press briefing at the White House later, President Bush clarified that the US would work to maintain freedom and security in Mindanao and other parts of the country “only at her (President’s) request and along the guidelines that are necessary in your Constitution.”

Inclusion of RP products in GSP could help ease poverty, particularly in Mindanao — GMA

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT)—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said that the expected \$1-billion windfall from the inclusion by the United States of some products from the Philippines under the generalized system of preferences (GSP) would help ease poverty, particularly in Mindanao.

In a press briefing at the Philippine Embassy here after her talks with US President George W. Bush at the White House, the President said the inclusion of carrageenin, tuna and pineapple juice in the next cycle of the GSP has a “very, very great economic impact” in Mindanao where these products mostly come from and where there is widespread poverty.

“These are all good measures to inspire market access, particularly in Mindanao where there is much poverty,” the President said.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II, who was also present at the press briefing, explained that the rough estimate of \$1 billion is in the form of tax perks that the country would get if products like carrageenin, pineapple juice, dried mangoes and tuna are included in the GSP.

The GSP is a scheme whereby the US grants preferential treatment to some 4,000 products from 139 beneficiary countries, including the Philippines, in the form of duty-free access.

The scheme was reauthorized by the US Congress from Sept. 30, 2001 up to Dec. 31, 2006.

Roxas said that in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US, President Bush pledged to work with the US Congress to grant the GSP benefit to the Philippines.

In fact, Roxas said, the pledge was embodied in the joint statement issued by President Bush and President Macapagal-Arroyo during the latter’s working visit to the US in November 2001.

A press statement by the DTI said that while the Philippine carrageenin or seaweed industry sees the GSP as a vehicle to further enhance its foothold in the US market, the US will also benefit in the process because of the presence of American companies engaged in the carrageenin business in the Philippines.

In 2001, carrageenin exports to the US reached \$24.1 billion or 26 percent share of the country’s total export receipts.

The DTI said with the inclusion of pineapple juice as eligible article in the GSP would bring additional foreign exchange revenues for the country, not to mention the jobs that it will be able to generate.

Some 400,000 people, mostly in Mindanao, are currently engaged in the pineapple business from farming to manufacturing. Dole Philippines leads the pack in this business.

Bush impressed with RP’s tax reform programs

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) – US President George W. Bush today said he was impressed with the tax reform the Philippine government is set to undertake to solve its deficit problem.

In a press conference called after his bilateral meeting with visiting Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Bush's issued statement dismissed earlier reports indicating that the US was concerned that the Philippines may not be able to contain its deficit.

"I was very impressed by the discussions on tax reform. The President put out a bold initiative," Bush said, referring to his discussions with Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo during their bilateral meeting at the White House.

Bush said he was convinced that "some of the tax proposals that the President laid out "would make sure that the government would be "more efficient in collecting revenues."

"And so in other words, it's comprehensive approach, and it's one (issue) we spent a lot of time discussing," he said.

Bush was also confident that the Philippine legislature will enact soon the tax reforms being pushed by the Arroyo administration.

"I was most pleased that the Speaker and the head of the Senate were here in Washington, D. C. and they were very receptive," Bush said, referring to Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr.

The two were among a small group of official accompanying the President to her state visit here.

RP-US relations evolve from dependency to partnership between equals

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) – From diplomacy of dependency to a partnership between equals.

This was how President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo described today, the maturing relations between the United States and the Philippines during her bilateral meeting with US President George W. Bush.

"I did not come here to be a mendicant or a mercenary," President Arroyo said as she refused to quantify the success of her state visit here, based on how much economic aid and military assistance her country would get from the United States.

Instead, he said she came to the US to discuss with President Bush her ideas for a stronger partnership between the two countries, particularly in the fight against poverty and terrorism.

"Poverty and terrorism are twin evils we must fight. For the Philippines, we consider the US a strategic partner not only in security matters, but also in the economy, in the fight against poverty," she said.

President Bush also recognized the importance of keeping the Philippines as an ally in the global fight against terrorism, and the need to maintain the partnership of the two countries to win this war.

According to the American President, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo "is tough when it comes to terror. She fully understands that in the face of terror, you've got to be strong, not weak. She knows, like I know, that the only way to deal with these people is to bring them to justice."

For this reason, Bush said his administration is looking forward to the continued cooperation between Philippines and the United States, especially in addressing terrorism.

"We've got a lot of work to do, which means we've got to continue to work together to share information, cut off money, share intelligence, and hunt these people down and get them," he said.

Bush also expressed gratitude to the President for being the first leader in Southeast Asia to openly support the US fight against terrorism.

Because of this, Bush said the US has decided to name the Philippines as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA), putting it on the same level as Israel, Egypt and Australia.

With this, Bush said his administration will find it easier to “answer requests on military equipment to provide parts and equipment, to make sure that the defense capabilities of the Philippine military are modern and the choppers fly when the President orders up a strike.”

Bush was also impressed with the tax reforms the Philippine government is undertaking to solve its deficit problem.

He was also confident that the Philippine legislature will enact soon, the tax reforms being pushed by the Arroyo administration.

On the President’s third and last day here, World Bank vice-president for policies Shengman Shang and International Finance Corp. Peter Woicke are scheduled to pay her a courtesy call.

After that, International Monetary Fund managing director Horst Kohler will also make a call at the Blair House which is the official residence of visiting heads of state in the US.

Later in the day, the President will grace a reception called by members of the Philippine Friendship Caucus.

She will have a coffee meeting with US Sen. Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee.

After that, she will be meeting with the chief executive officers in a dinner hosted by the US-ASEAN Business Council.

Before the end of the day, the President will depart for New York for another set of official activities.

Remarks by GMA, Bush in exchange of toasts (*The State Dining Room, White House, May 19, 2003*)

PRESIDENT BUSH: Madam President, Attorney Arroyo, it is a high honor for Laura and me to host you at the White House. Madam President, I know you attended college here in Washington, so perhaps I should say, welcome back — or, as they say at Georgetown, Hoya Saxa. (Laughter.)

With your visit, the Philippines and the United States affirm our strong friendship, our common commitment the fighting terror, and our shared determination to promote freedom.

Our nations are natural partners. We are connected by an ocean, united by a shared history, and sustained by the bonds of family and culture. More than 2 million Americans have family ties to the Philippines. Some are with us tonight, and you’re welcome. Filipino Americans strengthen America’s culture, our economy, and our government. And we are privileged that they call this country their home.

The United States and the Philippines are also joined by common values, especially the value of human freedom. And when freedom comes under attack, our countries respond.

Madam President, you’ve been a fierce fighter of terrorism in your own country. You’ve earned the respect of the American people for your resolve. And after September the 11th, you were one of the first leaders to contact me and express your strong support for the war against terror. And you have not wavered.

The President was also a strong and persuasive voice on the need to disarm Saddam Hussein and to liberate the Iraqi people.

Madam President, for your leadership and for your friendship, I thank you.

Seventeen years ago, the Filipino people restored their nation's democratic tradition and inspired lovers of freedom across the globe. In the years since, the Philippines has emerged as a stronger and more confident nation. The Philippines is building its prosperity on the foundation of markets, and building its future on a foundation of democracy. These commitments are opening new opportunities for the Filipino people, and setting a hopeful example for other nations traveling the road to freedom.

President Arroyo is playing a large role in her nation's success. Her bold and determined leadership has opened a new chapter in the friendship between our countries, and is responsible for revitalizing our strong alliance.

In his last poem, Jose Rizal, one of the founders of the Filipino independence, referred to his native land as the "Pearl of the Orient Seas." More than a century later, this "pearl" is admired the world over for its beauty, its progress, and its wonderful people.

Madam President, it will be my pleasure to visit the Philippines later this year, with you as my host. And Laura and I, and the American people are honored to have you and your husband as our guests here tonight. Would you please join me in a toast to the enduring friendship between the Philippines and the United States.

(A toast is offered.)

PRESIDENT ARROYO: Thank you, President Bush, and Mrs. Bush. Thank you on behalf of the 8 million Filipinos for honoring our country with this state visit.

The bonds between our two countries run deep. We've stood side-by-side at every crucial point in modern history. World War, the Second; the Cold War; Korea; Vietnam; and now, the war against terrorism.

I visit you at a time of great change — change in the way economies work; change in the way wars are fought; change in the way countries organize or disintegrate. But in two things, there must be no change — in the way governments treat people; and in the manner by which friends stand by each other. In the first case, with care and justice; and in the second case, with courage and steadfastness. In a time of crisis, friends do not ask, why; they ask, how.

The Philippines and America are friends. To guide our friendship in the 21st century, our meeting today was essential, so that we can develop a strategic framework for this century based on mutual respect and mutual help. Our talks focused on stopping terrorism, fighting poverty, and undertaking economic reform on both sides — meaning, offering more markets to each other, and less resistance to mutual trade and investment.

My fundamental concern in the Philippines is the need to lick mass poverty. Central to this concern is the task of building a strong republic — a republic able to keep crime and terrorism totally at bay; a republic free from vested and corrupt interests that subvert free markets; a strong republic empowered to execute good policy and provide essential services to all our people.

In this task, we value America as a partner, a partner in our common desire to create the kind of world in which we want both our countries to exist — a world of progress and ever-widening prosperity; a world of justice, freedom, and peace. These are within the grasp of modern economies and modern technology, and men and women of firm resolve and goodwill.

And how do we define a man or a woman of firm resolve and goodwill? It was once thought difficult to take a firm stand against tyranny, and nearly impossible to cope with terrorism. Now, the world knows better, especially after March 20th. Indeed, it's not easy, but, clearly, it can be done, with fearless leadership and iron resolve, combined with a bold strategic vision, and an unflinching sense of justice. I'm describing President Bush.

Only a strong and steadfast partnership, such as that between our two countries, can respond to the manifold and threats and challenges that the world working towards freedom and prosperity must face. I hope ever more countries

join this partnership. Two are better than one. Three are harder to break. Four and more, nothing can prevail against them.

On that note of hope for an ever-widening partnership of the good to complete the greater task of the coalition of the willing, I invite you all to join me in a toast for the continued success and good health of President and Mrs. Bush, and the relations between our two countries. Mabuhay!

(A toast is offered.)

Menu for state dinner was like marriage between two countries

WASHINGTON D. C. – When Assistant White House chef Cris Comerford, born in the Philippines and now a US citizen, said she sought a common ground between the two nations as she prepared the menu for the state dinner accorded President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo by President George W. Bush, little did she know that among the guests were Fil-Americans like her.

“It was like a marriage between the two countries,” she told reporters before the dinner.

True enough, among the 130 guests who attended the state dinner aside from government officials are dignitaries and staff with Philippine ancestry.

There was US Army Maj. Gen. Edward Soriano, the first Philippine-born soldier to become a general in the US Armed Forces.

The 55-year-old Soriano, a native of Alcala, Pangasinan, became the highest-ranking Fil-Am in the US Army history when he received his third star and took over command of Fort Lewis.

Also in the state dinner were Miss America 2001 Angela Perez Baraquo, daughter of Filipino immigrants who became the first woman of Asian-American heritage to win the coveted crown; former Daly City mayor now Councilman Michael Guingona; and Milpitas, California Mayor Jose Esteves.

Baraquo, eighth of the 10 children of Hawaii immigrants Claudio and Letty Baraquo, is a teacher in Hawaii who went on to become the first Asian and Filipina Miss America.

Guingona was born in San Francisco and raised in Daly City. He was only 31 years old in 1993 when he became the first Fil-Am elected to the City Council of Daly City. Two years later, he became Daly’s youngest mayor ever.

There’s also a sportsman in boxer Brian Viloria who represented the United States in the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Viloria is also a Fil-Am.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, clad in a simple purple terno with a lime green sash, was joined by First Gentleman Jose Miguel-Arroyo, Senate President Franklin Drilon and Mrs. Mila Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia and Mrs. Gina de Venecia, Jr. and other government officials in the strictly black tie affair that started promptly shortly after seven in the evening.

Upon arrival, President Macapagal-Arroyo gave US First Lady Laura Bush a state gift of 14 mm South Sea pearl earrings mounted on finely worked flowers and leaves of Philippine-mined 18-karat yellow gold.

The Marine Orchestra rendered pieces during the guest reception in the Grand Foyer and throughout dinner. Brass horns and strolling strings played during dessert. Opera singer Susan Graham warmed up in the East Room as the White House put the finishing touches on the State Dining Room.

Bouquets of pink and white peonies graced each table and flanked a portrait of Abraham Lincoln.

In finding a common ground between the two nations, chef Comerford featured in the first course crabs which the Philippines and Maryland are known for. Mango sorbets, filled with coconut mousse, were draped with brightly-colored leis made of sugar and chocolate, said pastry chef Roland Mesnier.

The main course included lamb, achiote polenta, fava beans and cipollini onion.

The wines were a 2001 Pride Mountain Viognier and a 2000 DuMol Pinot Noir “Finn,” both from California, said White House usher Daniel Shanks.

Shanks said he goes out of his way to find American wines and did not try to keep French wines off the White House tables.

White House chief usher Gary Walters said the rarity of state dinners did not heighten the excitement for the staff.

“I don’t know how in the world you can make a state dinner any more exciting or tension-building – they’re all the same,” Walters said. “It’s a head of state that we’re celebrating here, that the President has invited to the room, and it’s very important that we do it and do it right.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: May 20, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20050312154236/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may20.htm>

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Mainstream U.S. media cite Bush-GMA concerted efforts in the fight against terrorism

WASHINGTON, D. C. (via PLDT)—American mainstream media, both in print and broadcast, today carried in their main headlines and prime newscasts the historic meeting at the White House Monday (Tuesday in Manila) between US President George Bush and visiting President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In their news stories, the two major Washington newspapers, the Washington Post and the Washington Times, as well as the wire organizations and news channels, described the President as a staunch supporter of the United States in the fight against terrorism.

In their early morning newscasts, the three major television networks, the CNN, NBC, and ABC, also carried the highlights of the meeting between Bush and the visiting Philippine president.

Yesterday, the President was interviewed live by CNN's Daljit Dhaliwal at her suite at the Blair House. Another interview with CNN, this time with veteran broadcast journalist Wolf Blitzer, is scheduled for today, also at the Blair House.

The conservative Washington Times, carried on page 1 a three-column photo of the President trooping the line with President Bush at the formal arrival ceremonies at the South Lawn of the White House.

The caption of the photo says that President Bush called President Macapagal-Arroyo as his "strong ally in the war on terror" and pledged to deploy more US troops to help fight the Muslim rebels in Mindanao, referring to the Abu Sayyaf.

The Times devoted the whole of its page A-10 to the meeting between the two presidents at the White House and the state dinner later in the evening.

Three more photos of the event, including an enlarged 5-column photo of smiling but aging World War II veterans welcoming the President when she arrived at the White House, was published on page A-10.

Another photo of the President and First Gentleman, Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo, being escorted by President Bush and American First Lady Laura Bush for the state dinner, accompanied the sidebar to the main story, entitled “Bush Will Send More Troops to Fight Philippine Rebels.”

The sidebar, devoted mainly to the state dinner, quoted President Bush as describing the Philippine president, when he offered a toast, as “‘fierce fighter of terrorism in the Philippines.’”

The main Times story was devoted to the highlights of the meeting between the two leaders that included the continuing commitment of the US to the Philippines in its war against local terrorists and in uplifting the lives of the Filipino Muslims affected by the conflict.

The sidebar, written by Times staff writer Sharon Behn, carried a light touch which says that aides rushed to place a small foot stool “for the diminutive Philippine president to stand on behind the lectern set up in the dining room.”

The sidebar also said that the state dinner, which was only the third held since Mr. Bush took office “had a quiet tone, with a guest list free of the glitterati that adorned such evenings at the White House during Bill Clinton’s two terms.”

The more liberal Washington Post had a Page 1 teaser on the President’s visit, entitled “U.S.-Philippines Anti-Terror Accord,” saying that the US had promised the Philippines aid in fighting Muslim rebels under an expanded anti-terrorism effort.”

The main Post story on Page 2 entitled. “U.S. Offers Increase in Philippine Terror Aid,” was accompanied by a three-column photo showing President Bush introducing President Macapagal-Arroyo to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Gen. Richard Meyers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The photo also showed Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople and Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo at the background.

In its main story, the Post said that the two leaders have pledged to expand collaboration in their campaign against terrorism with the White House promising more than \$95 million in military aid and new deployment of US forces to help defeat Muslim rebel groups in the Philippines.

Later in the joint press briefing, President Bush has clarified that the US plan to send troops to the Philippines in the fight against terrorism would be subject to the constitutional requirements of the Philippines.

The Post, known for its analytical pieces on international events, said that “while the Pentagon is not necessarily interested in moving back into Subic Bay, one of the world’s great deep-water ports, it is interested in negotiating agreements that could give US warships or aircraft access to that or other facilities in the event of a conflict in the region.

In its world section, the USA Today carried a brief item, also with an anti-terrorism bias. The item, entitled “US, Philippines Agree to Fight Islamic Rebel Group,” says that the two leaders have agreed to send an unspecified number of US troops to support operations against the Abu Sayyaf rebels in the Southern Philippines.

The USA Today said that Washington has linked the Abu Sayyaf to the al-Qaeda terrorist group.

Ople cites importance of RP’s designation as major no-NATO ally of the U.S.

WASHINGTON, D. C. (via PLDT)—Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople today said the designation by President Bush of the Philippines as a major non-NATO ally would strengthen the Philippine government’s drive against terrorist cells operating in southern Philippines.

Ople said that this designation was an indication of the strong support of President Bush for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the Philippine government.

NATO refers to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a military alliance composed of the US and major European countries.

Ople said that countries granted major non-NATO status are limited to those with a close and strategic working relationship with the US defense forces.

Ople, who is part of the official delegation of the President, also said that during their meetings and subsequent media briefings, President Bush was effusive in his praise for President Macapagal-Arroyo for her “decisive and efficient leadership.”

He noted that as an indication of their immediate rapport, President Bush did not hesitate to accept the invitation extended by President Macapagal-Arroyo for him to visit the Philippines in October this year.

In a joint press briefing at the White House yesterday, President Bush said he was honored to accept the generous invitation of President Macapagal-Arroyo to visit the Philippines this fall when he intends to travel to Southeast Asia for the leaders’ meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Ople described the discussions between the two leaders as candid and cordial, with the US government, through President Bush, firmly committed to help the Philippine government in getting rid of the Abu Sayyaf.

In a joint press conference at the White House Monday (Tuesday in Manila), President Bush announced the inclusion of the Philippines in the MNNA category that includes Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Argentina, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea.

“The designation is symbolic of the high level of trust and friendship between the two countries and its leaders. It also boosts the relentless efforts of our military to fight terrorist in southern Philippines since it means the Philippines is now eligible for priority delivery of excess defense articles,” Ople said.

Under Section 516 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, the US government has the authority to transfer surplus military equipment to foreign security forces.

Such defense articles, Ople said, could range from rations and uniforms to used vehicles, cargo aircraft and ships.

Ople explained that the designation given by President Bush to the Philippines, as a new MNNA, will take effect 30 days after the US Congress is notified in writing.

U.S. allocates \$32.81M for reintegration of former MNLF combatants to society

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) — The United States government has allocated \$32.81 million to help the Philippine government in its program of reintegration to society of some 25,000 former combatants of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the grant was signed Tuesday afternoon (Wednesday morning in Manila) at the Blair House by Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople and Acting Administrator Frederick Schieck of the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who is winding up her state visit here, and US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone, Jr. witnessed the signing.

Ople said the amount formed part of the \$72-million program the USAID has earmarked to help conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.

He said the agreement is focused on direct humanitarian assistance to some 4,000 former MNLF combatants to enable them to lead productive lives and contribute to the government's quest for enduring peace in Mindanao.

According to Ople, the USAID also intends to provide the former MNLF fighters all inputs needed to start commercial production of corn, rice or seaweed, as well as post-harvest facilities in the communities.

Ople said that the USAID also intends to provide another \$5 million, in addition to the \$6 million it earlier provided, to help 500 communities in conflict-areas to build small infrastructure facilities such as water systems, bridges, and farm-to-market roads costing between \$5,000 and \$25,000 each.

The foreign secretary also stressed that a similar arrangement awaits members of the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) who would pursue the path to peace and abandon their armed struggle.

In a joint press conference Monday at the White House with President Macapagal-Arroyo, US President George W. Bush said he and President Macapagal-Arroyo have reviewed the developments concerning the MILF and they agreed that the MILF must abandon the path to violence.

"If it does so, and addresses its grievance through peaceful negotiations, then the United States will provide diplomatic and financial support to a peace process," Bush said.

GMA witnesses signing of several gov't to gov't agreements on topics of concern to RP. U.S.

WASHINGTON, D. C. (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo witnessed the signing Tuesday afternoon (Wednesday morning in Manila) of several government to government agreements on areas of mutual concerns ranging from US assistance for the reintegration of former Muslim Filipino guerillas, to narcotics control and agricultural modernization.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople and his counterpart, US Secretary of State Colin Powell, signed two agreements for their respective governments. The signing ceremony was held at the Blair House where the President is staying during his state visit here.

One of the agreements signed by Ople and Powell was on cooperation in science and technology that would enable scientists of both countries to embark on joint education and research.

The other accord signed by Ople and Powell was a Letter of Intent on Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement that sets aside \$1.01 million to enhance policing and supervisory skills of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other law enforcement agencies while supporting the institutional development of the Philippine criminal justice system.

US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone also witnessed the signing of the agreements.

The President and Ricciardone also witnessed the signing of other agreements that included the following:

- memorandum of understanding (MOU) that allocates \$20 million to procure US rice for the purpose of assisting the Philippines improve its food security;
- an MOU on the establishment of an Agriculture Research and Endowment Fund directed towards agriculture development through science and technology;
- an MOU for the development of financing support for appropriate irrigation technologies to enhance agricultural productivity. This MOU directs the EximBank to finance irrigation projects in Mindanao;
- an MOU on the facilitation of remittances that will reduce the cost of transaction on overseas remittances to the Philippines;

- an MOU on technical assistance grant for a financing facility for rural electric cooperatives;
- an MOU on a project to extend the Manila-Cavite Expressway through a financing from the International Finance Corporation; and
- an MOU on the construction of a geothermal plant in cooperation with the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) and development of a 1,500 hectare-airport facility at the Fernando Air Base in Lipa City.

GMA winds up Washington leg of state visit

WASHINGTON, D. C. (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo winds up her highly successful three-day state visit here Tuesday night (Wednesday morning in Manila) after a historic meeting with US President George W. Bush and other top US officials.

Before her departure, the President witnessed the signing of a number of government-to-government agreements worth millions of dollars in grants and loans aimed at speeding up the development of conflict areas in Mindanao, promoting food security, and setting a framework of cooperation in such areas as science and technology, narcotics control, and financing rural electric cooperatives and other irrigation projects.

Before the signing of the memorandums of agreement (MOUs), the President also received at her suite at the Blair House top-ranking officials from the public and private sector.

Among her callers were Senators Daniel Inouye and Ted Stevens; Jeffrey Alan Goldstein, managing director of the World Bank; Assad Joseph Jabre, vice president for operations of the International Finance Corporation; and Horst Kohler, managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

The President also had a coffee meeting with Senator Richard Lugar at the Capitol Building.

Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. were also present during the President's meeting with Lugar and Senators Inouye and Stevens.

The President was also interviewed live by CNN's "Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer."

The President and her official delegation were scheduled to depart for New York, the last leg of her state visit, from Andrews Air Base at 10 p.m. (Wednesday morning in Manila).

WB, int'l financing institutions assures GMA of continued support for development agenda

WASHINGTON D. C. (via PLDT) — World Bank officials Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila) assured President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that it would continue supporting the Philippine government's development agenda, specifically its efforts to reduce poverty and improve governance.

The President met Shengwan Zhang, vice president for policies and program of the World Bank, and Peter Voicke, head and managing director of International Financial Corporation as well as Horst Kohler, managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, is headquartered in Washington, D. C. It shares the primary objective of all World Bank institutions to improve the quality of life of people in developing member countries.

During the meeting, an agreement was reached for the signing of two loans amounting to \$33.6 million and \$50 million for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Social Fund and the Agrarian Reform Community Development Project II (ARCDP II) respectively.

Both loans are targeted for the poor members of society, providing them with social and community services and access to facilities to meet their basic needs.

The ARMM Social Fund addresses the needs of residents in ARMM to enhance the development of the region and upgrade the living standards of the people in the area.

The ARCDP II will continue the earlier support under the ARCD I to the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), primarily by providing community development and capacity building of about 80 additional agrarian reform communities representing approximately 70,000 farming households.

The Philippines has also requested the World Bank to assist in the Judicial Reform Program of the Philippines.

The World Bank and other donor agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Japan and Canada are providing assistance to the Philippine government in its judicial reform efforts.

In order to strengthen the judiciary, the Philippines is currently negotiating a loan in the amount of \$22 million with the World Bank.

Another loan which is under advanced technical discussion with the World Bank is the Rural Power Project.

Rural electrification is a flagship program of the Department of Energy (DOE) which aims to improve the quality of life in rural areas through the provision of adequate, affordable and reliable energy services in partnership with the private sector.

The proposed loan of \$10 million, together with a grant from the Global Environment Facility of another \$10 million, will be a major contributor to achieving 100 percent barangay electrification by 2006 and 90 percent household electrification by 2017.

The World Bank and the Philippine government have just concluded the country programming exercise covering the World Bank's fiscal years (July-June) 2004 and 2005.

For fiscal year 2004, project and program loans amounting to \$290 million have been programmed for judicial reform, rural power, health, environment, urban slum upgrading and land titling and management, while a public finance strengthening program loan will be considered in the fiscal year.

For fiscal year 2005, projects and program loans amounting to \$360 million are tentatively scheduled for discussion.

Two groundbreaking program loans, namely the Public Finance Strengthening in the amount of \$200 million and the Public Sector Reform program in the amount of \$150 million, are in the process of being discussed.

These two program loans will lay the framework for the much-needed reform program in the public sector.

It is to be noted the World Bank portfolio performance has dramatically improved in the last two years from a disbursement ratio of 12 percent in fiscal year 2001 to a projected level of 22 percent in end of fiscal year 2003.

According to the World Bank, this virtual doubling in the disbursement ratio achieved by the government counterpart agencies of World Bank-financed projects implies a decline in the average project implementation period from eight years to 4.5 years, translating to faster delivery of services to project beneficiaries, primarily the poor.

Moreover, the World Bank recently provided non-lending assistance to help offset the negative impact of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) threat on the ongoing business of government, through the use of the videoconferencing facilities available at the Global Distance Learning Center at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM).

The GLDC was established by the World Bank in partnership with AIM, and provides state-of-the-art technology which will enable the government to conduct and participate in international meetings, dialogues and conferences that would otherwise be postponed or cancelled due to travel concerns over SARS.

Int'l alliances keep region safer, says GMA

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila) defended the decision of the United States to work for the inclusion of the Philippines as a major non-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) ally, saying the US can help wipe out terrorism back home as it wipes out terrorism within its own borders.

In her speech before the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) Roundtable meeting of the US-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Business Council at the Park Hyatt Hotel, the President said leading a nation means making tough choices.

“Some loud voices denounce a closer alliance with the US but let my state visit here send a message to those who peddle in the false currency of terror: The US can help us wipe out terrorism at home as it wipes out terrorism within its own borders,” the President said.

She noted that international alliances keep our region safer and provide economic stability and growth. “In turn, we can provide an island of friendship, stability and security in an uncertain world,” she said.

The President noted that the last time she was in Washington was just one month after the horrific events of September 11.

She said at this time, the US is again on heightened alert. (The US Department of Homeland Security placed parts of the country on orange alert Tuesday. Code Orange is the second highest level of alert and signifies a high risk of terrorist attack).

The President noted the state of heightened alert demonstrates that the new global environment requires a new perspective on political and economic security.

“That perspective must be based on a recognition that while each nation or region must take greater responsibility for its own political and economic security, it must also recognize that strong international relations will contribute greatly to regional prosperity and stability as well as greater success in addressing terrorism, the most significant threat to world peace and stability,” she said.

The President said “we must find a way to support continued engagement of ASEAN with the US at a time when there are forces working against this relationship, and when there are those with an evil agenda to disrupt it.”

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said that as she ends her state visit with profound thanks to President Bush and the American people, she would like to say that “we shall work side by side with the US to overcome the terrorism that knows no boundaries and transform fear into peace, progress and prosperity in the world.”

President Bush announced the decision of his government to work for the inclusion of the Philippines as a major non-NATO ally during their joint press conference following a one-on-one meeting with Macapagal-Arroyo at the Oval Office.

The major non-NATO status places the Philippines up there with other countries like Australia, Egypt, Japan, Bahrain, Jordan, Argentina and New Zealand for required military assistance.

In her remarks, the President said she is gratified to say that the relationship between the two countries has never been stronger.

RP must remain alert against SARS, says GMA

WASHINGTON, D. C. – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila) that the Philippines must remain alert against Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) even as the World Health Organization declared the country free from the dreaded disease.

The President announced to members of the Philippine media during a panel discussion at the Blair House that the WHO has removed the Philippines from its list of areas with recent local transmission of the deadly SARS virus.

WHO stressed in its announcement that it never advised that travel to the Philippines be restricted.

WHO also noted “the efficient surveillance and reporting system in the Philippines, which reflects strong political commitment and a high level of awareness among health staff.”

At the height of the SARS scare in the country, the President advised the people to remain calm but fully alert and to religiously observe health and sanitation measures.

“The delisting is very important to us,” said Consorcia Quizon-Lim, head of the Department of Health’s National Epidemiology Center, in an interview in Manila.

She said it would prompt countries that have banned Filipino workers due to the SARS scourge to lift the ban.

She also said countries that have issued travel advisories against the Philippines over SARS now have no reason to bar their citizens from visiting the Philippines.

Philippine health officials said the removal of the Philippines from the WHO list of countries affected by SARS is testimony to the success of the government’s efforts to prevent the spread of the killer virus.

The delisting of the Philippines from the WHO list of SARS-infected countries came 20 days after the country had no SARS case.

The WHO requires that there be no SARS infection in an area for 20 consecutive days before it removes that country from its list. Tuesday marked the 20th day the Philippines has had no new reported case of local transmission.

The last probable SARS case in the Philippines that was locally acquired was isolated on April 30, the WHO said in its SARS website, “meaning that opportunities for spread of the virus to others were significantly reduced.”

“As 20 days have now passed with no further cases detected, WHO can safely conclude that local transmission has been interrupted,” the international organization said.

Economy on track and RP is excellent place to do business, says U.S.-ASEAN Business Council

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) – The United States-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Business Council Tuesday night (Wednesday in Manila) lauded the economic policies and programs of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

During the round-table discussion of the council at the Park Hyatt Hotel here, the businessmen conveyed their full trust in the present administration in making sure of the dividends in doing business in the Philippines.

Ernest Bower, president of the council, said “absolutely, the economy of the Philippines is on track.”

“It’s doing well. It (the Philippines) is an excellent place for American economists to go and do business,” he said.

“We appreciate the direction of the steady aim that the President and her Cabinet are taking toward economic reforms and stability in the Philippines,” Bower added.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, who accompanied the President during the round-table discussion, said the comments made by Bower is “a collective appreciation for the support that they have gotten from the administration of President Arroyo.”

In her remarks at the discussion, the President thanked the council anew for its hard work on behalf of the Philippines “and for sticking with us through thick and thin.”

“I am endeavoring to return your loyalty and dedication by working to build a strong Philippines, to strengthen our institutions so that we can all prosper,” she said.

The President said that aside from security and foreign policy, she is focusing on international business and economy during her state visit here.

She said not only is she responsible for a nation of 80-million people. “I am also the CEO of a global Philippine enterprise of 8 million Filipinos who live and work abroad and generate billions of dollars a year in revenue,” she said.

The President emphasized that the great comparative advantage of the Philippines is the rich human resources which are highly-skilled, well-educated and English-speaking.

“This includes the millions of Filipinos working in over 140 countries of the world and for the millions more employed in the Philippines in business process outsourcing, manufacturing and other service industries,” she added.

The President said her administration is addressing the legacies of the past.

“We’ve moved forward on Bureau of Internal Revenue reform. Revenues are up. That is why, despite last year’s large fiscal deficit, this year our deficit is smaller than expected because our revenues are higher than targeted. We’re continuing privatization and liberalization of the power sector,” she said.

The government, the President added, now has a strong anti-money laundering legislation to stop terrorists and government fraud.

Also, there is now a law empowering special purpose asset vehicles to direct greater liquidity into the banking system and provide relief for debt-burdened banks.

“And it is not just legislation, but real money that must be invested if we are to get a good return for the nation in the years ahead,” she added.

The Chief Executive likewise noted the new investments in infrastructure to help move people and goods and enhance the quality of life through expressways, fast railroads from Manila to Clark-Subic and CALABARZON and Batangas Port as well as roll-on, roll-off ferries around the nation.

The President further said that there are new investments in small and medium enterprises.

“Challenges remain, many economic, many social, many political, but I awake every day determined to make progress and I believe I have,” she said.

Reunion of old friends

WASHINGTON, D. C. – The scene was like a reunion of old friends as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo met with United States Sen. Richard Lugar at the Senate foreign relations committee room at the Capitol Hill Building.

Lugar wore a big smile as he emerged from a one-hour meeting with visiting President Macapagal-Arroyo.

He described the relations between the Philippines and the US under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration as “very strong and beautiful.”

Lugar said he was pleased to see Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo again, saying “she is well acquainted with all of us.”

The President described Lugar as “a great and old friend of the Philippines and of Philippine democracy and it’s my pleasure to be here to exchange notes with him.”

Lugar was the head of the American observer team in the 1996 snap elections where former President Corazon Aquino was recognized as the legitimate winner.

He was believed to have been responsible in focusing the spotlight on the corrupt activities of ousted President Ferdinand Marcos, ultimately convincing then-President Ronald Reagan to support Mrs. Aquino.

During the meeting, the President expressed appreciation for the US Senate foreign relations committee’s continued interest and support for the Philippines.

The President reiterated to Lugar that her administration affirms the enduring importance of the Philippines’ alliance with the US.

She recalled how history has shown that the US and the Philippines have been on the same side in every major conflict over the years.

The President stressed that the depth of the partnership between the two countries is well reflected in the presence of thousands of Filipinos serving in the US Armed Forces, some of whom lost their lives in the service.

GMA to be conferred honorary Doctorate of Laws degree by the Fordham University

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will be conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree by the Fordham University in New York City today.

The conferment of a doctorate degree on the Filipino leader by Fordham University, one of the leading universities in the United States, is one of the major scheduled activities of the President during her one-day stay in the city.

The President, together with First Gentleman Jose Miguel T. Arroyo, flew Tuesday night (Wednesday morning in Manila) from Washington to New York.

The President left Washington with some glowing press reports citing her tough stance against terrorism.

The *Washington Post* headlined its story on the state dinner hosted by US President George W. Bush for President Macapagal-Arroyo at the White House Monday night (Washington time) as “Dinner with Two Tough Cookies.”

The *Washington Post* noted that President Bush, during his toast at the state dinner, said President Macapagal-Arroyo’s visit affirms “our strong friendship, our common commitment to fighting terror, and our shared determination to promote freedom.”

The newspaper also reported that Bush praised Arroyo as “a fierce fighter against terrorism in your own country. You’ve earned the respect of the American people for your resolve. And after September the 11th, you were one of the first leaders to contact me and expressed your strong support for the war against terror. And you have not wavered.”

“Friends stand by each other, in times of crisis. Friends do not ask why; they ask how,” the *Washington Post* quoted President Macapagal-Arroyo’s response.

While in New York, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo will meet business leaders planning to set up or expand businesses in the Philippines and, in the process, create more jobs for Filipinos.

15 congressmen assure GMA of support for RP interests on 3 issues discussed in Congress

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Via PLDT) — Fifteen United States congressmen today met with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, assuring her of their full support for Philippine interests on three important issues being deliberated upon in Congress.

At the meeting held at the House ways and means committee room at the Capitol Building in Capitol Hill, the 15 congressmen said they would support the Philippines on the security and global anti-terrorist cooperation, trade expansion between the US and the Philippines, and the passage of Senate Bill 68 or the Filipino Veterans Benefits Improvement Act.

Present during the meeting were Congressmen Darrel Issa (R. California), Bobby Scott (D. Virginia), Bob Filner (D. California), Duke Cunningham (R. California), Neil Abercrombie (D. Hawaii), Todd Tiahrt (R. Kansas), Dana Rohrabacher (R. California), Dennis Cardoza (D. California), Sam Farr (D. California), Mike Honda (D. California), Joseph Pitts (R. Pennsylvania), Charlie Rangel (D. New York), Ed Schrock (R. Virginia), Diane Watson (D. California) and Roger Wicker (R. Mississippi).

The 15 were part of the 70-man Philippine Caucus composed of Democratic and Republican congressmen.

The caucus was initiated by eight members of the US House of Representatives who sent a “Dear Colleague” letter last Oct. 2002 to all the House members, enjoining them to establish the caucus.

The eight members are Issa, Filner, Cunningham, Scott, Tiahrt, Abercrombie, Rohrabacher and Lane Evans (D. Illinois).

The letter underscored that “the Philippines has had a historically close and special relationship with the United States and has become the US’ most active Asian ally in the war on terrorism.”

No reason to doubt sincerity of U.S. in treating RP as ally –GMA

WASHINGTON, D. C. — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said Tuesday (Wednesday morning in Manila) there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the United States in treating the Philippines as a friend and major ally, saying what is important is “what will be good for the country.”

In a press conference with Filipino media here, the President said that if the offer of friendship will redound to the benefit of the Filipinos and the entire Asian region, “we shouldn’t hesitate to accept the offer.”

“Kaya’t yon ang isang nagustuhan ko rin. Iyong parating sinasabi ni Pangulong Bush na tutulongan tayo sa anyo na gusto kung tumulong sila sa atin. Ayon sa ating kumposisyon, sa ating interpretasyon, ayon sa ating pangangailangan (What I like in the offer is the way President Bush said that help will come in whatever form we want it — according to our needs, according to our composition and interpretation),” she said.

Speaking in the vernacular, the President stressed that she wouldn’t like to look at the relationship as an isometric one, meaning between a powerful nation – a superpower at that – and one that is not.

“Ang importante, ang relasyon natin sa bawat bansa at sa rehiyon ay ipinaiiral natin kung ano ang ikabubuti natin (what is important is we insist what will be good for us in our relationship with each country and the region as a whole),” the President said.

Saying she did not come to the United States as a mendicant or mercenary, the President claimed all the countries in the world are now interdependent on each other, each having something to share in the name of globalization.

“Mayroon din namang papel ang Pilipinas na maitutulong sa ibang bansa at makatutulong din sa atin. At hindi lamang Amerika ang pinag-uusapan natin. Pati na ang mga kapitbansa tulad ng Malaysia and Indonesia. (The Philippines also has something to share to other nations that will help us, including such neighbors as Malaysia and Indonesia),” she said.

One of her main bargaining points in her state visit, according to the Chief Executive, is to find jobs for millions of Filipinos who have been reeling from the economic downturn.

She mentioned several possible benefits of her state visit including the granting of a generalized system of preferences, lower transaction costs for Overseas Filipino Workers and additional concessions for Filipino World War II veterans and their dependents.

BIR officials involved in ‘birthday scam’ charged

Upon orders of the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the Department of Finance (DOF) together with the Transparency Group of the Office of the President yesterday filed criminal charges against three ranking officials of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) before the Office of the Ombudsman.

Charged were Aguinaldo L. Miravelles, Assistant Revenue Regional director; Kamil L. Bajunaid, Assistant Revenue District Officer; and Godofredo M. San Jose, Jr., a former Revenue District Officer.

The charges were filed based on evidence gathered by the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC), which is conducting the lifestyle check ordered by President Arroyo.

The three BIR officials were involved in the so-called “birthday scam” by falsifying their date of birth to prolong their stay in the agency.

Presidential Chief of Staff Rigoberto D. Tiglao, who oversees the Transparency Group, said the BIR officials were also charged with perjury for misrepresenting their actual date of birth.

Tiglao said an administrative case will be filed before the Department of Foreign Affairs against Juanito M. Valdecantos, another BIR employee, for violation of passport laws.

Tiglao said that sometime in March this year, they received reliable information that some employees of the BIR were engaged in wanton falsification of their personal circumstances and credentials in their personal data sheets (PDS) in order to stay in their positions past their retirement age.

These allegations of unexplained wealth and falsification of public records by BIR officials were reported in several newspapers in the past several days.

Tiglao also announced lifestyle checks are ongoing on those who have acquired ill-gotten wealth and those involved in graft cases.

DOF officials hope the filing of these cases will bring about renewed interest on the part of the public to take an active part in preventing corruption in the BIR and the Bureau of Customs (BOC). Corruption has been blamed for the low tax collections of both agencies.

WHO lauds RP surveillance, reporting on SARS

The World Health Organization (WHO) has praised the strong political commitment and efficient surveillance and reporting system in the Philippines that removed the country from the list of areas with reported local transmission of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

“The efficient surveillance and reporting system in the Philippines, which reflects strong political commitment and a high level of awareness among health staff confers an additional level of assurance that no local transmission is now occurring,” a recent WHO update said.

The WHO said the SARS situation in the Philippines illustrates the scale of the emergency effort needed to respond effectively to an imported case and ensure that an outbreak is swiftly contained.

Undersecretary Antonio Lopez, officer-in-charge of the Department of Health (DOH), thanked the Office of the President for its “forceful actions” that contained the spread of SARS in the country.

“The Department of Health thanks the Office of the President for its forceful actions in the combat against SARS,” Lopez said in his report to Malacañang.

The DOH has reported a total of 12 probable SARS cases to the WHO that had been promptly and extensively investigated.

Of the 12 SARS cases, five were imported. One of the imported cases, a female who carried the disease from Toronto, Canada, infected seven others in the only chain of secondary transmission that has occurred in the Philippines. She and her father were the only SARS deaths in the country.

While she traveled up to five provinces prior to her hospitalization, contact tracing by local officials identified 250 individuals who were closely followed up. Four of them developed fever and were quarantined until they were a diagnosed as SARS free.

Lopez said the DOH and other government agencies would continue to enforce vigilance and strict surveillance against the dreaded disease.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: May 21, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20081019052618/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may21.htm>

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Top U.S. firms, mostly in I.T. sector, assure GMA of new investments in RP

NEW YORK (Via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was assured today by the chief executive officers (CEOs) of top American corporations of new investments in the Philippines that would generate thousands of jobs.

In a series of calls at her suite at the Waldorf Astoria here, the CEOs, mostly in the information and technology (IT) sector, told the President of their multi-million dollar expansion plans in the Philippines starting this year.

The President is here for the last leg of her state visit to the United States, which was highlighted by her meeting with US President George W. Bush in Washington, D. C.

Officials of Convergys Corporation led by its president for customer management group, John C. Freker, informed the President of their project of setting up a 240-seat call center facility at the Enterprise Center in Makati City and another 600-seat facility at Robinson's Equitable Bank Tower in Pasig City.

Convergys is one of the world's number one providers of outsourced billing and customer management solutions. The company employs more than 44,000 people in its contact centers, data centers and offices around the world.

Officials told the President that they have chosen the Philippines, rather than India, for their worldwide expansion plans.

They said that within two to three year timeframe, they expect to hire from 8,000 to 10,000 Filipino workers. Employers would be manning their call centers within the next two months in their maximum capacity of 880 seats.

Convergys officials said that their initial capital expenditures for their Philippine project is about \$10.437 million.

During his call, Ron Lindorf, chairman and owner of Western Watts Center, also informed the President of the setting up of a call center site in Cebu.

The project, which will have an initial capital outlay of \$3.125 million, will involve 300 seats and employ about 500 workers initially.

Officials of Vision-X, Inc. (VXI) led by its CEO, Eva Wang, informed the President of a \$1.06 million call center facility in the Philippines that is expected to generate some 4,800 employees within a three-year time frame.

VXI is currently operating with over 1,600 workstations in three locations in the United States and in Shanghai, China. The company supports 20 foreign languages in addition to its core English language.

Another American firm, the Prudential Group, has linked up 77Global, a Philippine IT company, for a pilot project on business process outsourcing (BPO) and call center projects in the Philippines.

Prudential, one of the world's largest insurance companies, offers a variety of products and services, from life and property insurance, to asset management, securities brokerage, banking and trust services, real estate brokerage franchises and relocation services.

Fordham U confers honorary doctorate degree of laws to GMA

NEW YORK CITY (via PLDT) — Fordham University Wednesday here (Thursday night in Manila) conferred an honorary doctorate degree of laws to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, making her and the late President Diosdado Macapagal the first ever father and daughter presidents to receive such an award.

Rev. Joseph O'Hare S. J., Fordham University president and who incidentally taught for eleven years at the Jesuit university Ateneo de Manila, conferred the degree on the President in ceremonies at the James McNally Amphitheater at the law school building along West 62nd Street here.

In the citation read by Fordham University Trustee and Rector of the Fordham Jesuit Community Rev. Vincent J. Duminico S. J., Fordham University "cherishes" the memory of an earlier visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to our campus.

This was on October 9, 1964 when the President accompanied his father to a ceremony at Fordham's Rose Hill campus, where the latter received a doctorate of laws, honoris causa.

"Today, we welcome his daughter, the fourteenth president of the Republic of the Philippines, to receive a similar honor," he said.

The citation says that "in recognition of the many bonds that unite the people of the Philippines and the people of the United States and with admiration and respect for her intelligent and courageous leadership, Fordham University is proud to present President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo with the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa."

Duminico said the President knows well the Jesuit mission in higher education.

At the undergraduate level, the President studied at Georgetown University and at the graduate level, she earned a Master of Arts degree in Economics from the Ateneo de Manila University.

And like her father, Duminico said the President also went on to earn the PhD. in Economics.

The citation also said that from 1973, the year after martial law was imposed in the Philippines, until 1987, the year after the restoration of democracy in the Philippines under President Corazon Aquino, the future president spent more than a decade as a member of the Economics faculty at ADMU.

He also said that when the President joined the Aquino administration as Trade and Industry Undersecretary in 1987, she was responsible in large part for the revitalization of Philippine textile exports.

"And in 1992, the President was elected to the Senate where she proved to be an outstanding leader, authoring 55 laws on economic and social reform that were a major component of the economic success of President Fidel Ramos' administration."

Meanwhile, as senator, the President championed the rights of women who were victims of domestic violence and in 1998, the people of the Philippines elected her vice president with 12.7 million votes, the most cast for that position in Philippine history.

Duminico said that on January 20, 2001, the President was sworn in as the 14th president of the Philippines, after the Supreme Court unanimously declared the position of President vacant.

He said like Aquino, the new President had been swept into presidency by a peaceful People Power revolution that rose up in protest against the corruption of the Estrada administration.

In her inaugural address, the President predicted that the 21st century would be a time of peril and opportunity. Eight months later, on September 11, attacks on New York City awakened the world to the threat of international terrorism.

Duminico noted that since that time, the Philippines, under the leadership of its President, has proven to be one of the major allies of the United States in this new struggle for the defense of civilization.

In receiving the degree, the President said she takes the Jesuit ideals seriously. “For the Greater Glory of God! A Person for Others!”

“Today, I stand here honored with the doctorate of laws by those who taught me a great deal of what I know and made me to a great extent what I have become,” she said.

She said in a very real sense, those who are honoring me with this degree today, led me as though by hand, to that White House Lawn. You honor me, Honorable fathers of the Jesuit community, you honor my country and you honor yourselves.”

Rev. Joseph O’Hare S. J., in brief remarks, noted that he has done some careful research and found that the President and his father are the only father and daughter presidents to receive honorary doctorate degrees from Fordham U.

He said the university conferred such an honorary degree to all Philippine presidents, except Presidents Marcos and Estrada.

O’Hare cited the President’s efforts to bring peace and development in the Philippines.

He also said that as a former colleague in ADMU, he has both institutional and personal pride to confer the degree to the President.

The conferment rite was also attended by Fordham University officials such as University Trustee and President of Fordham Preparatory School Rev. Joseph Parkes S. J., Faculty Senate President Rita Guare and Vice President for Academic Affairs John Hollwitz.

The President was accompanied by, aside from her family, Philippine officials such as Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia.

Twice in the family; Fordham revisited

NEW YORK (via PLDT) — This is what some call a case of déjà vu.

On October 9, 1964, when she was only 17, she was at the Fordham’s Rose Hill Campus to accompany her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, who was then conferred by the university with a doctorate of laws, honoris causa.

This morning (Wednesday evening in Manila), President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was back at the same campus, this time to be conferred with the same doctorate degree that the prestigious Jesuit university had conferred on her father some 39 years ago.

In its citation, the Fordham University said it cherishes the memory of an earlier visit of the President, then a young girl, who was with her father during the conferment ceremony.

“Today, we welcome his daughter, the 14th President of the Republic of the Philippines, to receive a similar honor,” the Fordham University said in its citation.

The citation said that the President knows well the Jesuit mission in higher education.

At the undergraduate level, the President studied at Georgetown University but at the graduate level, she earned her Master of Arts degree in Economics from the Ateneo de Manila University.

Like her father, the citation said, the President also went on to earn her PhD in economics.

The Fordham University said that it was proud to confer the degree of doctor of laws, honoris causa, on the President “in recognition of the many bonds that unite the people of the Philippines and the people of the United States and with admiration and respect for her intelligent and courageous leadership.”

Visibly touched, in her response, the President said that she was greatly honored by the conferment of the honorary degree.

“You honor me, you honor my country, you honor yourselves. And you have done it twice in my family,” the President said in her acceptance speech.

The President said that in addition to the education that she got from the Ateneo de Manila University, she was now fortunate to be able to add a ram to her menagerie of mascots that include a blue eagle and a hoya.

She said that she has seriously taken the Jesuit ideals—Ad maiorem Dei gloriam (For the greater glory of God), and Homo pro aliis (A person for others).

“These ideals are ever so relevant to the responsibility entrusted to me as President of my country and to improve the lives of my countrymen, to ensure their safety, and realize their collective potential to become a strong nation,” the President said.

New framework for RP-U.S. ties now being forged after the state visit – GMA

NEW YORK (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Wednesday said that her state visit to the United States had enabled her and US President George W. Bush to develop a “modern framework” for Philippine-American relations in the decades to come.

In her speech this morning (late Wednesday evening in Manila) at the Fordham University here where she was conferred a doctor of laws degree, honoris causa, the President said that in the past, relations between the two countries have been marked by resentment from events long past and old misunderstandings.

The President arrived here early this morning for the last leg of her successful state visit to the United States. She is here not only to receive the honorary degree from Fordham University but also to meet with top chief executive officers (CEOs) of major American corporations.

The President said the Philippine-American relationship is not just back on the same old track but is forging ahead in a new direction, marked by mutual respect and reciprocal trust.

“Indeed, in my watch, a new and mature relationship has been developing between the Philippines and the United States,” the President said.

Today, she said, that relationship covers a wide range of critical issues, from security, to regional stability, trade and investments, economic reform, and good governance measures.

The President said that strengthening Philippine alliances with other countries through aggressive diplomacy like what she had achieve in her Washington visit is an integral part of what she termed as her “strategic vision.”

This strategic vision, the President explained, includes the recognition that terrorism in the Philippines must be eliminated if the country is to free its government resources for the task of wiping out poverty.

“In that regard, the US is an important ally. We face a common foe, identified by the same cowardly tactic of targeting the innocent and hitting those who cannot retaliate,” the President said.

The President said that her administration has come to grips with the terrorist threat in the Philippines but stressed she will not let go, because terrorism is still disrupting the world.

“Terrorism must be faced, and must be fought, to the bitter end,” the President stressed.

The President said that her travels abroad, which focus on business and investment promotion, are also part of her vision of eliminating poverty in the Philippines.

She said that she travels abroad not just as the head of state or a nation of 80 million Filipinos but also as an equivalent to a CEO of a global Philippine enterprise consisting of about eight million Filipino workers deployed in over 140 countries, generating billions of dollars a year for themselves, for their employers, and their families in the Philippines.

Philippines capable of building a strong republic, says GMA

NEW YORK (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she is confident the Philippines can build a strong Republic that would lay the foundation for a speedier economic development and a better life for its people.

In her speech this morning (late Wednesday evening in Manila) at the Fordham University here where she was conferred a doctor of laws degree, honoris causa, the President said that with the help of friends like the United States, the Philippines can achieve this strong Republic dedicated to economic growth and good governance.

The President said that for others, a woman like her cannot do very much alone about the problem of poverty but added that a strong government can do infinitely more.

“As a necessary step towards the eradication of mass poverty in my country, I set my mind to creating a strong Republic that can tackle so great a challenge,” she said.

The President cited two essential features that are needed in building a strong Republic in the Philippines.

First, she said, is the independence from class and sectoral interests, so that the Republic stands for the interests of all, rather than a powerful minority.

The second, the President said, is the capacity to execute good policies and deliver essential services through strong institutions and an efficient bureaucracy.

“The results of good policies and empowered institutions is faster economic development and a more meaningful social reform,” the President said.

But the President also said that in order to achieve her vision of a strong Republic, sacrifices must be made, especially from those who have not had to make them by forces of circumstance.

She recalled that the late President Ramon Magsaysay had made famous his dictum that “those who have less in life should have more in law.”

“I say that those who have more in life shall have more to do to make life more livable for more of their fellowmen. This is the Jesuit sense of social justice that would have us all be men and women for others,” the President said.

GMA salutes courage of troops, support of communities in punitive operations vs terrorists

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today saluted the courage of the Armed Forces of the Philippines troops who have carried out punitive operations against the enemy in some terrorist enclaves in Mindanao as well as the civilian communities that have supported them.

In a teleconference beamed to Manila from New York, where she headed after a highly-successful state visit to Washington, the President, however, said the task of enhancing peace and order is far from over.

The Philippine National Police, she said, must be ready to hold the areas cleared by punitive operations while the national agencies and the local government units must consolidate relief and rehabilitation efforts.

The President also said she would proceed to Mindanao following her state visit to the United States “to evaluate the national security situation and to see how immediately we can apply the gains of this trip to addressing the issues of the security situation in Mindanao.”

The President said the punitive actions she ordered the military to carry out before she embarked on her US visit last May 17 have been successful. She added, however, that she could call them off anytime.

“The path of peace is always open,” the President said.

In response to surrender feelers from Moro rebels and suspected terrorists, the President said “I have been very clear about what I want from them. I want them to renounce terrorism. I want them to stop terrorist attacks. I want them to surrender the terrorists among them.”

While authorizing the AFP to employ “selective aerial and artillery attacks to dislodge embedded terrorist cells that have attacked hapless civilian communities and murdered scores of innocent Filipinos in Mindanao,” the President said the administration will step up anti-poverty programs, intensify diplomatic initiatives and maximize community preparedness and support until the threat of terrorism is beaten.

In Malacañang, Presidential Chief of Staff Rigoberto Tiglao said Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano Soliman and Presidential Adviser on Strategic Concerns Renato de Villa are now in Mindanao overseeing government operations and projects and preparing the way for the President’s visit next week.

More mature RP-U.S. ties, new investments mark GMA state visit to Washington

NEW YORK (via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that as a result of her state visit to the United States, the overall framework of Philippine-American relations is now marked by mutual respect and reciprocal thrust.

Wrapping up her visit with a two-day trip to this city, the President said in a press briefing at the Waldorf Astoria here that her visit also resulted in new investments and financial assistance worth millions of dollars, citing in particular the expected bonanza of \$1 billion in tax perks from the inclusion of some Philippine products under the US generalized system of preference (GSP).

She said the inclusion of such products as carrageenin or seaweed, pineapple juice and tuna in the GSP is particularly significant since these products come primarily from Mindanao where there is much poverty and where the threat of terrorism and violence continues to hang.

In terms of new investments and impact on the overall economic development of the country, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II described the state visit as an “overwhelming success,” adding that the achievements made were beyond their expectation.

The President said that in talks with US President George W. Bush in Washington, D. C., they have laid the foundation for Philippine-American relations “based on more trade, not aid; reciprocity, not mendicancy; and mutuality, not exclusivity.”

“Our bonds of friendship and values have now grown into an overarching, pragmatic alliance for security, peace and development,” the President said in her opening statement at the press briefing.

The President said that through this “bolstered alliance,” the two countries have gained solid momentum for a more decisive engagement with the world.

As an example of how this new partnership is working is the agreement that the United States will now go beyond fighting the Abu Sayyaf terrorists by helping the government mop up the pockets of poverty, especially in Mindanao, where the recruits of terrorism are taken.

“The shared future of Philippine-American relations now demands initiatives that should lend greater momentum to our achievements,” the President said

The President said that her meeting here with organizations engaged in business process outsourcing and with the executives of top US companies, particularly those in the information and technology (IT) sector, as well as with companies projected to invest in the reconstruction of Iraq, mean more investments and a greater range of opportunities for the Filipino workers.

“Jobs are my main concern. We go worldwide with greater zeal because we want to expand the quest for jobs through the greater market access that will come as a result of our closer economic engagement,” the President said.

Officials said that for the reconstruction of Iraq, some 30,000 to 35,000 jobs could be made available soon to Filipino workers while some 10,000 new jobs could be generated in the call centers that would be opened in the Philippines.

In a series of calls at her suite at the Waldorf Astoria here, the chief executive officers (CEOs), mostly from the IT sector, told the President of their multimillion-dollar expansion plans in the Philippines starting this year.

Officials of Convergys Corporation led by its president for customer management group, John C. Freker, informed the President of their plan to set up a 240-seat call center facility at the Enterprise Center in Makati City and another 600-seat facility at Robinson’s Equitable Bank Tower in Pasig City.

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Another American firm, the Prudential Group, has linked up with 77Global, a Philippine IT company, for a pilot project on business process outsourcing and call center projects in the Philippines.

On the last day of her visit to Washington, D. C., the President witnessed the signing of several agreements worth millions of dollars in outright grant or loans from financial institutions aimed at speeding up the country's economic development and in pushing for some socio-economic projects.

One of the agreements signed was for a US grant of \$32.81 million to help the Philippine government in its program of reintegration to society of some 25,000 former combatants of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The amount forms part of the \$72-million total program of assistance earmarked by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for assistance to conflict affected areas in Mindanao.

Another achievement of the visit was the designation by President Bush of the Philippines as a major non-NATO ally to strengthen the Philippine government's drive against terrorist cells operating in southern Philippines.

Foreign Secretary Blas Ople said this designation was an indication of the strong support of President Bush for President Macapagal-Arroyo and the Philippine government.

NATO refers to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a military alliance composed of the US and major European countries.

Ople said that countries granted major non-NATO status are limited to those with a close and strategic working relationship with the US defense forces.

In a joint press conference at the White House Monday (Tuesday in Manila), President Bush announced the inclusion of the Philippines in the MNNA category that includes Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Argentina, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea.

"The designation is symbolic of the high level of trust and friendship between the two countries and its leaders. It also boosts the relentless efforts of our military to fight terrorist in southern Philippines since it means the Philippines is now eligible for priority delivery of excess defense articles," Ople said.

Under Section 516 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, the US government has the authority to transfer surplus military equipment to foreign security forces.

Ople and his counterpart, US Secretary of State Colin Powell, also signed two agreements for their respective governments, one on cooperation in science and technology that would enable scientists of both countries to embark on joint education and research, and two a Letter of Intent on Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement with a \$1.01 million grant.

Other accords signed on the last day of the President's visit to Washington, included the following:

- memorandum of understanding (MOU) that allocates \$20 million to procure US rice for the purpose of helping the Philippines improve its food security;
- an MOU on the establishment of an Agriculture Research and Endowment Fund directed towards agriculture development through science and technology;
- an MOU for the development of financing support for appropriate irrigation technologies to enhance agricultural productivity. This MOU directs the EximBank to finance irrigation projects in Mindanao;
- an MOU on the facilitation of remittances that will reduce the cost of transaction on overseas remittances to the Philippines;
- an MOU on technical assistance grant for a financing facility for rural electric cooperatives;
- an MOU on a project to extend the Manila-Cavite Expressway through a financing from the International Finance Corporation; and
- an MOU on the construction of a geothermal plant in cooperation with the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) and development of a 1,5000 hectare-airport facility at the Fernando Air Base in Lipa City.

GMA reiterates decision not to run in 2004

NEW YORK CITY (via PLDT) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo reiterated Wednesday (Thursday morning in Manila) that her decision not to seek re-election in 2004 stays.

In a press conference at the Waldorf Astoria, the President said she feels “so comfortable” not being a candidate for president.

“I’ve been able to make so many unpopular but correct decisions so I think I should stick to that decision,” the President said.

The President announced last December 30 that she is not seeking reelection, saying she would rather work for the holding of honest, orderly and peaceful elections.

During the press conference at the Waldorf Astoria, the President said she wants to talk about the gains of her state visit to the United States instead of discussing politics.

“My focus is what I need to do in the next 14 months,” the President said.

GMA commends PNP for pre-empting terror plot

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today commended the Philippine National Police for pre-empting a terrorist plot in Metro Manila.

In a teleconference in New York, where she headed after a successful state visit in Washington, with reporters and other Malacañang officials in Manila, the President said the success of the PNP operations highlights the need for preparedness not only of the law-enforcement agencies but of the local government in threatened communities as well.

Chief Presidential Legal Adviser Avelino Cruz informed the President during the teleconference of the arrest of seven people in Isla Puting Bato in Tondo by joint operatives of the PNP and the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP).

Cruz also said the seven suspects, who are under the custody of the Western Police District, are undergoing interrogation in connection with previous bombing incidents.

Cruz added that investigators will be making an announcement on the results of their probe in the next few days.

The WPD described the seven as alleged members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front who were among the 75 people rounded up during an operation in Tondo.

GMA urges people to continue good health, hygiene habits to keep SARS virus away

NEW YORK (Via PLDT) – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo called on the people Wednesday (Thursday in Manila) to continue to practice good health and hygiene habits to keep the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) virus away.

The President said during a press conference at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel which was also beamed to Manila that she was “very, very happy and delighted” over the World Health Organization declaration that the Philippines is SARS free.

She also congratulated health and airport authorities and workers for their vigilance against the spread of the SARS virus and expressed hope that “other countries in the region will also be able to contain their epidemic so that we can have a world free of SARS and a world free to move forward in our fight against poverty.”

The WHO, in announcing the removal of the Philippines from its list of areas with recent local transmission of the killer virus, noted “the efficient surveillance and reporting system in the Philippines, which reflects strong political commitment and a high level of awareness among health staff.”

The United Nations health organization said Philippine authorities accomplished the SARS-containment feat and demonstrated their government’s resolve to beat the killer disease. The results of this hard work are now being seen, WHO said in a statement.

During her press conference, the President said “we saw the close relationship between SARS and having a hygienic environment, that a hygienic and clean environment is an end in itself. Let us continue that habit.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: May 22, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514155824/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may22.htm>

The President's Day: May 23, 2003

23 MAY 2003

- **GMA going to Mindanao after successful state visit to pursue peace, development concerns**

GMA going to Mindanao after successful state visit to pursue peace, development concerns

Malacañang today said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's concern for peace and development in the Southern Philippines will bring her to Mindanao on Monday, after an overnight rest in Manila from a successful visit to the United States, to consolidate efforts against terrorists, look into relief and rehabilitation efforts, and check on development projects in the region.

In a press briefing this afternoon, Presidential Chief of Staff Rigoberto Tiglao said the plan is for the President to be back in Manila Sunday and take a day's rest from the hectic schedule in Washington, D. C., New York and California.

On Monday morning, Tiglao said, the President will make a report to the nation on the outcome of her eight-day state visit to the US and then sign into law the Anti-Trafficking in persons Act of 2003.

After the signing of the bill, a priority measure of the administration, the President will fly to Cagayan de Oro City; Tubod in Lanao del Norte where the Palarong Pambansa is scheduled to be staged; Maigo, also in Lanao del Norte, which was attacked by rebels; and Davao City.

Tiglao said that after a quick visit to Tubod, the President will preside over a command conference of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police in Cagayan de Oro to assess the anti-terrorist campaign and to check on the crime situation there.

After the command conference in Cagayan de Oro, the President would proceed to Davao City to meet with Mayor Rodrigo Duterte and other local leaders to check on the Mindanao National Initiative, or Mindanao Natin program, and consolidate further the political efforts against terror.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 23, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514155845/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may23.htm>

The President's Day: May 24, 2003

24 MAY 2003

- **GMA state visit gets good playup in mainstream American media**
- **Mindanao evacuees cite gov't action against MILF, terrorist**
- **Southcom sees MILF defeat**

GMA state visit gets good playup in mainstream American media

WASHINGTON, D. C.—In her weeklong trip to the United States, three days of which were the state visit to this American capital, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo not only charmed her way to her host, US President George W. Bush, and the American people but also to the mainstream American media.

The state visit, highlighted by her talks with President Bush and the state dinner at the White House, were played up in the major American newspapers and in such influential TV networks as the CNN International, NBC and ABC, as well as in the major wire organizations like the AP, Reuters and AFP.

During her Washington visit, the President was interviewed twice by CNN International, the first by Daljit Dhaliwal, and the second, where she recapped the highlights of her talks with President Bush, by veteran broadcast journalist Wolf Blizer.

The influential Washington Post published two full-length articles on the state visit, with a Page 1 teaser, entitled “U.S.-Philippines Anti-Terror Accord,” saying that the US had promised the Philippines aid in fighting Muslim rebels under an expanded anti-terrorism effort.

The main Post story on Page 2 entitled. “U.S. Offers Increase in Philippine Terror Aid,” was accompanied by a three-column photo showing President Bush introducing President Macapagal-Arroyo to US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Gen. Richard Meyers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The photo also showed Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople and Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo at the background.

Unfortunately, true to its interpretative journalism tradition, most of the American media outlets used as their slant the supposed agreement between the two leaders that would allow the US to send combat troops to fight the Abu Sayyaf terrorists in Mindanao.

In its main story, the Post said that the two leaders have pledged to expand collaboration in their campaign against terrorism with the White House promising more than \$95 million in military aid and new deployment of US forces to help defeat Muslim rebel groups in the Philippines.

But later in the joint press briefing, President Bush clarified that the US plan to send troops to the Philippines in the fight against terrorism would be subject to the constitutional requirements of the Philippines.

Also in a press brief briefing at the Philippine embassy later, the President pointed out that what she and President Bush agreed on was that the US government would help in eliminating the terrorist threat in the Philippines in the manner that the Philippine government would want it to do.

On several occasions, the President had emphasized that US forces would not be allowed to join in combat operations in Mindanao but only to train and equip Filipino forces who should be the ones to engage in the actual fighting against the Abu Sayyaf.

The New York Times carried on page A-15 a full-length article, entitled “Bush Affirms U.S. is Ready to Send Troops to the Philippines,” accompanied by a photo of the two Presidents during a joint press conference in the White House.

The Los Angeles Times, also with the same slant, carried in its World Section an article, entitled “Bush Pledges More U.S. Troops to Help Philippines.”

The Post devoted one whole page in its Style Section to the state dinner at the White House hosted by President and Mrs. Bush for the visiting Philippine president.

The lifestyle article, entitled “Dinner with Two Tough Cookies,” had a five-picture montage showing President Bush welcoming the President and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo to the State Dining Room of the White House where the dinner was held.

The article also carried the guest list that included the “Who’s Who” in American and Philippine officialdom.

The conservative Washington Times carried on Page 1 a three-column photo of the President trooping the line with President Bush at the formal arrival ceremonies at the South Lawn of the White House.

The caption of the photo says that President Bush called President Macapagal-Arroyo as his “strong ally in the war on terror” and pledged to deploy more US troops to help fight the Muslim rebels in Mindanao.

The Times devoted the whole of its page A-10 to the meeting between the two presidents at the White House and the state dinner later in the evening.

Three more photos of the event, an enlarged 5-column photo of smiling but aging World War II veterans welcoming the President when she arrived at the White House, was published on page A-10.

Another photo of the President and First Gentleman, being escorted by President Bush and American First Lady Laura Bush for the state dinner, accompanied the sidebar to the main story, entitled “Bush Will Send More Troops to Fight Philippine Rebels.”

The sidebar, devoted mainly to the state dinner, quoted President Bush as describing the Philippine president as “fierce fighter of terrorism in the Philippines.”

The main Times story was devoted to the highlights of the meeting between the two leaders that included the continuing commitment of the US to the Philippines in its war against local terrorists and in uplifting the lives of the Filipino Muslims affected by the conflict.

The sidebar, written by Times staff writer Sharon Behn, had a more human touch when it said that aides had rushed to place a small foot stool behind the lectern “for the diminutive Philippine president to stand on in the dining room.”

The sidebar also said that the state dinner, which was only the third since Mr. Bush took over, “had a quite tone, with a guest list free of the glitterati that adorned such evenings at the White House during Bill Clinton’s two terms.”

In its world section, the USA Today carried a brief item, also with an anti-terrorism bias. The item, entitled “US, Philippines Agree to Fight Islamic Rebel Group,” says that the two leaders have agreed to send an unspecified number of US troops to support operations against the Abu Sayyaf rebels in the Southern Philippines.

Mindanao evacuees cite gov’t action against MILF, terrorist

ZAMBOANGA CITY— “It is better for us to endure the pains and sufferings of war in one or two years than to have eternal sacrifices in the hands of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).”

This best describes the sentiments of the evacuees now being attended to by government agencies in Lanao, Sirawai and in some parts of Central Mindanao as they started appreciating government efforts to bring perpetrators of several terrorist acts in the region to justice.

Citing several reports in areas affected by punitive military operations, Southern Command chief Maj. Gen. Roy Kyamko said terrorist or not, the military would leave no stone unturned in their pursuit operations against armed groups like the MILF because “they have committed criminal acts.”

“Arrest warrants have been issued to top officials of the MILF and we are determined to bring justice to people to whom they have committed these atrocities,” said Kyamko.

In a television interview over IBC 11 here, the Southcom chief expressed optimism that the Armed Forces would emerge victorious in the fight against terror, citing the cooperation the military is getting from the civilian population.

He said Civilian Volunteer Organizations and barangay tanods have been a big help in information gathering as to the whereabouts of the rebels that led to the capture of several MILF bases in South Central Mindanao.

Local officials as well as several Mindanao congressmen, according to him, have also expressed support to the ongoing pursuit operations quoting them as saying that “it was timely for the AFP to demonstrate that it still has the capability to crush the MILF.”

Kyamko also reported that Muslim businessmen and leaders in the town of Munai, Pantao Ragat and other surrounding municipalities have withdrawn their moral and logistical support to the terrorist cells of terrorist leader Yahyah Lucsadatu quoting them as saying that “they are already fed up with the terror and havoc brought about by the terrorist.”

“The MILF is now suffering the agony of losing the war against government troops,” he said. “The rebels are just paying the price of following a false ideology which is terrorism.”

On the reported presence of 12 foreign nationals believed to be linked to the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist group in South Central Mindanao, Kyamko said there was nothing concrete yet on the veracity of the report. He said, however, that “if they are proven to be involved in terrorist bombings, we have to bring them to justice, too.”

On criticisms that the AFP operations were nothing more than a state-sponsored terrorism which has displaced thousands of families, Kyamko said majority of the Mindanaoans supported the government war on terrorism.

“The selective strike on several terrorist cells in Mindanao continues to gain ground. We expect the job to be finished as soon as possible. When this job is over, we will emerge victorious in our war against terrorist groups here in Mindanao,” he said.

Southcom sees MILF defeat

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Contrary to published reports, only one soldier was killed in action as a result of punitive military actions against terrorist rebels in selected targets in Mindanao.

However, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) registered a death toll of 77, according to intelligence documents obtained from the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Aside from wounding five and capturing two rebels, government forces have also accepted the surrender of 97 Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) members in Iligan City Thursday. This, according to the documents, resulted in the recovery of 85 assorted firearms.

Southern Command chief Maj. Gen. Roy Kyamko released the information today to belie reports that at least 28 government troopers have been killed in the fighting that took place in the areas of Maguindanao and Lanao del Norte.

The story quoted an unidentified rebel spokesman.

Enemy casualties, according to Kyamko were based on intelligence reports and body counts.

The AFP said that the long-standing poor credibility of self-styled MILF spokesman Eid Kabalu was reason enough not to believe anything he said about the soldier casualties.

Lt. Col. Fredesvindo Covarrubias of the 4th Civil Relations Group branded Kabalu as “a congenital liar whose credibility has gone at an all-time low, following terroristic activities he and his group did in Mindanao.”

“On the contrary, it is the MILF who suffer more casualties, resulting in their demoralization and eventual surrender to the government ,” Covarrubias said.

He said Kabalu has a long line of atrocities to his name and with the arrest warrant issued against him, “he is probably talking while hiding in his closet.”

“Absolutely, it is difficult to believe a person like Kabalu whose group has employed terrorism by killing innocent civilians,” he said. “On one hand,” he added, “the MILF will only attack military targets but look at what they are doing, they have sown terror by attacking defenseless civilian communities.”

He claimed it had been a routine for Kabalu to lie and “being an expert at that, he imagines things and resorts to this tactic to project they are still strong and resilient.”

“But the point is, no one believes Kabalu anymore because his propaganda has been, from the start, obvious ,” Covarrubias said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: May 24, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514155852/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may24.htm>

The President's Day: May 26, 2003 26 MAY 2003

- **The unquantifiable benefits of state visit**
- **GMA says enhanced R.P.-U.S. ties to benefit Filipino nation**
- **GMA, pinpoint responsibility, mete out sanction, compensate victims, take pre-emptive measures**
- **GMA warns against exploitation, trafficking of Filipino women, children**
- **Continuous MILF harassment force civilians to return, seek refuge at evacuation centers**

The unquantifiable benefits of state visit

More than anything else, the state visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to Washington, D. C. has laid the foundation of a more mature Philippine-American relationship for decades to come based on mutual respect and reciprocal trust.

Officials who formed part of the presidential entourage have described the visit as an “overwhelming success,” because the benefits derived from that visit were beyond their expectations.

A fact sheet issued by the officials showed that the package of benefits on bilateral cooperation in such areas as defense and security, poverty alleviation, economic development, and assistance on financing by multilateral financial institutions, as well as pledges of new investments, was worth some \$4.09 billion.

This was indeed beyond the expectations of the Philippine government.

But the President did not want to dwell on this achievement. In fact, she got upset every time someone asked her how much her administration is getting out of the visit in terms of US dollars.

The President said she went on a state visit to Washington not to beg but to lay the strategic basis of Philippine-US relations based on more trade, not aid; reciprocity, not mendicancy; and mutuality, not exclusivity.

In a closer economic engagement between the two countries, the benefits to be derived by the Filipino people would be far greater than the price tag that comes with it, the President said.

For example, the President said, more than the \$1 billion that could be derived in tax perks after the inclusion of such Philippine products as carrageenin, pineapple juice and tuna, in the US generalized system of preference (GSP), are the prospects of increased employment opportunities and income for the people of Mindanao directly involved in these products.

Because their produce have now greater access to the American market through the GSP, the seaweed farmers of Tawi-Tawi, the tuna fishermen of General Santos City and the pineapple growers of Central Mindanao can now have a better life.

And this kind of economic assistance from the US goes beyond fighting the Abu Sayyaf because this is geared towards the advancement of the lives of Muslim Filipinos in the most depressed areas in Mindanao, which have become the breeding ground for recruits of terrorism, the President said.

The significance of classifying the Philippines as a major ally of the US outside of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is another example of how a long-term goal could not be appreciated immediately.

Being a major non-NATO ally (MNNA) of the US means the Philippines is now eligible to receive excess military equipment and supplies from the US, a big boost to our defense establishment, especially in the fight against terrorism.

The President said that this classification paves the way for a stronger partnership with the US for a more secure Philippines, a more secure region and a more secure world.

According to the President, during her state visit, as well in her other foreign trips, one of her major concerns was to attract more foreign investors into the country to generate employment opportunities for the Filipino people.

In fact, it was the purpose of her one-day sidetrip to New York where she met with chief executive officers (CEOs) of top US corporations, mostly in the information and technology (IT) sector, who have pledged to set up more call centers in the Philippines.

She also met with US companies projected to invest in the reconstruction of Iraq that offers a broad range of opportunities for the Filipino workers.

“Jobs are my main concern. We go worldwide with greater zeal because we want to expand the quest for jobs through greater market access that will come as a result of our closer economic engagement with such countries as the US,” the President said.

The President said that whenever she travels abroad, she is not only the head of a nation of 80 million Filipinos but also the equivalent of the CEO of a global Philippine enterprise consisting of some eight million overseas Filipino workers deployed in over 40 countries.

GMA says enhanced R.P.-U.S. ties to benefit Filipino nation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the governments of the Philippines and the United States have reinvigorated and improved their partnership on a range of mutual interests.

In a speech during the signing of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang, the President noted how her state visit last week to the US enhanced the “enduring bonds of friendship, alliance and common interest between our two sovereign nations.”

The President said she and US President George W. Bush have “articulated a new partnership based on a range of mutual interests that now include a vision for the strategic role the Philippines place in Asia and in the global stage.”

“The partnership between the Philippines and America is mirrored in the amity and cooperation between our two governments which in turn reflect the historic and social bonds between the Filipino and American peoples,” she said.

The President reported that “America has been generous with our political needs and America has also been warm and wise in honoring the uniqueness and humanity of our nation.”

She added: “Before critics devalue this achievement, before political contenders cast partisan doubts on the advancement of our nation and before controversy confuses the high-minded purpose of this national enterprise, let us pause and join our people in congratulating themselves” for the state visit that truly honors respect for women, caring for children, and the resilience of the Filipino people.

She said the US recognized and appreciated “a friend” with such sterling qualities.

“But those qualities are primarily for our nation’s benefit and resources we can rely upon in facing the many challenges of the future,” she added.

GMA, pinpoint responsibility, mete out sanction, compensate victims, take pre-emptive measures

Pinpoint responsibility, mete out the necessary sanction, make sure there's just compensation to the victims, and take pre-emptive measures so that this doesn't happen again.

These were the orders issued today by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as she expressed sadness over the collision between the Manila-bound *MV San Nicolas* and the Cebu-bound WG&A's *Super Ferry 12* off Corregidor Island on Sunday which she branded as "another blackeye in maritime safety."

"It's ironic because sea transport is a fundamental aspect of the economy," said the President in her speech during the ceremonial signing of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 in Malacañang.

"These perennial accidents can and must be stopped," the President stressed, calling to mind the series of sea disasters that have hit the country, including the collision between the ferry *Doña Paz* and the oil tanker *Vector* on December 29, 1987 off Mindoro which came to be known as the world's worst peacetime maritime tragedy where more than 4,000 people died.

"I'm directing the maritime authorities to get to the bottom of this incident and submit a complete report within 15 days," an irate President said, at the same time warning them about the strict enforcement of navigation rules and the fitness of pilots of commercial vessels.

In her first official public act since returning from a successful state visit to the United States on Sunday, the President went to the Coast Guard headquarters to personally look into the situation of the victims. On the spot, she ordered an immediate investigation into the sea tragedy, assuring that those responsible for the tragedy will not go unpunished.

She also raised the question why the wooden-hulled vessel's crew and owners allowed unmanifested passengers on board and asked who were the ones responsible for enforcing the law and rules on maritime travel and safety.

"We must pinpoint responsibility and mete out the necessary sanction," the President reiterated in her speech today in Malacañang.

"Let's make sure there's just compensation to the victims," she went on, "and we must take pre-emptive measures so that this won't happen again."

She said: "I deeply sympathize with the families of those who perished in yesterday's tragedy."

"May mananagot (those responsible will be punished)," the President assured the survivors of the sea disaster involving the *San Nicolas* and the *Super Ferry 12*.

The President assured that P10,000 will be given for each of the fatal victim on top of the P100,000 insurance that the families will be receiving. Those injured will also be properly taken care of.

GMA warns against exploitation, trafficking of Filipino women, children

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today signed into law Republic Act 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, sending a strong signal that the days of people who exploit women and children are numbered.

"Itong batas ay nagbibigay ng babala na ang pangkabuhayan ng ating mga kababaihan at mga bata ay bubuti, hindi sa pagsasamantala sa kanila, kundi ang pagbibigay ng karapatan sa kababaihan at edukasyon sa mga bata (The law assures that the lives of Filipino women and children will get better, not because they are exploited, but because women exercise their rights and children get education)," the President said.

In a speech during the signing of RA 9208 at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall, the President stressed that the new law imposed heavy penalties against violators.

The President said “we can now inform the world and ourselves that the Filipino people already know the abusive jobs and legal jobs, because we already know the distinction between illegal and legitimate jobs.”

“This law also strengthens our republic. A strong republic is an effective state that helps the poorest of the poor and weak people, providing them the power to abolish the structure that deprives them,” she said.

The law provided that:

- Any person found guilty of committing acts enumerated in Section 4 on “Acts of Trafficking Persons” suffer the penalty of imprisonment of 20 years and a fine of not less than P1 million but not more than P2 million;
- Any person found guilty of committing acts enumerated in Section 5 on “Acts that Promote Trafficking in Persons” shall suffer imprisonment of 15 years and a fine of not less than P500,000 but not more than P1 million;
- Any person found guilty of trafficking under Section 6 on “Qualified Trafficking in Persons” shall suffer a penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of not less than P2 million but not more than P5 million;
- Any person who violates Section 7 on “Confidentiality” of this Act shall suffer the penalty of imprisonment of six years and a fine of not less than P500,000 but not more than P1 million;
- If the offender is a corporation, association, establishment or any juridical person, the penalty shall be imposed upon the owner, president, partner, manager and/or any responsible officer who participated in the commission of the crime or who shall have knowingly permitted or failed to prevent its commission;
- The registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission and license to operate of the erring agency, corporation shall be cancelled and revoked permanently; the owner, president, partner or manager thereof shall not be allowed to operate similar establishments under a different name;
- If the offender is a foreigner, he shall immediately be deported after serving sentence and may be permanently barred from entering the country;
- Any government employee or official found guilty of the enumerated acts under Section 5 on “Acts that Promote Trafficking in Persons” shall be dismissed from the service, barred permanently to hold public office and his/her retirement and other benefits shall be forfeited;
- Conviction of an adopter for any offense under this Act shall result in the immediate rescission of the decree of adoption.

The law also provided that any person who buys or engages the services of trafficked persons for prostitution shall likewise be penalized; any trafficked person or victim shall be entitled to the Witness Protection Program of the government; and the government shall establish and implement preventive protection and rehabilitation programs for trafficked persons.

It added that the trafficked persons in the Philippines who are nationals of a foreign country should be entitled to appropriate protection, assistance and services available.

The law tasked the government to create an Inter-Agency Council to be composed of the Secretary of the Department of Justice as chairperson and the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) as co-chairperson.

Council members include the secretaries of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Labor and Employment; administrator of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration; commissioner of the Bureau of Immigration; director of the Philippine National Police; chairperson of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women; and three representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGO) composed of one representative each from among the sectors representing women, overseas Filipino workers, and children.

The council shall formulate a comprehensive and integrated program to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons, promulgate rules and regulations, and monitor and oversee the strict implementation of the Act.

Among the Cabinet secretaries present during the signing were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Corazon Juliano-Soliman of the DSWD, Presidential Chief of Staff Rigoberto Tiglao, members of the Senate led by Senate President Franklin Drilon and Senator Loi Ejercito Estrada who sponsored the bill in the Senate, members of the House of Representatives, business sector, and NGO's.

Continuous MILF harassment force civilians to return, seek refuge at evacuation centers

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Continuous harassment by Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels of civilians who have returned to their homes are forcing refugees to go back to evacuation centers and swell their number.

This was noted by Director Vilma Cabrera of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's National Operation Office following published reports on the status of evacuees in areas affected by the ongoing conflict between the military and the MILF.

Cabrera, however, emphasized that the 318,000 refugee figures quoted in the newspapers are not indicative of the actual statistics in the evacuation centers, saying the figures included those who were displaced by the AFP pursuit operations against Kidnap-for-Ransom gangs in PIkit, North Cotabato last February.

She said that based on DSWD records, a total of 69,530 families or 356,893 people have been served by the government agency in various evacuation centers in Regions IX, X, XI, XII and ARMM since the start of the year.

It is possible, she said, that the same persons were served several times.

"If what we're talking about, however, is the number of evacuees that was a direct result of the ongoing punitive action by the military, I'm sure very low 'yan."

In Region IX and ARMM, for example, the DSWD reported no additional evacuees since the start of the latest AFP operations that was launched last May 17.

She said statistics on the total number of evacuees since May 17 when the AFP launched its newest operations will be made available as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the continuing harassment of civilians by the MILF in South Central Mindanao drew the ire of Maj. Gen. Generoso Senga, Commanding General of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, who said the pursuit operations against the 95 MILF members who have standing arrest warrants will continue.

"I want to make it clear that the continuing atrocities being committed by the MILF gives us no choice but to protect both the state and the people against acts of terrorism from any group," Senga said.

He stressed, however, that the government's policy of making peace with the MILF remains, but that 'it can never allow the rebels to terrorize and commit atrocities against civilians in pursuit of their political goals.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: May 26, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514155905/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/may26.htm>

The President's Day: June , 2003

The President's Day: July 3, 2003

03 JULY 2003

- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Statement of the President**
- **Statement of the President**
- **British Business Council backs GMA peace drive, urges U.K. investors to put up business in RP**
- **Gov't seeks signed declaration from MILF head on ceasefire, terrorism, participation in talks**
- **GRP, NDF hope to resume formal talks before end of July — Bello**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

GMA Stand

It is the duty of any President to serve the national interest and to sacrifice self-interest in doing so.

But President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has not made any statement on this matter and refuses to be distracted by partisan politics in her day to day task of tackling vital national concerns.

Meeting with Mr. Danding Cojuangco

The President met Mr. Cojuangco very briefly at Villamor Air Base yesterday while she was her way to attend the 56th anniversary celebration of the Philippine Air Force.

The President had just arrived from Marawi City where she presided over a command conference on the anti-drug campaign.

They discussed strengthening the administration coalition in the House of Representatives.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

Death Penalty for Drug Traffickers

The President has expressed support for the idea of executing convicted big-time drug traffickers, but she has exercised due deference to the position of the church as well as to other well-meaning sectors on this issue.

She wants the nation to be united, not divided, on all issues relating to the anti-drug campaign.

It may not be timely to spark extended debates on the death penalty while we are trying to consolidate the nation behind the war against illegal drugs.

Statement of the President

Anti-Drug War

We must wage the war against illegal drugs the same we are waging the war against terrorism. Our strategy should be non-partisan, it should involve all levels and sectors of society, it should stretch down from the national to local levels of governance, and it should involve domestic and transnational cooperation. Every Filipino must feel that the whole country and the world are with him or her in this campaign of good versus evil.

Statement of the President

MILF

We are keeping an active dossier of these terrorist plans and atrocities and we are hopeful that any prospective peace talks will close the book on these issues. The MILF has the opportunity not only to condemn terrorism by word, but to actually purge its ranks of terrorist operatives and intentions. The success of the peace process will heavily rely on meaningful moves taken by the MILF in this direction.

British Business Council backs GMA peace drive, urges U.K. investors to put up business in RP

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has found another ally in her efforts to end the decades-long secessionist movement in Mindanao.

The British Business Council, signifying its continued trust and confidence in the Arroyo government, expressed support for her peace efforts by way of promoting the inter-faith dialogue and encouraging British investors to put up their business in the Philippines.

During a courtesy call on the President at Malacañang's Music Room this morning, BBC officials headed by Geoffrey Short, chairman and president of Wealth Creation, Inc., reiterated their support for the inter-faith dialogue, one of the 16-point agenda of the administration to fight local terrorism and ending the secessionist movement in Mindanao.

The President thanked the BBC for promoting and teaching the English language to the Muslims, saying this "will promote the inter-faith dialogue to our Muslim brothers in Mindanao, especially the young ones."

During the same meeting, BBC officials informed the President that the British Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines is planning to expand their business in Mindanao, particularly in Davao.

Short revealed that one of the investments the BBC plans to put up in the conflict-torn island is in the field of information and communication, technology, saying it is the fastest growing business not only in the country but also in the whole world.

Paul Hubbard, BBC director and country head of Total Solution Software, Inc., testified that information technology is one of the booming businesses in the country.

He revealed that his company is now teaming up with Smart Communications to expand their operations.

Short said he is impressed by the government program on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), saying this has helped improve the lives of the small business entrepreneurs.

In response to the positive observation of the BBC to the business climate in the country, the President informed them that aside from ICT, the insurance industry is also one of those that have contributed to the growth of the Gross National Product.

Also present during the courtesy call were Jeremy Smith, BBC Director and Country Head of Jones Lang Lasalle; Andres Bautista, BBC Director and Country Head of Anglo-Industrial Consulting; Gill Westaway, Director of BBC and the British Council; and Eamonn Staunton, BBC Director and First Secretary of the British Embassy for Trade and Investment.

Gov't seeks signed declaration from MILF head on ceasefire, terrorism, participation in talks

The government today said the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) should come up with an official statement, signed by MILF chairman Hashim Salamat himself, on the permanent cessation of hostilities, the renunciation of links with terrorism and terrorist groups, both local and foreign, and the active participation of the MILF leader in the peace talks so that the formal negotiations could start soon.

“We would wish that they come up with a written statement signed by Salamat himself. And I repeat not necessarily by their spokesman (Eid Kabalu), because they can always turn back on their word and then we will be left hanging,” Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said in a media briefing in Malacañang.

Ermita pointed to the flip-flopping announcements of the MILF on the participation of Salamat in the peace talks. Last week, Ermita said, Kabalu issued a statement to the media that Salamat was ready to hold talks with the government not as a “full-blown participant” but only during the opening of the resumption of the talks and during the signing of a final agreement.

Ermita added that he was surprised that he had been asked questions again this morning to comment on reports that Kabalu said that Salamat will not again participate.

“Now, it only shows that there is wisdom in the government position of getting information from the MILF leadership, from Salamat himself, and not through the statements of their spokesman,” he said.

At present, Ermita said the government is still evaluating the genuineness and sincerity of the MILF in their declared cessation of hostilities.

“And we are awaiting a (written) declaration of a permanent ceasefire or whatever they may call it... an indefinite ceasefire. Now, the negotiations proper will be somewhere after the declaration of cessation of hostilities are concerned,” he said.

As part of confidence-building measures, Ermita said the MILF could also initiate a petition for the lifting of the warrants of arrest on the MILF members implicated in terrorist activities, particularly the bombing of the Sasa Wharf in Davao City that killed scores of innocent civilians.

“Now even those persons who are supposed to be involved in the talks and even in the ceasefire mechanism, such as the coordinating committee for the cessation of hostilities and local monitoring team, we will ask the MILF leadership to submit the names, validate them, so these are the people that we can monitor whether they are the ones upon whom the suspension of the warrant of arrest will be done,” he said.

Ermita said he is hoping the MILF would be advised by their lawyers to initiate the action before the court in Davao City for the reinvestigation of the case “so that the judicial process could start for the court to consider whether the arrest warrants could be lifted or suspended.”

GRP, NDF hope to resume formal talks before end of July — Bello

Negotiators of the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) have a mutual understanding to formally resume the peace negotiations by the end of July, Silvestre H. Bello, chairman of the GRP panel for peace talks, said today

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Bello said that a meeting took place at The Hague, the Netherlands on June 26 to 29 between his panel and the leaders of the NDF that include Jose Maria Sison, Luis Jalandoni, Fidel Agcaoili and the widow of Antonio Zumel.

Bello said that after the meeting, there was a mutual understanding to meet again or to resume formally the talks by the end of July. “It’s just a mutual understanding,” Bello said.

Bello said that even before they could meet at the end of July there are some very contentious issues that both panels have to resolve.

“As a matter of fact there was a colatilla that even before we could meet we have to resolve some contentious issues,” Bello said.

Bello, however, refused to divulge all the conditions, saying that he was not at liberty to discuss it.

But he mentioned one important condition and that is the NDF must accept the new framework of the peace process as proposed by the GRP panel.

Bello explained that under the old peace process framework, both panels were supposed to discuss three substantive issues and as soon as they both agreed on these substantive issues they will have to enter into separate agreements.

“So under the old process we have four separate agreements covering the four substantive issues while under the new peace process framework there will be one final peace agreement,” Bello said.

“We are suggesting we would only have one agreement, one final peace agreement instead of four piecemeal agreements. Yun ang pagkaiba ng old process and the new process,” Bello said.

He added that during the meeting, the NDF leaders brought up some issues and one of them is the delisting of the NPA as a terrorist organization and the other one is the difficulties of Jose Maria Sison after he was listed as a terrorist.

But Bello believed that the delisting is not an obstacle to the resumption of the talks because from the very start there has always been a mutual commitment of both parties to sit down in the peace negotiating table.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 3, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514160708/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july03.htm>

The President's Day: July 4, 2003

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- **Lorenzo calls for more int'l funding for agri research, development to avert world hunger**
- **Statement of the President: NDF Talks**
- **Statement of the President: General Lastimoso**
- **Statement of the President: Death Penalty**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Prime Minister Howard of Australia to visit the Philippines from July 14-15**
- **Punitive action against terrorist groups in Mindanao to continue**
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GMA orders probe on porno VCDs in QC police station chief's office

Lorenzo calls for more int'l funding for agri research, development to avert world hunger

Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo, Jr. has called on international donor agencies, like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank, to increase their funding in agricultural research and development (R&D) in order to stave off massive hunger and poverty, especially in developing countries.

In his speech at the Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agriculture Science and Technology held recently in Sacramento, California, Lorenzo said that international funding for agriculture, including R&D, began to decline in 1981.

"I find this ironic because if we want to ensure food security in the next century, continuous sustained scientific activity must be supported. After all, it is the accumulation of knowledge that accounts for the timely advances in innovation sustaining increased agricultural productivity," Lorenzo said.

Lorenzo said that ensuring a food supply in a sustainable manner to feed what he described as "a galloping world population" is long overdue and, if further delayed, "could bring humanity to its last mile."

He said that there is an urgent need to leapfrog agricultural productivity, improve nutrition and quality of life, terminate hunger and alleviate poverty around the world.

Lorenzo said the world's population, which was six billion in 1999, could shoot to nine billion in 2050. "Worse, the greater increase in population will happen in developing countries where poverty and hunger are commonplace and agricultural productivity is low," he said.

"We all know that conventional crop improvement alone will not double food production in the next five decades," Lorenzo said.

He said that experts have agreed that the solution to this dilemma can only come from increased yields from the same land area on less water, noting that arable land per capita of 0.45 hectares in 1966 dwindled to 0.25 in 1998 and will only be 0.15 by 2050.

Lorenzo said that last year's statistics indicated that only one-third of developing countries saw a reduction in hunger incidence. He said that some even showed no improvements while others even experienced a reduction.

"To arrive at permanent solutions, science and technology must not hobble its wonders behind the walls of laboratories away from the reach of farmers and fisher folk," Lorenzo said.

He also told researchers and the academe not to rest on their laurels following the publication of their papers but actualize the marketability of their recommendations and proposed reforms.

“Every day great technological advances are prevented from being used by the supply chain and translated to the benefit of commerce from seed to shelf, we delay permanent solutions for mankind,” Lorenzo added.

He also expressed concern that developing countries cannot catch up with developed countries in scientific innovations as he noted that the widespread adoption of Green Revolution technologies has not been sustainable.

He cited the Philippine example where the adoption of certified and hybrid rice and hybrid corn seeds remains low at 25 percent, even if this has already increased by 50 percent in the last two years.

Lorenzo also noted that the application of fertilizers is unusually below recommended rates and that publicly-funded irrigation systems are suitable only for paddy rice and services only about one-fourth of the total area planted to rice.

Programs of providing inputs like subsidized credit, subsidized cost or free distribution of seeds and fertilizer to farming communities are not sustainable.

Statement of the President: NDF Talks

I appreciate the efforts of Speaker Joe de Venecia to go the extra mile for peace. I have no doubt that he has the best interest of our people in mind. Nevertheless, talks are still at the exploratory stage and will not affect the comprehensive countermeasures we are drawing up against the resurgent threat of the NDF-CPP-NPA. The direction and pace of these countermeasures will not relent until we see a definite shift in the political and armed agenda of the revolutionary left to overthrow our Constitutional democracy. We will use force against force, truth against deception.

Statement of the President: General Lastimoso

General Lastimoso will take a leave as LTO Chief by July 15 and assume his new post as Assistant Secretary shortly thereafter. There is no point in heaping all the blame on him for the ills of the agency. He did his best but he was apparently overwhelmed by the morass of problems. Undersecretary Bengzon shall do a systemic review of the agency and recommend the necessary measures to improve its effectiveness and integrity. We have to move on from here.

Statement of the President: Death Penalty

I shall make a decision on the possible re-imposition of the death penalty on the basis of moral principles and due process. There are many sides to this issue that must be listened to, plus the matter of ensuring that those who would be condemned to death are indeed notorious drug lords, and not the small-time drug pushers in the street. I am prepared to exercise utmost political will to beat this menace, in accord with a sound and just moral compass.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

The President met with Mr. Cojuangco very briefly in Villamor Air Base between her arrival from Marawi and her speaking engagement with the Air Force the other day.

The President took up the vital issue of public interest involved in the stability of the administration coalition in the House of Representatives, which is important to the passage of key bills in her national agenda.

The President frequently meets with political and business leaders to hammer out matters of national interest.

She did not discuss any other matters of personal, partisan or commercial nature with Mr. Cojuangco.

Speculations of the President shaping political alliances, business deals or intervening in the internal affairs of the House are misplaced.

Prime Minister Howard of Australia to visit the Philippines from July 14-15

Australian Prime Minister John Howard will undertake an official visit to Manila from July 14-15 upon the invitation of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Prime Minister Howard will arrive in the evening of July 13 and, following his official visit to Manila, will proceed to Japan and South Korea.

The Prime Minister will be accompanied by Mrs. Janette Howard.

The President and Prime Minister Howard are expected to discuss ways to enhance bilateral relations between the Philippines and Australia, particularly with respect to strengthening cooperation in combating international terrorism and transnational crimes.

The Philippines and Australia signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism on March 4, 2003 in Canberra.

The two leaders will also exchange views on pressing regional and international concerns.

While in Manila, Prime Minister Howard will also formally open the Australian Embassy in Manila at the RCBC Tower in Makati, City. He will also address the Asia Society.

Punitive action against terrorist groups in Mindanao to continue

The government will continue selective punitive actions against terrorists in Mindanao as well as the comprehensive measures against the resurgent threats of the New People's Army.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said that the government is continuing its efforts of back-channel negotiations with the National Democratic Front/Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (NDF/CPP/NPA) that will lead to formal peace talks, hopefully at the end of this month.

At the Ugnayang Pambansa program of Channel 4, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Soliman also disclosed that out of the 80,000 displaced families staying in evacuation centers in the conflict areas, 31,000 have returned to their homes.

"More than 48,000 families have been helped by the DSWD and other concerned government agencies," she said.

Soliman said that some 5,000 houses so far have been repaired and constructed for the returning evacuees. One model unit was visited by the President the other day.

Secretary Ermita also said that for the GRP-MILF peace talks to progress, the leadership of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) should consider what the Philippine government is asking for, a declaration of permanent ceasefire.

Ermita said the government has not declared a stop to the punitive actions against terrorists. "In fact selective punitive actions continue because we have not arrested those who bombed Siocon and Maigo in May this year," he said.

Ermита also confirmed the existence of a tactical alliance between the MILF and the NPA. Reports said the NPA allowed the entry of the MILF in their area, “a common border,” and gives guerilla warfare training to MILF youth.

He also cited reports that the NPA lends firearms to members of the MILF for diversionary attacks against government soldiers.

Tinga named new Supreme Court Justice

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced today the appointment of former Congressman Dante Tingа of Taguig-Pateros as the 15th member of the Supreme Court.

The President said that of the five top nominees for the Supreme Court position left vacant by the retirement of Associate Justice Vicente Mendoza on April 5, only Tingа got the unanimous vote of the Judicial and Bar Council.

Tinga is currently the dean of the College of Law at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

The other top nominees for the position were Court of Appeals Justice Ruben Reyes, Sandiganbayan Associate Justice Gregory Ong, University of the Philippines Law Dean Raul Pangalangan and Court Administrator Presbitero Velasco.

Tinga is the seventh member of the High Court appointed by President Macapagal-Arroyo. The six others are Justices Adolfo Azcuna, Romeo Callejo, Antonio Carpio, Renato Corona, Alicia Austria-Martinez and Conchita Carpio-Morales.

Headed by Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., the Judicial and Bar Council screens aspirants and recommends nominees to the country’s highest court.

Young Filipino leaders pledge to become catalysts for moral recovery, nation-building

ANTIPOLO CITY — Around 80 young leaders of a coalition of religious groups today committed to become catalysts for national moral recovery and nation-building to help attain President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s vision of a strong Republic.

At the last day of their two-day leadership training at the Paenaan Camping Farm in Barangay Paenaan here, the young leaders expressed their commitment to help the President transform the nation by being a model of integrity to set a good example to others, serve the poor, live a simple lifestyle, fight social injustice, corruption and patronage politics.

“We also commit to help the government in the development and betterment of this nation and restore the dignity of every Filipino,” the young leaders said during their oath-taking.

In their action planning session witnessed by the President, the young leaders said a strong Republic is anchored on good governance run by righteous officials and leaders.

They said the problems the country is encountering, among them drug abuse and graft and corruption, can be remedied if it has enough God-fearing and righteous people.

“The heart of the problem lies in the heart,” the leaders said.

The group later gathered together, held each other’s hands, and prayed over for the President’s protection from “intrigues, bad advice, and courage to stand up for her conviction for righteousness to rule in this nation.”

The training, whose theme was “Rediscovering the Best in the Filipino Youth Leader,” was convened by the Samahang Itinatag ng mga Kabataang Lingkod na Aangat sa Bayan (SIKLAB), a coalition of major evangelical Christian groups.

Among its members are the Youth for Christ, Youth on Fire, Alliance Youth of the Philippines, Campus Crusade for Christ, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, El Shaddai Youth, and the Kristiyanong Kabataan Para sa Bayan Movement.

The group has conducted trainings since October last year to some 70,000 young leaders nationwide, including Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) members, on the topics of moral transformation and good governance.

The President, who arrived with Press Secretary Milton Alingod around 2:00 p.m., was welcomed by Rizal Governor Rebecca Ynarez, Mayor Angelito Gatlabayan, National Youth Commission (NYC) Executive Director Raul Dominic Badilla, NYC Commissioner Mark Castrodes, and SIKLAB convenor Emmanuel Calingo.

GMA orders probe on porno VCDs in QC police station chief’s office

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today showed how tough and uncompromising she could be when it comes to instilling conscientiousness and morality in public service.

The President ordered a thorough investigation on how pirated pornographic video compact discs (VCD) found their way into the office of Senior Superintendent Rosendo Franco, chief of the Central Police District’s Station 7 in Cubao, Quezon City.

In a surprise visit to the police station, the President blew her top when she found the lewd VCDs in the station chief’s office.

The discs were near the desktop computer of Franco, who was on leave and out of the country.

“Terrible!” she exclaimed.

She said the low moral foundation of police officers would reflect on his men when they perform their duties.

This was not the only time the President caught government officials and police officers remiss in their duties during unscheduled visits.

Less than a month ago, the President gave Land Transportation Office (LTO) chief Roberto Lastimoso a severe tongue-lashing after she discovered irregularities at the LTO in a surprise visit to one of its offices.

The President has often warned officials to observe moral uprightness and dedicated civil service every time she stresses good governance.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: July 4, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514160722/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july04.htm>

The President's Day: July 5, 2003

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- **Lorenzo calls for the setting up of RP-U.S. endowment fund for agriculture development**
- **Construction generates employment for the poor, strengthens domestic economy — Neri**
- **Lastimoso's relief as LTO Chief routine and proper — Palace**
- **President's radio address to the nation**
- **War vs drugs is war vs terrorism — GMA**
- **GMA thanks JDV for 'going the extra mile' in the search for peace with the communist rebels**
- **GMA groundbreaking off-base housing project for soldiers in Tanza, Cavite**

Lorenzo calls for the setting up of RP-U.S. endowment fund for agriculture development

Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo has proposed the setting up of an RP-US Endowment Fund to address the lack of the needed technology that would help improve agricultural productivity in the Philippines and thus alleviate poverty in the countryside.

In his speech at the Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology held recently in Sacramento, California, Lorenzo said that the endowment fund can be established from grants under Section 416 of Public Law 480 of the United States.

He said that to spare it from the usual bureaucratic red tape, the fund can be managed as a separate facility by an independent body composed of representatives from the two governments.

According to Lorenzo, the US and other developed countries should provide the technologies needed for food production by developing countries, like the Philippines, since these countries are the most vulnerable to massive hunger and poverty because of the continuing rise in their population.

"I see the development of new technologies contributing to sustainable agriculture, the security of food and feed, and most importantly, the alleviation of poverty in the world," Lorenzo said.

In his speech, Lorenzo also called on international donor agencies, like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank, to increase their funding in agricultural research and development (R&D) to developing countries.

Lorenzo said that international funding for agriculture, including R&D, began to decline in 1981.

"I find this ironic because if we want to ensure food security in the next century, continuous sustained scientific activity must be supported. After all, it is the accumulation of knowledge that accounts for the timely advances in innovation sustaining increased agricultural productivity," Lorenzo said.

Lorenzo said that ensuring a food supply in a sustainable manner to feed what he described as "a galloping world population" is long overdue and, if further delayed, "could bring humanity to its last mile."

He said that there is an urgent need to leapfrog agricultural productivity, improve nutrition and quality of life, terminate hunger and alleviate poverty around the world.

Lorenzo said the world's population, which was six billion in 1999, could shoot to nine billion in 2050. "Worse, the greater increase in population will happen in developing countries where poverty and hunger are commonplace and agricultural productivity is low," he said.

“We all know that conventional crop improvement alone will not double food production in the next five decades,” Lorenzo said.

He said that experts have agreed that the solution to this dilemma can only come from increased yields from the same land area on less water, noting that arable land per capita of 0.45 hectares in 1966 dwindled to 0.25 in 1998 and will only be 0.15 by 2050.

Lorenzo said that last year’s statistics indicated that only one-third of developing countries saw a reduction in hunger incidence. He said that some even showed no improvements while others even experienced a more severe food scarcity.

Construction generates employment for the poor, strengthens domestic economy — Neri

The growth in the construction subsector as reflected in the recent first quarter economic performance has translated to more jobs for unskilled workers which comprise majority of the poor, according to Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri.

Neri said efforts of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to jumpstart housing construction seems to have paid off. The recent April Labor Force Survey Results showed that employment in the construction subsector posted the biggest increase, growing 4.9 percent in the month of April 2003, or the highest since October 2001.

“Construction contributed eighty-one thousand jobs in April alone, more than five times what it added in the same period in 2002,” Neri said.

Neri said that housing construction has a high multiplier effect on the economy, about 16.6 times, meaning that every P10 billion worth of housing units will contribute a total of P166 billion of economic activity for the country.

He noted that poverty incidence seems to subside during high construction activities in a certain place. “This is because construction is labor intensive and tends to employ the less skilled of our labor force,” Neri said.

He said that the government aims not only to make housing more affordable to all Filipinos but also to generate employment for the less skilled workers.

With the marked improvement in jobs generated by the construction subsector, industry was able to employ more people than lose them for the first time since April last year, Neri said.

Neri also noted that despite the impact of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the recent US-Iraq war, employment in domestic tourism-related industries such as hotels, restaurants and transportation rose in April.

This was seen in the growth of employment in the transportation, communication and storage subsector by 8.7 percent in the month of April 2003 which employed roughly 2.29 million workers compared to 2.1 million workers in the same month last year.

Employment in the community, social and personal services subsector, which includes recreation, cultural and sporting activities, grew by 2.7 percent in the month of April and employed 901,000 workers compared to 877,000 in April 2002.

Lastimoso’s relief as LTO Chief routine and proper — Palace

Press Secretary Milton Alingod today took exception to reports and speculations that Land Transportation Office Chief Roberto Lastimoso was relieved from the LTO post without being officially informed before hand.

Alingod confirmed that Undersecretary Enrique D. Perez of the Presidential Search Committee was able to talk to Lastimoso over the phone late morning of Thursday, July 3, 2003, when the latter was informed that DOTC Undersecretary Agustin Bengzon has been designated by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as Officer-In-Charge of the LTO, at the same time that Lastimoso had been appointed Assistant Secretary in the DOTC.

“Perez had been trying to contact Lastimoso since July 1, 2003 but the latter was either out of town or in meetings” Alingod said.

He also pointed out that the Office of the Executive Secretary transmitted the Bengzon and Lastimoso papers, by courier and fax, before the close of office hours on July 3, 2003. These were officially received by the LTO and DOTC early evening of the same date, he said.

Alingod emphasized that the process of replacement was routine and proper, and that there was never an intent to treat Lastimoso unceremoniously or put him in bad light.

“In fact, President Arroyo said General Lastimoso was trying to do his best but he was simply overwhelmed by the morass of problems in the LTO,” he added.

President’s radio address to the nation

Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat.

Sunod-sunod na naman ang ginagawang pag-atake ng mga NPA nitong mga nakaraang araw sa ilang bahagi ng ating kapuluan, na kung saan marami sa ating mga magigiting na sundalo at inosenteng sibilyan ang mga namatay at nasugatan. Patuloy pa rin sila sa paninira ng mga pampublikong pasilidad tulad ng pag-susunog ng mga bus dahil ang mga may-ari ng mga sasakyang ito ay ayaw mag-bayad o hindi nakakabayad sa kanila ng illegal na “*revolutionary*” tax.

Talagang sobra na ang pang-gugulo at paninirang ginagawa nila sa ating bayan at sa ating mga kababayan. At ang mga ito ay ginagawa nila habang tayo ay abala sa pag-resolba sa ilang mga problema sa ating bansa tulad ng problema sa Mindanao na kung saan isinasaayos natin ang kalagayan ng mga evacuees na nadamay sa ilang sagupaan sa pagitan ng mga kawal ng gobyerno at MILF.

Marahil inyong napapansin na may umiiral na katahimikan ngayon sa mindanao at ang mga evacuees ay nag-uuwian na. Kaya naman isanasa-ayos na natin ang lahat para sa isang tunay na usapang pang-kapayapaan sa pagitan ng gobyerno at MILF. Habang inaasaayos ang prosesong pang-kapayapaan, pinananatili natin ang marami sa ating mga kawal sa Mindanao para matiyak ang seguridad at katahimikan sa buong rehiyon.

Ang nakakalungkot, sinasamantala ng mga npa ang sitwasyong ito para makapaglunsad sila ng mga pag-atake laban sa pamahalaan at maging sa mga sibilyan. May posibilidad din na patuloy silang nakikipag-sabwatan sa mga MILF at iba pang mga grupo sa mga pang-gugulong ito. Napatunayan na natin noon pa ang alyansang ito sa pagitan ng NPA at MILF dahil sa mga dokumentong nakalap, at maaring patuloy pa rin ang sabwatang ito hanggang ngayon. Inatasan ko na ang ating government peace panel na isama sa kanilang pakikipag-usap sa MILF ang tungkol sa sabwatang ito sa pagitan nila at ng NPA at tigilan na ito, dahil lubhang makaka-apekto sa isinasagawang proseso para sa usapang pang-kapayapaan.

Inatasan ko na rin ang Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security na determinahin ang “optimum deployment” ng ating mga sundalo at mga tauhang sibilyan para sa mas maayos at mabilis na pag-responde sa mga pag-babanta mula sa ibat-ibang grupo sa ibat-ibang panig ng kapuluan.

Haharapin natin ng buong tatag at may lubos na kahandaan ang panibagong bantang ito mula sa NDF-CPP-NPA. Inilunsad na natin ang isang Comprehensive Counteraction Plan na kung saan pag-sasabayin natin ang aksyong militar, pulitikal at legal sa pag-resolba sa problemang ito. Habang hinaharap natin ang NPA units, pag-iibayuhin

natin ang mga aksyong legal laban sa mga namumuno sa National Democratic Front na nag-kukunwaring nakikipaglaban para sa demokrasya pero ang katotohanan ay nais lamang pabagsakin ang pamahalaan sa pamamagitan ng dahas.

Inatasan ko na ang mga kinaukulan na ihain na sa ating mga korte at maging sa mga international venue ang mga kaso laban sa mga pinuno ng NDF. Ito ay para mapigilan na ang mga pag-kilos ng mga pinunong ito, at para mahinto na ang pag-gamit ng kanilang pondo at mga mapanirang kagamitan.

Mula ng ikondena noong nakaraang taon ng Estados Unidos at European Union ang NDF-CPP-NPA bilang mga terorista, nahirapan na silang mangalap ng pondo kaya sila ay napilitang humanap ng mapagkukunan ng pang-gastos tulad ng pagtanim ng marijuana. Ilang marijuana plantations na rin sa ating bansa ang nahuling pinatatakbo ng NPA. Malamang na labis na ring nababahala ang grupong ito dahil sa ating mga mas pina-igting na laban kontra ilegal na droga at marijuana.

There is a strong link between terrorism and drug syndicates. The war against drugs is a war against terrorists, and vice versa.

Patuloy rin nating i-isolate sa pandaigdigang komunidad ang grupong ito para wala ng iba pang madamay sa kanilang masasamang gawain, at para wala na ring bansa na magbibigay sa kanila ng suporta. We shall isolate them from the international community by exposing them for what they are – terrorist masquerading as revolutionaries.

Inutos ko na rin ang pagre-rebisa o muling pag-aaral sa Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantees sa pagitan ng pamahalaan at NDF dahil napapabalitang ginagamit lamang na “cover” ng mga NDF consultants ang kasunduang ito para maisagawa nila ang ilang buktot na hangarin.

We are combining military action with political and legal action against this renewed threat. As we move against NPA units, we shall step up legal action against all personalities of the NDF ostensibly engaged in democratic struggle but clandestinely leading and abetting the overthrow of government by force and violence.

Inatasan ko na rin ang ating military at intelligence agencies na i-dokumento at ibunyag ang panlolokong ito ng NDF, CPP at NPA – ang kanilang terrorist activities at ang kanilang kaugnyan sa mga terrorist organizations.

We will combine all necessary measures to stop this threat and defeat it by the use of force, political action and long-term social reforms. Poverty is the spawning ground for terrorist recruits.

At kahit na pinaigting pa natin ang labanang ito kontra NDF-CPP-NPA, asahan natin na patuloy pa rin silang magsasagwa ng mga pataksil na pag-atake, lalo na sa mga pampublikong pasilidad tulad ng sa komunikasyon at transportasyon. Kaya nga inatasan ko na ang ating PNP at iba pang mga kaukulang ahensya na maging alerto at pag-ibayuhin ang pagmamanman at pag-babantay sa mga pasilidad na ito para mapigil agad ang anumang mga pag-babanta.

Gusto ko ring paalalahanan ang ating mga local na opsiyal tungkol sa mga permit to campaign na isa sa mga terrorist fund raising activities ng NPA. Alam natin na ang permit na ito may katumbas na halaga na kung hindi ninyo bibigyan ng kaukulang pansin ay maaring makakasama sa inyo. Matagal na nilang ginagawa ang buktot na gawaing ito. Panahon na para matigil ito para mag-karoon ng mga mas karapatdapat na mga local officials sa halip na yaong mga sinusuportahan ng mga NPA na mga walang karapatang mamuno sa inyong komunidad. Alliances with the NPA are alliances with terrorists.

Hinihiling ko na rin ang tulong ng mga baranggay at mga komunidad sa pagmamatayag na ito. Maraming mga bantang pag-atake ng mga NPA ang nabigo dahil sa pakikipag-tulungan ng mga taong-bayan. Muli nating patunayan na sa ating tunay na pagtutulungan nakasalalay ang katahimikan ng bayan.

Mga mahal kong kababayan, ang NDF-CPP-NPA ay isang palubog na organisasyon na kinondena na sa ibat-ibang bansa. Desperado na ang mga miyembro nito habang ang kanilang mga pinuno ay nagpapasasa sa ibang bansa. Nanatiling buhay ang organisasyon ito dahil na rin sa pakikipag-sabwatan sa ilang mga grupong may masasamang balak sa pambansang katatagan.

Ginawa na natin ang lahat ng alam natin na mapayapang pamamaraan pero nanatili silang nag-mamatigas. Patuloy pa rin nating isasagawa ito pero hindi ibig sabihin na patuloy nilang magagawa ang kanilang mga mapanirang gawain. Hahadlangan natin sila at kung kinakailangan gawin ang ibang pamamaraan para matigil sila ay gagawin natin.

Sa tulong ninyo ay maisasakatuparan natin ito.

Maraming salamat.

War vs drugs is war vs terrorism — GMA

The war against drugs is a war against terrorists and vice versa.

This, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo emphasized today as she divulged the strong link between terrorism and drug syndicates.

“We shall isolate this group from the international community by exposing them for what they are – terrorists masquerading as revolutionaries,” the President said in her weekly radio address this morning.

The President recounted how the National Democratic Front-Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (NDF-CPP-NPA) has been forced to plant marijuana ever since being declared by the United States and the European Union as terrorists.

Some of the marijuana plantations, according to her, are being run by the rebels, and the current government campaign against illegal drugs has been making life difficult for them.

The President said she has ordered the revision or further study of the Joint Agreement on Security and Immune Guarantees between the government and the NDF because of reports that NDF consultants are just using this as a cover for their illegal activities.

“We are combining military action with political and legal action against this renewed threat,” she said. “As we move against NPA units, we shall step up legal action against all personalities of the NDF ostensibly engaged in democratic struggle but clandestinely leading and abetting the overthrow of government by force and violence.”

She asked local government officials to help put a stop to the illegal permit to campaign fund-raising activities of the NPA, which the rebel group has been using to put favored candidates into office.

“Panahon na para matigil ito para magkaroon ng mga mas karapat-dapat na mga local officials sa halip na yaong sinusuportahan ng mga NPA na walang karapatang mamuno sa inyong komunidad (It’s high time that these activities are stopped so that we can put deserving officials instead of those supported by the NPA),” the President said.

“Alliances with the NPA are alliances with terrorists,” she stressed.

She then asked the help of the barangays and the communities at large to be vigilant in this regard.

“Maraming mga bantang pag-atake ng mga NPA ang nabigo dahil sa pakikipagtulungan ng mga taong-bayan. Muli nating patunayan na sa ating tunay na pagtutulongan nakasalalay ang katahimikan ng bayan. (Many planned NPA attacks were foiled because of the help of the citizenry. Let us prove once again that peace can be attained by helping one another),” the President said.

GMA thanks JDV for ‘going the extra mile’ in the search for peace with the communist rebels

CAMP RIEGO DE DIOS, Tanza, Cavite — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed her appreciation for the efforts of Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., in “going the extra mile” to achieve peace in the country.

Speaking at the inauguration of an off-base housing project for soldiers here, the President said she has no doubt Speaker de Venecia has the best interest of the Filipino people in mind when he met with the leaders of the National Democratic Front (NDF) in the Hague, the Netherlands from June 26-29.

The President, however, said that talks with the NDF, the political front of the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People’s Army, are still at the exploratory stage and will not affect the comprehensive countermeasures the government is drawing up against the resurgent threats.

“These countermeasures will not relent until we see a definite shift in the political and armed agenda of the revolutionary left to overthrow a constitutional democracy,” the President said.

The President stressed that the government will “continue to use force against force, truth against deception.”

More than 1,000 soldiers and their families stand to benefit from the off-base housing project the President has just inaugurated.

The project, a joint venture of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Laguna Properties Holdings, Inc. (LPHI), is being developed at the 20-hectare portion of this sprawling camp.

A total of 1,300 quality and affordable housing units would be constructed and would be ready for occupancy by next year.

The President initially inaugurated four model units. She also led in the groundbreaking ceremony for the formal commencement of the construction of the rest of the housing units, infrastructure and other amenities inside the village.

Aside from the housing units, LPHI will also build a multi-purpose area with clubhouse and sports facilities, road network, and utilities for water, light and sewage, an area for public market and other commercial establishments, as well as a space for a church and school.

Housing units vary from single detached to duplex, and to town houses. Monthly amortization, through Pag-IBIG housing loans, ranges from as low as P2,344 to as high as P6,143.

GMA groundbreaking off-base housing project for soldiers in Tanza, Cavite

CAMP RIEGO DE DIOS, Tanza, Cavite — To prove that the government is sincere in its promise to improve the lot of the Filipino soldiers, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the groundbreaking of an off-base community housing project in this sprawling military camp.

The groundbreaking ceremony signals the formal construction of a total of 1,323 quality and affordable housing units within the 20-hectare Riego de Dios Village inside the camp.

The President also inspected the four model housing units.

In her brief remarks, the President lauded Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Gen. Narciso Abaya, for initiating the project that would benefit ordinary military personnel and their families.

“Dapat alagaan natin and mga kawal dahil sila ang nagtatanggol sa ating kapayapaan, at sa ating kasarinlan (We should take care of our soldiers because they defend our peace and independence),” President said.

The President said that she wants to ensure that all soldiers assigned in the field have a peace of mind while performing their duty to protect the interest of the country against communist rebels.

She said that through these off-base housing projects, even the private first class and first lieutenants in the Armed Forces can now avail the quality but affordable housing units at Riego de Dios Village.

The Riego de Dios housing project is the first joint venture of the AFP and real estate developer Laguna Properties Holdings, Inc. (LPHI), an Ayala Land subsidiary.

This is the first of four military camps initially picked for off-base housing development. The others are Camp Aquino in San Miguel, Tarlac; Camp Evangelista in Cagayan De Oro; and the AFP Officers Village in Taguig, Metro Manila.

General Abaya said that about 17,000 soldiers and their families would be the direct beneficiaries of these four off-base housing projects.

Aside from Reyes, other officials who attended the simple groundbreaking ceremony were Press Secretary Milton Alingod, Secretary Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Secretary Marita Jimenez of the Official Development Absorption Office, and local officials of Cavite led Rep. Gilbert Remulla.

Earlier, the President visited the Salawag Elementary School in Dasmariñas, also in Cavite, for the inauguration and turnover of a two-classroom school building donated by the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (FFCCCI).

Secretary Edilberto De Jesus of the Department of Education accompanied the President during the inspection of the school building at the Salawag Elementary School.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 5, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514160735/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july05.htm>

The President's Day: July 6, 2003

06 JULY 2003

- **GMA orders expansion of jails, rehab centers for drug pushers, users**
- **Lina vows to unmask drug lords, protectors**

GMA orders expansion of jails, rehab centers for drug pushers, users

CLARK ECONOMIC ZONE, Angeles City – The burst of arrests and voluntary surrender of pushers and users of dangerous drugs prompted President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night to order the expansion of lockup and rehabilitation facilities all over the country.

The situation in the jails has become “very, very substandard” and the rehabilitation facilities are getting overcrowded, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. informed the President during a command conference on illegal drugs here on Saturday night.

During a conference held at the Clark Development Corp. (CDC) building, the heads of the different agencies mobilized in the administration’s intensified war against dangerous drugs gave the President a update on their accomplishments thus far, including the number of suspected pushers and users arrested and who voluntarily turned themselves in.

The President was likewise apprised on the problem areas in the ongoing campaign, one of which is the lack of space and facilities in jails and rehabilitation centers.

The President then directed Lina and the heads of the law-enforcement agencies to hasten the expansion of the jail facilities and the opening of rehabilitation centers nationwide to accommodate the growing number of drug pushers and users netted in the ant-drug campaign.

Because of the intensified crackdown against the drug syndicates and pushers, many of those involved in the trade are coming out and willing to undergo voluntary rehabilitation, the President learned.

The situation in the jails has become “very, very much substandard,” said Secretary Lina. “So the President has also directed us to tap into the P1-billion fund so we can expand our jail facilities and open the rehabilitation centers to as many of our citizens who would want to undergo rehabilitation,” he added.

Lina said they are now conducting an inventory of the jails and will prioritize those that are heavily congested to allocate the resources wisely.

He said the government would put up a rehabilitation center in a region where there is no such center.

“In an area where there is a rehabilitation center but there is not enough space, the government will augment that rehabilitation center and enhance it, whether it’s national or local,” Lina said.

In an area where there is no rehabilitation center, Lina added, the national government would go into a joint venture operation with the private rehabilitation center.

Among those present during the command conference on illegal drugs, aside from Secretary Lina, were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency Director General Anselmo Avenido, PNP Anti-Drug Task Force commander Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay, Local Government Undersecretary Agnes Devanadera, Justice Undersecretary Merceditas Gutierrez, Health Undersecretary Antonio Lopez, Customs

Commissioner Antonio Bernardo, PNP Region 3 director Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, Pampanga police provincial director Sr. Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, Angeles City Mayor Carmelo Lazatin, Nueva Ecija Governor Tomas Joson III, Clark Development Corporation president Emmanuel Angeles, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Chairman Felicito Payumo, and Press Secretary Milton Alingod.

Lina vows to unmask drug lords, protectors

CLARK ECONOMIC ZONE, Angeles City – Interior and Local Government Jose Lina, Jr. pledged last night to unmask soon the big-time drug lords and their protectors.

“It’s just a matter of time,” said Lina as he emerged from a command conference on illegal drugs presided over by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the Clark Development Corp. building here Saturday night.

He said the various agencies mobilized by the President in the anti-drug war have identified these drug lords and their protectors and are now in the process of collecting and collating evidence against them.

“In prosecuting a case, you need proof beyond reasonable doubt,” Lina added.

Lina said he is confident the systematic collection of evidence against the so-called big fish in the dangerous drugs trade and their protectors in government would soon produce the desired result.

He said there are 13 transnational syndicates and 175 local drug groups operating in the country and some of them have already been neutralized.

“The ones heading these drug groups, whether transnational or local, and their protectors, are already identified and evidence will be gathered to make sure that they are successfully prosecuted,” he said.

He said the President has instructed the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB), the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and other law enforcement agencies to produce significant and strategic results within three months.

“The target is to produce strategic and significant results to the end that the people see and feel the impact of the campaign against illegal drugs in the various communities all over the country,” Lina said.

He said their targets in the three-month campaign include one-third of the transnational groups, one-third of the local drug groups, one-third of the drug pushers and traffickers, and one-third of the barangays affected.

He added there would be a colloquium of policemen, judges and prosecutors on the third week of July so that there would be a speedy and impartial disposition of drug-related cases.

“If the cases are not resolved in a fast manner, the campaign will also be affected as the citizens might think there is nothing happening,” he said.

He said the first seminar will be held in Manila to thresh out and remove the problem areas that block the speedy disposition of cases.

Lina also stressed that the cleansing of the ranks of law enforcement agencies has also produced results. He said several policemen have tested positive for drug use and some of them are already facing summary dismissal proceedings.

“Those who are directly involved in the violation of Republic Act 9165, or the Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, are also facing criminal cases,” he said.

Philippine National Police Anti-Drug Task Force commander Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay added that 93 PNP officers and men have been administratively charged in connection with illegal drugs cases and 18 are facing criminal charges. He said they are looking at one percent of the 114,000 population of the PNP as being involved in dangerous drugs.

“So tuloy-tuloy itong kampanyang ito at ang ating Pangulo ay talagang nakatutok dito (So this intensified campaign will be pursued and the President really wants to see accomplishments),” Lina said.

During the command conference, the President was given the latest update and informed of the problem areas in the ongoing campaign against illegal drugs.

Aside from Lina, among those present during the command conference were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency Director General Anselmo Avenido, PNP Anti-Drug Task Force commander Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay, Local Government Undersecretary Agnes Devanadera, Justice Undersecretary Merceditas Gutierrez, Health Undersecretary Antonio Lopez, Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo, PNP Region 3 head Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, PNP provincial director Sr. Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, Angeles City Mayor Carmelo Lazatin, Nueva Ecija Governor Tomas Joson III, Clark Development Corp. president Emmanuel Angeles, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Chairman Felicito Payumo, and Press Secretary Milton Alingod.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 6, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514160746/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july06.htm>

The President's Day: July 7, 2003

07 JULY 2003

- **GMA, FG launch search for model Filipino sportsman-citizens in PBA**
- **Statement of the President: NPA-CPP-NDF**
- **Statement of the President: Drug Rehabilitation**
- **Statement of the President: Moscow Bombing**
- **Howard, GMA to discuss cooperation to combat terrorism, other bilateral issues**
- **OPAPP says Salamat needed in GRP-MILF talks to ensure binding peace pact**
- **GMA stresses 4-point policy on community rebels**

GMA, FG launch search for model Filipino sportsman-citizens in PBA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Sunday graced Game 3 of the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) Finals between the Coca Cola Tigers and Talk and Text Phone Pals at the Araneta Coliseum.

The President arrived at about 5:40 p.m. while the Sta. Lucia Realtors and Barangay Ginebra were playing, 80-65 and around 9:45 to go in the game, for the PBA Mabuhay Cup.

The First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and First Daughter Luli Macapagal-Arroyo accompanied the President, who was met by PBA Commissioner Noli Eala and other PBA officials.

In an interview, First Gentleman "Mike" Arroyo said the First Family was there to launch the FG Foundation search for the basketball sportsman, in partnership with the PBA.

Arroyo said the search called for basketball players who would be a role model as a sportsman and as a citizen.

During the search, at least five PBA players would be accorded the title of sportsmen and model Filipinos.

Eala, on his part, welcomed the tie-up and stressed that this would help much in upgrading the quality of professional basketball, not only as a premier game in the country but as a venue for showing to the youth the better values of a good life.

Statement of the President: NPA-CPP-NDF

We will press on tactical countermeasures in tandem with the peace process. We will continue to move against NPA formations and protect the communities from NPA depredations, as we open the door to rebels who wish to return to the fold. The employment of force shall be balanced by the hand of reconciliation extended to those who renounce violence in the pursuit of political ends.

Statement of the President: Drug Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is a vital component of the comprehensive anti-drug campaign. It is important to undertake a national strategy for drug rehabilitation based on the consolidation of expertise and resources of the national and local governments, working with private organizations and committed communities. This will start with an immediate inventory and expansion of the country's jails and drug rehabilitation centers to accommodate the growing number of drug users the government has apprehended in the anti-drug campaign. Timely intervention can stop drug use and curtail demand.

Statement of the President: Moscow Bombing

The Philippine government condemns the recent terrorist attacks in Moscow and in Pakistan. We know the pain of being victimized by terror and we stand firmly with all nations in the fight against terrorism. Our law enforcement agencies and our communities must be alert at all times to thwart terrorist incursions. Philippine embassies abroad are already advised to take precautionary measures.

Howard, GMA to discuss cooperation to combat terrorism, other bilateral issues

Australian Prime Minister John Howard said that today he will be discussing cooperation between the Philippines and Australia on how to combat terrorism and other bilateral issues affecting the two countries.

In a statement released by the Australian Embassy in Manila, Howard said that he is looking forward to meeting with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during his official visit to Manila July 14-15.

“A major focus of our discussion will be on practical cooperation to combat terrorism,” Howard said.

The Philippines and Australia signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on cooperation to combat international terrorism on March 4, 2003 in Canberra.

Howard said that while in Manila, he will also address the Asia Society and meet with Australian and Philippine business leaders.

From Manila, Howard will proceed to Seoul and Tokyo.

He said his visit to the Philippines, Japan and the Republic of Korea would also give him the opportunity to promote commercial links with each of these three countries.

Howard said the visit would also give him the chance to discuss with Australia’s key regional partners such major international and regional security issues such as North Korea, terrorism, and Iraq.

OPAPP says Salamat needed in GRP-MILF talks to ensure binding peace pact

Ensure a final and binding peace pact.

This is why government urges the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to field chairman Hashim Salamat as head of its peace panel.

“MILF Chair Salamat’s active participation and presence in the peace negotiation is demanded by government to ensure that the final peace agreement be binding on the whole organization of the MILF,” said the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP).

In a statement, it said this would follow the “example of the GRP-MNLF (Government of the Republic of the Philippines-Moro National Liberation Front) Peace Accord of 1996 which was directly handled by MNLF Chairman (Nur) Misuari.”

The OPAPP said “the government negotiating panel talking with the MILF is fully clothed with authority by (President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) in entering into agreements.”

It added that the President “has given her policy guidance at the start of the negotiations under her administration.”

The President also “continues to personally assess and define the directions of the government panel as the peace process develops,” it stressed.

The OPAPP also clarified that the government understood the “difficulty and complication posed by the warrants of arrest against MILF leaders involved in the peace talks.”

It said the “Justice Department is attending to this concern.”

Earlier, Acting Presiding Judge Andrew Banayo of the 4th Municipal Circuit Trial Court of Maigo-Bacolod-Munai in Lanao del Norte issued a warrant of arrest on about 400 MILF officials and men headed by Salamat.

The cases included multiple frustrated murder, theft of large cattle, malicious mischief, serious illegal detention, multiple murder and brigandage.

The OPAPP stressed that the executive department could not impose on the Judiciary and the “courts have to determine the legal and reasonable action on a petition for the suspension of the application of the warrants of arrest.”

But the MILF would have to initiate this, it added.

GMA stresses 4-point policy on community rebels

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to continue implementing her four-point policy to protect civilians from communist depredations and keep the door open to all communist rebels who wish to return to the fold of the law.

The President issued the instruction during the meeting of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS) right after she received from top military officials intelligence and operations update on the campaign against the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF).

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said the President also instructed the Armed Forces officials to continue punitive action against NPA members who are involved in a series of attacks against civilian communities.

During the meeting, Bunye said the President reiterated her earlier four-point policy to:

- Optimize deployment of military and civilian resources;
- Initiate politico-legal-diplomatic moves to put an end to the reported tie-up of NPA and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF);
- Document link between the so-called front organizations and the terrorist organizations; and
- Implement a comprehensive package of socio-economic program in so-called “influenced” barangays.

Bunye said the President wants the military to provide alternative socio-economic projects to those barangays that are influenced by the communist rebels.

Bunye admitted that although the possible resumption of the peace talks between the government and the CPP-NPA-NDF was not discussed during the meeting, the President reiterated her earlier position to accept members of the NPA who are willing to renounce violence.

Earlier, Secretary Silvestre Bello III, head of the government panel negotiating peace with the rebels, reported to the President that both the GRP and CPP-NDF-NPA agreed to resume negotiations before the end of this month.

Bunye said, however, that in the COCIS meeting this morning, the comments of Secretary Bello were not specifically discussed.

“But the President has a separate statement which indicates that she’s open to receiving into the fold of the law those who are willing to renounce violence,” Bunye said.

Bunye added that with regard to the alleged link of the NPA to drug syndicates, both Interior Secretary Jose D. Lina and PNP Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. had confirmed that marijuana plantations have been found in NPA-controlled areas in Benguet province.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: July 7, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514160756/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july07.htm>

The President's Day: July 8, 2003

08 JULY 2003

- **Statement of the President: NPA**
- **Statement of the President: Anti-Drug Operations**
- **Statement of the President: MILF**
- **Statement of the President: Ambush attempt on Mayor Arcillas**
- **Gov't to implement more socio-economic projects in some 500 NPA-influenced barangays — Palace**
- **Gov't ready to name drug lords, coddlers, says GMA**
- **GMA cites Valenzuela City's drive against unscrupulous grains traders**
- **GMA credits bishops-businessmen confab for poll computerization**
- **GMA to bring distance learning program to Visayas**
- **USAID to put in \$70M in grants for RP peace, development programs**

Statement of the President: NPA

The government will move on two priority areas. First, we will conduct a political social and economic audit on the 500 or so NPA-influenced barangays identified by the intelligence community and determine a specific set of military or developmental countermeasures to extricate these poverty-stricken barangays from the grip of the dissidents. Second, we will identify and expose the growing number of front organizations of the CPP-NPA-NDF and cut their links from domestic and foreign funding sources. We will mount a full court press on the security and developmental components of this threat, even as we leave the door open to peace talks based on constitutional, democratic participation.

Statement of the President: Anti-Drug Operations

The intelligence community maintains a list of the most notorious drug lords and their coddlers. That list will be disclosed in due time as information is gathered on these personalities. I want the people to know the face of the enemy, who should not be allowed to move around freely under a cloak of legitimacy. Drug lords must be exposed for what they are, destroyers of our future. Our crusade must be relentless and all encompassing.

Statement of the President: MILF

We are open to the suspension of warrants by the court if this is necessary to move the peace talks forward. The MILF must not tarry on the procedural issues involved, especially so that it has several lawyers and legal advisers among its ranks. We continue to build confidence in the peace process and we are preparing for the opening of talks. We must avoid being bogged down by these matters.

Statement of the President: Ambush attempt on Mayor Arcillas

We condemn the series of assassination attempts on municipal executives, considering that this is already the 4th case within the span of weeks. The DILG Secretary has ordered the full investigation of this incident.

Gov't to implement more socio-economic projects in some 500 NPA-influenced barangays — Palace

Malacañang today said that through its various agencies, the government will step up the implementation of specific socio-economic projects in some 500 barangays in the country that are "influenced" by the communist New People's Army (NPA).

In an interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that this was one of the items taken up by the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS) in its regular meeting Monday.

According to intelligence reports, out of the more than 40,000 barangays in the country, the NPA is relatively strong in some 500 barangays because of poverty.

“Ang ibig sabihin nito ay medyo malakas ang NPA sa mga barangay na ito (What this means is that the NPA seems to have a strong influence in these barangays),” Bunye said.

In a statement, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that the government will conduct a political, social and economic audit on these 500 barangays and determine a specific set of military or developmental countermeasures to extricate them from the grip of the dissidents.

Bunye said that one the measures now being conducted by the government is distance learning where residents in a remote barangay could get their education even with the absence of regular classrooms or teachers.

Distance learning is being conducted by teacher-soldiers assigned to remote localities.

These soldier-teachers, now mostly assigned to relocation centers in Mindanao, are doing quite well and the government plans to expand this activity to other areas where dissident groups are active, Bunye said.

Gov’t ready to name drug lords, coddlers, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that the government is now ready to name the most notorious drug lords and their coddlers as part of the government’s stepped-up campaign against illegal drugs.

Speaking before the 27th general assembly and annual meeting of the Bishops-Businessmen’s Conference for Human Development at the NBC Tent in Fort Bonifacio Global City in Taguig, the President said that the intelligence community has a list of the most notorious drug lords and coddlers, and in due time, their names and necessary information would be exposed to the public.

“Drug lords must be exposed for what they are: destroyers of our future,” the President said.

The President said that the government crusade against personalities behind the proliferation of illegal substances in the country must be “relentless and encompassing.”

She explained that the rampant operation of illegal drug syndicates in the country is a major challenge to the country’s peace and order that needs a strong political will.

The main part of the President’s speech was devoted to the electoral reforms being undertaken by the Commission on Elections aimed at assuring clean and honest national and local elections in 2004.

She added that while the government is trying to achieve fundamental reforms in the electoral process and in seeking peace in Mindanao, there is also an immediate need for all sectors in society to work together to fight illegal drugs.

The President also lauded the bishops and businessmen for their sincere efforts and guidance in helping the government resolve the problems that the country is facing.

GMA cites Valenzuela City’s drive against unscrupulous grains traders

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today commended local officials of Valenzuela City for their aggressive drive against unscrupulous businessmen selling repacked National Food Authority (NFA) rice priced at commercial levels.

The President, together with Valenzuela City Mayor Jose Emmanuel Carlos, inspected a Valenzuela warehouse stocked with NFA rice due for repacking and overpriced marketing.

Also found inside the warehouse were machineries and equipment for milling and repacking.

She congratulated Carlos and barangay officials for having discovered the trading anomaly and having acted on the case immediately.

The President said the anomaly involved some 230,000 to 240,000 bags of NFA rice worth several millions of pesos.

The poor consumers would have been shortchanged by ill-motivated businessmen if not for the discovery, she said.

Meanwhile, Carlos said he had issued last July 1 an order for the immediate closure of the MGM Metro Grains Marketing warehouse owned and operated by Eleonor Rodriguez.

The warehouse is located at Pearl Island Industrial Compound, Phase II, in Punturin, Lawang Bato, Valenzuela City.

Mayor Carlos cited the failure of the business owners to get the needed business licenses and permits to operate the warehouse, among others.

GMA credits bishops-businessmen confab for poll computerization

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the Church and civil society to assist the government in “monitoring the milestones and advancing the advocacies of a poll modernization program that business and church leaders have been pushing for some time now.

In a speech before the 27th General Assembly of the Bishops-Businessmen Conference in Makati City, the President told her audience: “I want to ask for your support in making the systems work.”

“After all, you worked long and hard for (the modernization of the electoral system), and I was only your instrument, as a faithful daughter of the Church, to make sure the facilities are made available,” she said.

“We want to see the elections of May 2004 as a time when we cross a bold new threshold in democracy by cleaning up the voting process,” she added.

The President recalled how leaders of the conference advocated for “High-tech *na boto, ito ang susi ng pagbabago* (High-tech votes, key to reforms).”

She said this inspired her to take a “giant leap of making available the financing needed to fully computerize the quick and accurate counting and tabulation of votes in the 2004 and subsequent elections” despite a multitude of threats to national security and stability.

The President added that she had assigned Science and Technology Secretary Estrella Alabastro to work closely with Commission on Elections (COMELEC) officials “to make sure that the specific system for counting votes is technically above board.”

She also ordered Alabastro to make sure that the system is “responsive to our needs and adherent to the high standards of integrity we want to preserve.”

The President reported that the COMELEC ably bid out the computerization process and the first batch of automated counting machines would arrive on August 5, 2003.

The COMELEC would be setting up a testing site for the machines and would be put through “a grueling set of tests to make sure that they are hardy and worthy,” she said.

“I look forward to that historic day in May next year when these automated counting machines will be first touched by Filipino hands. This will be one of our great legacies to suffrage,” she added.

GMA to bring distance learning program to Visayas

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will launch the government’s Distance Learning Program when she visits depressed villages in Iloilo and Eastern Samar next week.

The President, during the Cabinet meeting today, said she had earlier launched the program, dubbed as the Strong Republic Grade School, in Iligan City last June 16 and in Agusan del Norte last June 17.

She lauded Priority and Official Development Assistance (ODA) Secretary Marita Magpili-Jimenez for spearheading the training of the “*para-guro*” or distance learning teachers that would start Wednesday (July 9).

Reporting on the status of the program, Secretary Jimenez said non-government groups have supported the program, donating some of the available 1,500 long distance learning equipment for grade schools.

Jimenez said requests for the distance learning program from other areas of the country such as cities and other urban areas, especially in the poorest sections of the area, have been received.

The President gave her go-signal to provide the program to the poor sectors of urban centers provided the Department of Education could fund them.

Some 500 Iligan City residents who could not avail themselves of formal education, will soon benefit from the program.

The project will extend the benefits of education to remote barangays bereft of classrooms and teachers, through television facilities.

The government has targeted some 3,000 barangays in Northern Mindanao, including 1,000 from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

All the targeted areas have been known to be sites where people do not even know how to read and write.

“Ignorance has been one of the weaknesses being taken advantage of by the rebels,” the President said, stressing that illiteracy breeds rebellion.

USAID to put in \$70M in grants for RP peace, development programs

In line with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s commitment to accelerate peace and prosperity particularly in Mindanao, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will provide \$70 million in grants for development assistance activities in the country.

Wendy Chamberlain, USAID Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East, said today the agency would review its program in the country.

This included its support for expanding development programs for peace in Mindanao; improved governance of economic processes; delivery of family planning and health services; and stronger environmental management.

In a speech following her courtesy call on President Macapagal-Arroyo, Chamberlain said she hoped to get a better understanding of the challenging issues on peace and development in the Philippines.

Among the agency's priorities are fiscal reforms, particularly measures to continue to enhance revenue collection; continued progress with the privatization of the energy sector; implementation of an effective anti-money laundering regime to combat terrorist financing; and additional measures to encourage economic growth, including investments that create jobs.

"USAID will be pleased to provide assistance similar to what we have provided former MNLF combatants, to help the parties in this conflict to consolidate their peace process and chart a new future for the children of Mindanao," Chamberlain said.

She added that the Philippines had been doing a great job in undertaking the USAID programs in the past.

She rated the country highly especially in good governance, environment management and economic prosperity.

Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, who accompanied Chamberlain during the call, reiterated the United States role in underwriting peace in Mindanao and in pushing diplomatic support for the success of the peace process.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 8, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514160807/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july08.htm>

The President's Day: July 9, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Drug Syndicates**
- **Statement of the President: US Assistance**
- **Statement of the President: Rizal Day Bombing Trial**
- **Statement of the President: UN Listing**
- **GMA says Muklis confession highlights national will to attain peace, security**
- **GMA seeks corporate world's help in distance learning program**
- **GMA cites businessmen's role in pushing good governance**
- **GMA expresses 'deepest thanks' to Malaysia for its efforts in forging peace in Mindanao**
- **Gov't efforts geared towards uplifting lives of people, says Malacañang**

Statement of the President: Drug Syndicates

These groups will be the principal targets of law enforcement operations as we move forward. These will be reinforced by international cooperation so that we can work with other police agencies to close the dragnet. This is a transnational effort as much as it is a community effort domestically. We must exploit the full range of actions needed to neutralize these syndicates and either run them to the ground or bring them to certain justice.

Statement of the President: US Assistance

We welcome the developmental assistance of the United States relative to the peace process with the MILF. Our strategic partnership with the U.S. comes full circle from an alliance against terrorism to an alliance for peace. We are one in combating terrorism and poverty and in pursuing peace and development. This is part of the new perspective of political and economic security in the Asia-Pacific that has emerged in the post-Iraq war period.

Statement of the President: Rizal Day Bombing Trial

Let this trial stand as a grim reminder that terrorists will never escape the long hand of justice. The confession of Yunos Muklis outlines a threat that lives and moves with us from day to day and against which we must exercise unrelenting vigilance. The threat moves within the bowels of our urban centers and across transnational borders. It is ever present, and it may strike at anytime. We must be alert against it individually and collectively.

Statement of the President: UN Listing

The government has been working hard to attain the goals of human development based on the guidelines set by the United Nations. It has been an uphill road but we are not making any excuses. We are determined to accord every Filipino a life of dignity, productivity and security. Our foremost thrusts for human development today are peace in Mindanao under the aegis of the Constitution, and dealing with the drug problem comprehensively and with finality. These are being pursued against the backdrop of larger reforms in governance, the electoral system and in fundamental underpinnings of economic growth with equity. Every Filipino has a role to play in the total human development of our people. Our sense of national community must be strengthened to meet the challenges to peace, security and development.

GMA says Muklis confession highlights national will to attain peace, security

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the trial of Yunos Muklis, who admitted primary involvement in the 2000 Rizal Day bombings, is a tribute to "our sense of national community to meet the challenge of security" and a reminder that terrorists will not go scot-free.

At the opening of the three-day Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Expo 2003 at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City, the President said the confession of Muklis outlined a threat that “terrorism lives and moves with us from day to day and against which we must exercise unrelenting vigilance across transnational borders.”

“It is ever present or it may strike anytime. We must be alert against it individually and collectively,” she said.

But even as people should remain alert against terrorism, the President said, the government “also remains open to peace,” as she exhorted the help and support of the private corporations, foundations and official development partners in attaining national security and developments.

“Because as you lend financial support to the search for peace, the search becomes easier,” she said.

She also welcomed the \$30-million development assistance of the United States relative to the peace process in Mindanao this year and another \$20 million or more for next year once the final peace agreement is signed between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

“Our strategic partnership with the US comes full circle from an alliance against terrorism and alliance for peace. They are one in combating terrorism and poverty and in pursuing peace and development,” she said.

She added the strategic partnership is part of a new perspective of political and economic security in the Asia-Pacific that has emerged from the post-Iraq War period.

GMA seeks corporate world’s help in distance learning program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today asked the country’s top corporate executives to support the Strong Republic Grade School system in some 500 insurgency-influenced barangays in the country.

“I ask the officials of the corporate development communities to help us mainstream distance learning in the 500 insurgency influenced barangays where teachers fear to tread,” the President said at the opening of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Expo 2003 at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City

At least 100 organizations from the public and private sectors are taking part in the July 9 to 11 event, organized by the League of Corporate Foundations (LCF), focusing on educational assistance, environmental care, delivery of basic health and human services, livelihood generation, and entrepreneurial development to support poverty alleviation and national development.

The President said the Knowledge Channel Foundation has been helping the Strong Republic Grade School, wherein students are taught by television.

In areas where television cannot reach them, the students are taught through “technovans,” which house a television set and instructional materials in reading, writing and arithmetic, she said.

“I hope the corporate foundations can provide some of these facilities to access the TV channel or facilities to provide for the technovans,” she added.

The President also asked corporate donors to help reduce the school building gap, referring to the schools with a student-classroom ratio of 100:1.

She said the country needs at least 2,500 additional classrooms to close this gap.

“The Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce is already helping us here. And I hope the other corporate foundations can also contribute to closing this gap,” she said.

The President also thanked the corporate sector for supporting the government’s poverty alleviation and human development program for marginalized communities in the country.

“Last year, I told you that the biggest concrete problem in our country is unemployment. And you responded by focusing over 60 percent of your programs on livelihood generation,” she said.

The President likewise lauded the LCF for its program line-up support for the government initiative to provide potable water for 100 waterless municipalities in the country under her administration’s Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHATI) program.

This is the third year in a row that the President graced the occasion since 1999 when the first week of July was declared Corporate Social Responsibility Week under Presidential Proclamation 229.

The President also toured the various exhibit booths showcasing CSR best practices of the major sponsors such as the Ayala Group of Companies, Mirant, Petron, Shell, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Lopez Group of Companies, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company and Splash Foundation.

GMA cites businessmen’s role in pushing good governance

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the country’s top corporations for advocating and promoting good governance and public service.

“You in the corporate foundations are also the same corporations who have been fighting for good governance. And so I thank you for this staunch advocacy,” the President said at the opening of the three-day Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Expo 2003 at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City.

She specified the Governance Advisory Council, whose members come from corporations, for working together with the Presidential Committee on Effective Governance to coordinate the efforts of government, business and civil society.

In response to the recommendation of the business community, the President said she also required all appointed directors in the corporate boards of government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) and government financial institutions (GFIs) to take an orientation course on corporate governance.

Because of the business community’s support to the advocacy of modernizing elections, the President said she also made available the funds needed to fully computerize and accurately count and tabulate the people’s votes in 2004.

“These are contributions to good governance as well as contributions to the long-term maturity of our people,” she said.

The President, recalling a couple of surveys wherein the business community is willing to contribute in fighting corruption, said she hoped the top corporations and foundations could provide additional funds to support the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) “in the very expensive and tedious task of lifestyle checks.”

She said everything that contributed to a disciplined, law-abiding and upright society should be integrated into the universe of good governance, including the war against drug syndicates.

“These syndicates will be principal targets of law enforcement operations as we move forward,” she said.

GMA expresses ‘deepest thanks’ to Malaysia for its efforts in forging peace in Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed the “deepest gratitude” of the Philippine government to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir and the Malaysian government for their role as principal facilitator and mediator in the peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople said that this expression of gratitude was conveyed during a luncheon meeting with Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Dato Seri Abdullah Bin Ahmad Badawi and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid bin Syed Jaafar Albar.

The two Malaysian officials had a four-hour stopover in Manila on their way to Japan and the Ukraine.

“Of course, we talked about the peace process with the MILF,” Ople said.

Ople said that Malaysia will be taking the lead in forming a peace monitoring team that will supervise the implementation of a ceasefire between the government and MILF once the peace talks are resumed.

He said that Malaysia is still completing the required “consultative process” within the Malaysian government before a formal notice is sent to the Philippine government.

Ople said that to be members of the monitoring team, he has suggested Brunei Darussalam, Bangladesh, Bahrain and Libya.

During the luncheon meeting, the President told the Malaysian officials that she felt that there is merit in the idea of suspending the effect of the arrest warrants issued against the top leaders of the MILF if it is needed to protect the national interest and the security of the country.

“But at the same time, of course, the court is beyond the reach of the executive branch under the Constitutional separation of powers, and all the government can do at this stage is to encourage and prompt the MILF leaders and their legal advisers to initiate these proceedings in court,” Ople told Malacañang reporters.

Ople disclosed that Deputy Prime Minister Badawi is expected to be the new Prime Minister of Malaysia by October this year, at the conclusion of the summit meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference in Kuala Lumpur under the chairmanship of outgoing Prime Minister Mahathir.

Gov’t efforts geared towards uplifting lives of people, says Malacañang

As far as uplifting the lives of Filipinos are concerned, the government is working hard to address the situation.

This was the assurance given by Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye in reaction to criticisms that the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has failed to uplift the lives of the Filipino based on the recent report of the United Nations Human Development Index.

“We know it’s a difficult battle. We are not making any excuses,” said Bunye during a press briefing in Malacañang today.

“But the President is doing her best to address the situation. The development efforts of the President are geared towards solving our principal problems.”

Bunye enumerated the principal problems as Mindanao, terrorism and drugs.

“We just have to work together to give our people the benefit of peace, order and security,” he said.

On the question of whether President Macapagal-Arroyo sought the help of the United States in the campaign against illegal drugs, Bunye said he was not sure if it was touched during the President's meeting with Ambassador Francis Ricciardone.

What he is sure about, he said, is that the country "has a standing arrangement with our neighbors and some of the major countries as far as sharing of intelligence on this matter is concerned."

"This is because the drug problem is a transnational concern that needs to be addressed by nations working very closely," he said.

During the same briefing, Bunye said the country has been very resilient at a time when the world market was not doing very well.

"We had some improvements in the domestic area and we somehow managed to grow. Actually we grew at a rate better than some of our neighbors," he said.

On the Fitch survey which gave low marks for the country's economy, Bunye said the rating did not consider the strides that the country has made in so far as containing the budget deficit is concerned.

"We're making significant strides. Our agricultural sector has improved a lot. We have managed to keep our inflation rate down. As a matter of fact, the inflation rate is at an all-time low," he said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 9, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514160821/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july09.htm>

The President's Day: July 10, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Ceasefire Observers**
- **Statement of the President: ASG**
- **Statement of the President: Anti-Drug Campaign**
- **Statement of the President: Improving the Quality of Life**
- **GMA orders talks for Payatas land acquisition**
- **GMA receives 3 Huey choppers from U.S.**
- **GMA swears in Tinga, 4 CA Justices, 5 envoys**
- **Palace condemns latest Koronabal blast but says it won't affect peace efforts in Mindanao**
- **Palace lauds military for blocking Abu Sayyaf threat**

Statement of the President: Ceasefire Observers

The deployment of Malaysian truce observers will be the start of an effective, durable ceasefire process. This will also deter terrorist acts and enable rehabilitation and development programs to take a speedier, unhampered course in conflict-affected areas. I ask our military and police forces, local governments and all stakeholders in the peace process to lend their full support for the Malaysian ceasefire observer team. I would like to thank Malaysia for its sincere and valued assistance to the Mindanao peace process. The Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, in coordination with the Armed Forces, shall determine the most effective deployment of the members of the ceasefire observer team in a manner that will build confidence in future peace talks and propel these forward to a successful conclusion. This comes closely in the heels of the commitment of the United States to put in a hefty share in the Mindanao peace and development process. We welcome these contributions as a boost to our quest for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in Mindanao.

Statement of the President: ASG

Terrorists will be hunted down wherever they are and be brought to justice. We shall keep them on the run until they are all accounted for. We shall not give them any quarter or opportunity to rest or plan out their evil deeds. Our communities must be vigilant. Our people must be the eyes and ears to help us track down the leaders of the Abu Sayyaf.

Statement of the President: Anti-Drug Campaign

I commend the PDEA for its relentless campaign that led to the neutralization of another drug syndicate in the country. We are expecting more results in the coming weeks. We will not relent in defeating this plague on our society.

Statement of the President: Improving the Quality of Life

As I said, our foremost thrusts for human development today are peace in Mindanao under the Constitution and dealing with the drug problem comprehensively and with finality.

We are moving forward, slowly but surely, in both fronts. Malaysia has agreed to deploy a ceasefire observer team to help us deescalate violence to pave the way for speedier rehabilitation and development in conflict-affected areas. We are starting to account for the big time drug syndicates that are plaguing our communities. We shall overcome our most formidable challenges.

Every Filipino has a role to play in the total human development of our people. Our sense of national community must be strengthened to meet the challenges to peace, security and development.

GMA orders talks for Payatas land acquisition

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered concerned officials to negotiate with owners of big parcels of land in Payatas, Quezon City for the acquisition and distribution to Payatas residents, many of them victims of a landslide that hit the area three years ago.

The President attended a morning Mass at the open basketball court of Phase 2, Lupang Pangako in Payatas celebrated by Fr. Robert Reyes, Fr. Aldrin Suan and parish priest Fr. Joel Bernardo in commemoration of the anniversary of the July 10, 2000 Payatas tragedy.

Accompanying the President were Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman, National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Chairperson Ging Deles, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council Chairman Michael Defensor, Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun, Press Secretary Milton Alingod, and former Quezon City Congressman Dante Liban.

“Kami ho ay nagpunta rito para makiisa sa inyong mga kalungkutan. At kaya katulad nung nasabi ni Fr. Joel, itong lupa ay dapat gawing adhikain kaya ito ho ang ating ginagawa ngayon (We went here to condole with you, and as Fr. Joel said, land distribution here is a must and that is what we are working on),” the President told some 1,000 residents after the Mass.

Defensor said the Payatas area was earlier classified as an unclassified forest land. The government fought for its reclassification but lost in its bid to distribute the land when the court ruled that the area has a valid title as a private land.

He said the President has tasked them to start bargaining with the several owners who are quite willing to negotiate with the government.

“Kasi yung mga may-ari po naman puwede naman silang bayaran ng dahan-dahan ng gobyerno. Kami na po ang makikipag-negosasyon para ho maisaayos yung pagbili ng lupa (We will negotiate with the landowners for the trouble-free acquisition and distribution of the lands),” he said.

A report reaching the President showed the closure of the Payatas dump in 2004 under Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Act.

One of its provisions stated that the city government is given another three years to convert the area from an open dump site into a controlled dump site.

Plans of the national and local governments for the Payatas dump include the utilization and conversion of the methane gas coming out from the trash to energy to light some portions in Lupang Pangako, hopefully before the end of October.

Others included the reduction by 35 meters of the height of the open dump site, establishment of a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) for recyclables to reduce the volume of the 7,000 cubic meters of trash coming in daily from the city, identification of another landfill area in Montalban, and the treatment of leachates so as not to contaminate the Marikina River.

After the May 1 siege, three Payatas children sent their wishes to the President through the “bangkang papel.” Their wish list was granted as it was reported to the President that there are now 582 elementary and high school scholars under the PGMA Scholarship Program who were given P10,000 each under the President’s Social Fund.

Other livelihood program such as waste recycling, broom and bed making, and credit cooperatives were established in the Payatas area under the President’s Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI) program.

GMA receives 3 Huey choppers from U.S.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today formally received from United States Ambassador Francis Ricciardoni three UH-1H Huey helicopters worth \$2.760 million granted by the United States government to the Philippines under its Excess Defense Articles Program (EDA).

The turnover ceremony was held at the 250th Presidential Airlift Wing hangar at the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City after the three helicopters were flown in from Subic Bay yesterday.

The President, together with Defense Undersecretary Feliciano Gacis, Jr., turned over the choppers to the Armed Forces of the Philippines led by Chief of Staff General Narciso Abaya. The AFP chief was joined by Philippine Air Force (PAF) Chief Lt. Gen. Nestor Santillan and Col. Prospero Ocampo, wing commander of the 205th Tactical Helicopter Wing, the PAF unit that will utilize these Huey helicopters.

The newly delivered aircraft were the second batch of refurbished helicopters from a total of eight that the US government had granted to the Philippines three years ago. The first batch of five was delivered in January last year. These are now being utilized in various air operations in Mindanao.

The three helicopters would bring to 38 the total number of helicopters in the Philippine Air Force.

Last July 2, during the 56th anniversary of the PAF, the President had directed the PAF to acquire 20 additional helicopters to augment its existing inventory and strengthen its mission of safeguarding and shielding the nation.

She tasked the PAF modernization board to expedite the bidding for the 20 helicopters within one month.

The President also said that during her recent state visit to Washington, United States President W. George Bush included in their joint communique the provision of 30 additional helicopters for the Philippine Air Force.

GMA swears in Tinga, 4 CA Justices, 5 envoys

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo inducted into office today newly appointed Supreme Court Associate Justice Dante Tinga and four other Associate Justices of the Court of Appeals.

Also sworn in during the mass induction held at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang were five newly confirmed Ambassadors led by Antonio Cabangon Chua, the newly-elected officers and board members of the National Press Club and six other private organizations.

The event was highlighted by the turnover to the Department of Health (DOH) of a Certificate of Drug Donation by the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP), the largest business association of pharmaceutical companies in the country.

PHAP's Drug Donation Program, through its PHAP Cares Foundation, has committed P100 million worth of medicines annually through the DOH for distribution, free of charge, to indigent patients in selected government hospitals.

Sworn in with Tinga were Court of Appeals Associate Justices Arsenio Magpale, Jose Mendoza, Arturo Brion and Jose Reyes, Jr.

Cabangon-Chua, the country's new Ambassador to Laos, was inducted along with newly-confirmed Philippine Ambassadors Laura Q. del Rosario, India with jurisdiction over Nepal and Bhutan; Antonio Rodriguez, Thailand and permanent representative to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific; Ramoncito S. Marino, Lebanon with concurrent jurisdiction over Syria; and Amable Aguiluz V, Special envoy to the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Antonio Antonio of the *Manila Bulletin* led the inductees among the NPC members as newly elected president.

Also sworn in by the Chief Executive were officers of the CMC Foundation International, Inc; Order of the Knights of Rizal; Pan Pacific Club of the Philippines, Speech Communication Organization of the Philippines, Alay Lakad Foundation, Inc. and Philippine Colleges and Universities China Studies Association Inc.

Members of the Philippine delegation to the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games led by Luli Arroyo as honorary chairman of the Special Olympics Philippines were also present during the rites.

Palace condemns latest Koronabal blast but says it won't affect peace efforts in Mindanao

Malacañang today said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today “strongly condemned” the latest bombing incident in Koronadal City, South Cotabato but at the same time stressed that the incident would not affect the ongoing peace efforts in Mindanao.

In his regular press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that the bombing incident at the public market in Koronadal City this afternoon has been brought to the attention of the President.

“The President strongly condemned this terroristic act. But we will try to go after the perpetrators of this incident. We will make sure that they are brought to justice,” Bunye said.

Bunye added, however, that despite the latest terrorist act, the government is keeping the doors open for “those who genuinely desire peace in Mindanao.”

He was referring to the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which is set to resume talks with the government under the auspices of the Malaysian government.

When asked whether the Koronadal bombing would affect the resumption of the talks with the MILF, Bunye said that the government has “already gone this far already” and the two sides have made significant headway.

“We should not throw some obstacles to the pursuit of genuine peace for those who earnestly want to have peace in Mindanao,” Bunye said.

Palace lauds military for blocking Abu Sayyaf threat

Malacañang today credited the military for downgrading the effectiveness of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), reducing the strength of the notorious kidnap-for-ransom band to fewer numbers from a previous 800.

But Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said operations against the ASG would continue to be relentless, as ordered by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Bunye factored in the difficulty of going after guerillas. He said the success by which the military has deterred the ASG from undertaking atrocities was “an improvement.”

He urged the citizenry to do their part in putting the ASG threat to an end.

“This is a concern of the military. But it should be the joint effort of all the citizenry,” he said.

He cited the importance of sharing intelligence information “to close in on these Abu Sayyaf bandits.”

Meanwhile, Bunye disclosed that a top man from the United States Department of Defense would soon visit the country to confer with government officials on the conduct of the next RP-US *Balikatan* training.

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz would head the government panel, he said.

Cruz was earlier ordered to go to the US for a *Balikatan* meeting. But after conferring with US ambassador Francis Ricciardone, it was suggested that the US would send its representative here, Bunye said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 10, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071217014442/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july10.htm>

The President's Day: July 11, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Koronabal Bombing**
- **Statement of the President: Drug Campaign**
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Statement of the President: Koronabal Bombing

Terrorism could strike anywhere at anytime. It is for us to constantly keep up our guard and be responsible for one another's safety. All the perpetrators will be brought to justice. Nothing in the peace process will deter us from punishing terrorists and bringing them to justice. And this event will not deter us from preparations for the peace negotiations unless the MILF is proven to be involved. The important thing is to care for the wounded, assist the victims' families and strengthen the vigilance of the community—while we take the perpetrators into account. I share the grief of the leaders and the people of Koronadal over this incident. Muslims and Christians are victims of terrorism and both must have the solidarity to ensure the security of the whole community.

Statement of the President: Drug Campaign

The bungling of drug cases on purpose can happen at any level of the criminal justice system and we will move against law enforcers, prosecutors, judges who set drug offenders free in exchange for bribes, or jailers who free them for a fee. The PDEA must keep a watch list of crooked personalities and expose and proceed against them as the evidence warrants. Maintaining the integrity of the criminal justice system is just as important as teamwork and synergy among all its components. We need the total participation of the community and civil society in this effort to clean up the system.

Statement of the President: Sweatshops

We will not tolerate sweatshops and we will act very strongly against firms employing or abetting the use of illegal drugs to keep their workers awake and alert, to the prejudice of their health. We will treat such employers as drug pushers under the law. The PDEA must work with the DOLE to monitor these unsavory practices and stop them.

Statement of the President: Peace Talks

Every step and gesture towards peace is welcome. We will wage the peace as fervently as we fight terrorism and we are confident of success in both fronts with the help of well-meaning allies and the support of all Filipinos.

Statement of the President: Economic Survey

There is a general pessimism about growth throughout the region but our domestic surveys show a rise in optimism. We are doing our best to build the foundations of confidence in terms of security, social and economic reforms and law and order. It is an uphill road but we are making progress. Our government and our people are hard at work to make this country a better place to live in and do business in. We will move forward with patience, perseverance and cooperation.

GMA visits victims of Koronadal blast

KORONADAL, South Cotabato — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today gave P20,000 cash assistance each to the families of the three fatal victims of the latest bombing incident here as she also ordered the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to hand out P10,000 each to the 25 injured victims now confined at the local hospitals.

The President arrived at the General Santos City airport around 10:00 o'clock this morning and directly motored to the public market here, the scene of a powerful blast at 2:30 p.m. Thursday.

She inspected the dry goods section that was directly hit by the blast that killed three and injured 25 others.

She then visited the wake of two of the victims in two funeral parlors here and the residence of Bai Masla, the 11-year-old Maguindanaoan girl killed in the blast, in Purok Kings in Gen. Paulino Santos.

She personally gave the P20,000 financial assistance to each of the three victims' families and ordered the DSWD to provide P10,000 each to the 25 injured victims.

The President then went to the Koronadal Sports Complex gymnasium and delivered a message during the 27th anniversary celebration of Koronadal.

She then went to the house of Governor Daisy Avance-Fuentes before motoring back this afternoon to General Santos City.

DOTC bares success in bus rationalization program

Don't be surprised if you find fewer buses plying city streets and traffic moving more smoothly.

That's because the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC), through its bus rationalization program, has finally weeded out dilapidated and illegally operating buses, resulting in improved traffic flow along the major thoroughfares of Metro Manila.

DOTC Undersecretary Arturo Valdez, in a press briefing held in Malacañang today, declared that the program, initiated on instructions of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo two years ago, is a complete success.

It is a product of a series of consultations and workshops conducted by the DOTC with all the stakeholders in the industry in March 2001.

From 10,000 buses operating on EDSA two years ago, Valdez revealed that there are now only 3,150 legitimate buses operating with franchise on their authorized routes.

This was attained by the DOTC in cooperation with the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board by enforcing the policies set forth in the Public Service Act.

"Due process was extended, including giving the operators adequate time to comply with the requirements," Valdez said. "Three extensions of deadlines were compassionately granted to non-complying operators."

Since the final deadline has expired, Valdez said the DOTC had mobilized enforcers to eradicate from the ranks of bus operators the "kabit operation," disallowed dropping and substitution to prevent circumvention of procedure and other forms of irregularities in the franchise issuance system.

As a result of the program, the DOTC claimed there has been an increase in the income of legitimate bus operators by 200 percent, an increase in MRT riders, improvement in traffic, and reduction of smoke belching buses.

There has also been, Valdez said, an effective management and control of public transport in line with the President's Strong Republic program.

Valdez said the success of the program has also emboldened the DOTC to replicate the scheme to cover jeepney operations in Metro Manila and in all major urban centers of the country.

GMA declares Aug. 22 special non-working day

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has declared August 22, 2003 as a special non-working day instead of August 21, 2003, which marks the 20th anniversary of the assassination of Senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, Jr.

The President said August 22, a Friday, could be declared as a special (non-working) day instead of August 21, a Thursday, to enable the people to enjoy the benefits of a longer weekend.

Proclamation No. 420, however, stated that all activities to commemorate the death of Senator Aquino should be observed on August 21 to inculcate the values of self-sacrifice and patriotism that his life and death exemplified.

The proclamation also stated that on August 22, 2003:

— All heads of departments, offices, agencies, instrumentalities or government-owned or controlled corporations may, if required by the exigencies of public service, direct their employees to observe regular working hours and provide regular services to the public;

— Employees of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Bureau of Customs and other government agencies/instrumentalities that impose deadlines on the transacting public for payment of taxes, fees or fines and for compliance with reportorial and other requirements shall be required by the head of the department, office, agency or instrumentality to observe regular working hours and provide regular services to the public; and

— Employees of government departments, offices, agencies or instrumentalities providing police, security, fire protection, custodial, rescue, emergency, medical and other similar services shall be required by their respective heads to observe regular working hours and provide regular services to the public.

Gov't won't rest until those behind Koronadal blast are arrested and brought to justice — GMA

KORONADAL CITY, South Cotabato — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the people of this city and all of Mindanao that the government will not rest until the perpetrators in Thursday's bombing are arrested and brought to justice.

In her remarks during the opening of the Tinalak Festival held at the Koronadal Sports Complex here, the President said the bombing in this city's market that killed three and wounded several others only showed that terrorism could strike anywhere at anytime.

The President also extended her condolences to the relatives of the victims and the people of this city. "I share the grief of the leaders and the people of Koronadal over this incident," she said.

Earlier, the President visited the wake of the two victims in two funeral parlors here and the residence of Bai Masla, the 11-year-old Maguindanaoan killed in the blast, in Purok Kings in Gen. Paulino Santos Street.

According to the President, nothing in the ongoing peace process with separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) would prevent the government from punishing the terrorists and in bringing them to justice.

“And this event will not deter us from preparations for the peace negotiations unless the MILF is proven to be involved,” the President said.

The most important thing, the President said, is to care for the wounded, assist the victims’ families and strengthen the vigilance of the community while the government takes the perpetrators into account.

The President said Muslims and Christians are victims of terrorism “and both must have the solidarity to ensure the security of the whole community.”

Saying that the people should not be cowed by terrorism, the President then asked for more cooperation among the people of Mindanao in the war against terrorism.

De Villa calls on Koronadal officials, people to work closely with military

KORONADAL CITY, South Cotabato — Presidential Assistant on strategic Concerns Renato de Villa today urged everyone “to work harder and closer with each other” in dealing with terrorists.

In a briefing with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo here, de Villa underscored the fact “that there are still terrorist groups operating in Mindanao” out to sow havoc in targeted population centers.

Because of the succession of bombings here in recent months, the city has become “a targeted area in so far as terrorism is concerned,” he said.

The President has ordered authorities to increase vigilance and the level of protection so that terrorist groups “would be effectively addressed and hopefully destroyed at the soonest possible time,” he added.

De Villa said stronger action against terrorism would involve better “intelligence to identification, capture and arrest and prosecution” of terrorists.

“And if they decide to engage our law enforcement forces, to include the military, then we must be able to demonstrate a clear superiority and destroy them in the field,” he said.

The Presidential Assistant said government would not abandon the effort of arriving at a general condition of peace in Mindanao through a peace process.

“But at the same time, we should not also lower our guards. We should not also let up on our manhunt for these terrorist groups,” he said.

De Villa was reacting to the latest bombing attack that killed three and wounded 25 others at the public market here Thursday.

Regional police officials earlier attributed the blast to persons suspected of extortion.

The officials said the perpetrators of Thursday’s bomb blast could be related to those involved in three earlier explosions in this city in the last several months.

Persons arrested for the first three bombings were linked to the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which was said to be raising funds for their group, the officials added.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 11, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071118085028/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july11.htm>

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U.S. paper cites RP's micro-finance program

The highly respected New York Times has cited the Philippine government's efforts in improving the lives of the people in Mindanao, particularly its micro-financing program that has already benefited thousands of women-borrowers.

In one of its editorials in its July 8, 2003 issue, the NYT focused on the story of Mrs. Melanie Pico who borrowed US\$60.00 from the Mindanao Enterprise Development Foundation, a local micro-financing organization, to put up a small business of sewing recycled cement wrapping into market shopping bags.

The editorial said that because of the loan and Mrs. Pico's hard work, she brings in an average income of P3,000 a week.

The editorial further mentioned that remittances by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are fast becoming the source of funding for micro-finance projects.

For last year, it was estimated that the amount of money sent home by migrant workers—some US\$ 80 billion—overshadowed for the first time the amount of total aid and credit (both private and public) extended to poor countries.

Because of this trend, the editorial said, international financial institutions, like the Asian Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, see a natural fit between remittances and micro-financing.

The challenge for them now is to find ways to deliver on this promise, both by enabling micro-financing groups to help speed the transfer of funds to remote villages at a lower cost and by providing a pool of working capital for micro-financing, the editorial said.

Micro-financing, being the cornerstone in the government's fight against poverty, has greatly enhanced the economic rights of about 600,000 women in the country.

The growth in the micro-finance program reflected the people's acceptance of the President's commitment to implement activities that would spur national social growth and economic development.

As of January 31, 2003, the People's Credit Finance Corporation, through its micro-finance institutions, had served 79 provinces, 113 out of 114 cities and 1,083 out of 1,496 towns, or 72 percent.

The President has earlier directed the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) to give priority to remote areas in their innovative micro-finance scheme called "credit plus five."

The “credit plus five” refers to credit plus training, product development, market access, new technologies and social insurance.

The President has also instructed the NAPC to set up a mechanism to serve remote and conflict areas in Mindanao, and the basic sectors such as the elderly, disaster victims, and the disabled.

She has also ordered the continued rationalization of credit programs in geographic coverage and client targeting to help sustain micro-financing institutions and clients.

The President said the NAPC must continue to be the champion for micro-enterprise development and open access to markets for the poor as the Department of Trade and Industry will focus on the small and medium enterprise program of the government.

President’s radio address to the nation

Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat.

Simula sa Martes, ika-15 ng Hulyo, ay sisimulan ko at ng mga miyembro ng aking Gabinete ang pagbisita sa ilang bayang mahihirap sa Kabisayaan. Ito ay para personal na mabigyan kaagad ng kaukulang aksyon ang kanilang mga problema, maging ito man ay tungkol sa edukasyon, agrikultura, kalakalan, industriya, transportasyon at komunikasyon, enerhiya at patubig, turismo at kapayapaan at kaayusan.

It is the duty of the President to personally see the extent and results of government’s security and development initiatives, especially in poverty-stricken areas. A President cannot be satisfied with merely reading reports from the field. A President must make personal, on-the-spot assessments of the most vital problems facing our people.

Ito ang dahilan kung bakit pumupunta ako sa probinisya. Kamakailan lamang ay namalagi ako ng walong araw sa Mindanao para personal na pamunuan ang pamamalakad ng ibat-ibang peace and development programs natin doon.

It has been regretful that there has been another terrorist attack in Koronadal City. I was there yesterday to condole with the relatives of the victims and to ensure the people of the continuing support and determination to bring the bombers to justice.

Kasabay ng darating kong paglilibot sa Kabisayaan ay paglulunsad at pagpapalakas ng mga ibat-ibang programang pangkaunlaran ng ating pamahalaan tulad ng KALAHI, education by television, livelihood program, agrarian reform communities, copra marketing, elektripikasyon at patubig, micro-financing. Magkakaloob din tayo ng coco levy checks, patents at certificates of ancestral domain titles sa ibat-ibang benepisyaryo. Kung inyong natatandaan ay nasimulan na natin ang pagkakaloob ng halaga mula sa coco levy fund sa iilang benepisyaryo at ang mga magniniyog sa Visayas at Katimugang Luzon ay dapat lamang na maibilang dito. Ang pondo mula sa coco fund ay gagamitin din sa pagkakaloob ng seguro ng mga magniniyog.

The coco levy fund must benefit the coconut farmers. We will continue to take all feasible measures to ensure that this principle is fully implemented.

Isa rin sa aking prayoridad sa pagdalaw ng mga lugar na ito ay ang makita ang kalagayang pang-kapayapaan at pang-kaayusan ng ating mga mamamayan dito. May mga natanggap akong report mula sa aking Gabinete at ilang opisyal na maraming barangay sa mga lugar na ito ang naimpluwensyahan ng mga NPA. Gusto kong malaman kung ano talaga ang problema ng ating mga kababayan doon, kung bakit nahihikayat sila ng mga NPA ng mga grupong ito na nagkukunwaring nakikipaglaban para sa demokrasya pero ang tunay na hangad ay pabagsakin ang gobyerno sa pamamagitan ng dahas.

Alam na niyo marahil na sunod-sunod na naman ang ginagawang pag-atake ng mga NPA nitong mga nakaraang linggo sa ilang bahagi ng ating kapuluan, na kung saan marami sa ating mga magiging na sundalo at inosenteng

sibilyan ang mga namatay at nasugatan. Patuloy pa rin sila sa paninira ng mga pampublikong pasilidad tulad ng mga bus dahil ang mga may-ari ng mga sasakyang ito ay ayaw mag-bayad o hindi nakakabayad sa kanila ng illegal na *“revolutionary tax.”*

Kaya bilang sagot sa mga pang-gugulong ito ng mga NPA ay ilunsad natin ang comprehensive counter measures na kung saan pagsasabayin natin ang aksyong militar, pulitikal at legal sa pagsugpo sa grupong ito.

We are combining all necessary measures to stop this threat and defeat it by the use of force, political action and long-term social reforms.

Kaya sa aking pag-ikot na ito sa Kabisayaan ay hihilingin ko ang suporta ng ating mga kababayan dito, lalo na ang mga local na opisyal tulad ng mga barangay captains para mabuwag na ang rebeldeng grupong ito. Aalalahanin natin na nalalapit na naman ang eleksyon na kung saan nanghihingi ng election permits ang mga rebeldeng ito at kung ikaw ay tatangi ay may mangyayaring masama sa iyo. Ngayon pa lang ay tiyakin na natin na hindi nila magagawa muli ang masamang gawaing ito ng sa gayon ay patuloy na kikilos ang proseso ng demokrasya at buong laya tayong makakaboto.

My administration has an integrated strategy for security and development in each province, wherever they may be – from infrastructure, to education, to economic growth, to poverty reduction, to law enforcement. We are mobilizing local governments, civil society and the business community to achieve our goals. We need the whole support and participation of the people.

Sa ating pagtutulungan lamang natin makakamit ang tunay na kapayapaan at kasaganaan.

Maraming salamat.

Stepped up anti-drug campaign paying off, PDEA tells GMA, parents of drug abuse victims

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) today reported that the intensified anti-drug campaign ordered by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is paying off with the arrest of more suspected drug lords and traffickers and the seizure of prohibited drugs worth billions of pesos.

In a briefing in Malacañang for the President and parents of drug abuse victims, Assistant Secretary Rodolfo Caisip, PDEA deputy director general for operations, said that for the period from July 30, 2002 to June 18, 2003, law enforcement agencies conducted a total of 11,242 drug operations.

Caisip said that as a result of these operations, the government seized P4.6 billion worth of dangerous drugs, precursors, essential chemicals and clandestine laboratory equipment.

He said that during the period, government prosecutors also filed 10,550 cases in courts against 9,028 drug users, 6,740 pushers, nine cultivators and 28 drug financiers and importers.

Caisip said that after the President issued Executive Order No. 218 on June 18, 2003, law enforcement agencies led by the PDEA stepped up operations, resulting in the arrest of an additional 697 drug users and 975 pushers, mostly in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

Under EO 218, the President created task forces to support the PDEA in pursuing “a forceful, intensive and unrelenting campaign against drug trafficking and the use of illegal drugs whether syndicated or street level.”

The President specifically ordered the PDEA and other law enforcement agencies to produce “strategic and significant” results during the first three months of the implementation of EO 218 “so that the people can perceive and feel that indeed the drug situation in the country has improved.”

Caisip said that from June 19, 2003 when the EO was first implemented, law enforcement agencies have seized a total of 4,582.26 grams of shabu, 878 marijuana plants, 1,492 marijuana seedlings, 4.79 kilos of dried marijuana leaves, 3,038 tablets of ecstasy, and 732.54 grams of cocaine.

After the intensified drug campaign was ordered by the President, Caisip said, four out of the 175 drug syndicates in the country have been neutralized, namely the Tubig Group operating in the National Capital Region, the Lingayen Group operating in Region 9, the Mendoza Group operating in Region 3, and the Uclos Group operating in Region 2.

He reported that during the one-year period ending on June 18, 2003, law enforcement agencies have neutralized 35 local drug syndicates and one transnational group, which was involved in trafficking of marijuana from the Philippines to Japan.

After the issuance of EO 218, two Chinese nationals and one each from Great Britain, Australia and Japan have been arrested for violation of Republic Act No. 915, also known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

RP to be drug-free in 2010, DDB assures GMA, parents and relatives of drug abuse victims

As ordered by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the government is determined to win its unwavering fight against drug abuse and trafficking and attain a drug-free Philippines in 2010, the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) said today.

In a report to the President and parents and relatives of drug abuse victims during a meeting this morning in Malacañang, DDB Executive Director Efen Fernandez said that there is now a “comprehensive, integrated, unified and balanced national drug abuse prevention and control strategy.”

“This scheme of action provides a definite long-range direction, continuity and synergy of efforts, as well as blueprint for a well-suited fighting machinery to ensure victory in the anti-drug war,” Fernandez said.

Fernandez said that with no less than the President in the frontline, he is optimistic that the government will “prevail and emerge victorious in our fight against the drug menace.”

During the briefing, Fernandez expounded on the demand reduction strategy of the DDB. The DDB was revitalized after the passage of Republic Act 9165, also known as Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

He said that the basic concept now being adopted by the government is to reduce to zero or at least minimize the profits from illicit drug activities through supply and demand reduction, a concept that has proven effective worldwide.

Earlier, the President ordered the DDB, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and other law enforcement agencies to give top priority to treatment and rehabilitation program for drug users.

For this purpose, the President has earmarked a standby fund of P1 billion for the program, using the acronym PERA, which stands for prevention, enforcement, rehabilitation, and after-care.

During the series of command conferences on the anti-drug campaign held in Malacañang, Marawi City, and at Clark in Angeles City, the President gave standing instructions to put up rehabilitation centers at least one in every region, in cooperation with the local government units (LGUs) and various stakeholders in the localities concerned.

The President has also ordered the Department of Health to put up extensions in the provincial hospitals to serve as rehabilitation centers and equip them with drug testing capabilities.

On top of this, the President has also directed the Armed Forces of the Philippines to look into the possibility of using some AFP camps as possible sites for rehabilitation centers, such as Camp Upi in Isabela, Camp Aquino in Tarlac, Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal and Camp Nakar in Quezon.

Gov't to launch counter-measures vs NPA

In response to heightened terroristic acts of the New People's Army (NPA) lately, the government will launch comprehensive counter-measures combining military, political and legal action to stop the threat.

In her weekly radio message today, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said she is determined to crush this threat with the use of force, political action and long-term social reforms.

"My administration has an integrated strategy for security and development in each province, wherever they may be – from infrastructure, to education, to law enforcement," she said.

"We are mobilizing local governments, civil society and the business community to achieve our goals. We need the whole support and participation of the people," the President said.

To this end, the President is embarking on another provincial sortie to several depressed areas in the Visayas next week to personally see the extent and results of the government's security and development initiatives especially in poverty-stricken areas.

Last month, she stayed in Mindanao for eight days to oversee the administration's peace and development programs.

"A President must make personal, on the spot assessments of the most vital problems affecting our people," she said.

In her Visayan sojourn, the President is scheduled to launch and strengthen various development programs like the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI), education by television, livelihood program, agrarian reform communities, copra marketing, electrification, irrigation, and micro-financing.

Aside from these, she also wants to see the peace and order situation in the area following reports that many barangays in the region are now being influenced by the NPA.

"Gusto kong malaman kung ano talaga ang problema ng ating mga kababayan doon. Kung bakit nahihikayat sila ng mga NPA, ng mga grupong ito na nagkukunwaring nakikipaglaban para sa demokrasya pero ang tunay na hangad ay pabagsakin ang gobyerno sa pamamagitan ng dahas (I want to find out what really is the problem of our people there, why they are being influenced by the NPA, by this group masquerading as fighters for democracy when in truth they have no other agenda but to topple the government by force)," the President said.

The President recounted that in the past few weeks, the NPA has stepped up its terroristic activities, killing and wounding innocent civilians and soldiers.

"Patuloy pa rin sila sa paninira ng mga pampublikong pasilidad tulad ng mga bus dahil ang may-ari ng mga sasakyang ito ay ayaw magbayad o hindi nakakabayad sa kanila ng illegal na revolutionary tax (They continue destroying public facilities like buses because the owners of these vehicles don't want or refuses to pay the illegal revolutionary taxes)," she said.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

COCO LEVY FUNDS

The case has been pending in the courts for the last 17 years.

The defendants had not been denied due process. They had all the opportunity and the time to present their case during that period.

The Supreme Court, in an en banc decision 18 months ago, ruled that the coco levy funds are prima facie public funds.

PGMA has expressed the view that the funds are public. Incidentally, this view is shared by former Presidents Ramos and Aquino.

It is for the court to resolve other issues pending before it, e.g. ownership of San Miguel shares.

GMA bats for crime prevention foundation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today batted for the creation of a foundation for crime prevention that would ensure safer streets and peaceful neighborhoods in the country.

The President said the foundation would handle the government's critical priorities in the next six months focusing on kidnap-for-ransom, illegal drugs, terrorism, street crimes and scalawags in uniform.

She said an executive director will be the overall head of the foundation which will act in oversight or advisory capacity to all the enforcement agencies of the government.

The President made the announcement during the PNP Command Conference on kidnap-for ransom, illegal drugs, terrorism and street crimes held at the Malacañang's State Dining Room.

She reiterated the need to focus on kidnap-for-ransom cases particularly on target hardening which is one of the critical moves of the police authorities.

"Let us focus on stage war on target hardening. We must focus on prime target rather than on strong target. Yan ang dapat na i-focus," the President said.

The Chief Executive ordered the Philippine National Police to create a task group to be called Operations Target Hardening Force. An action officer will be assigned to said task force.

She expressed the need for technical support from the United States and the United Kingdom on anti-money laundering particularly on tracing ransom payments and bringing recipients of ransom money to justice for unexplained wealth.

Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. informed the President they have resorted to investigating cyber crimes thru cyber space and this will take effect sometime next month.

Ebdane said pro-active citizen action through organized groups such as the school-based Club 2920 and the opening of a 24-hour access to police service through PNP Text 2920 and text patrol 2910 and Patrol 117 will be established as the frontline measures to bring street crimes down to the minimum.

"Let us start advertising text 2920, text 2910 and patrol number 117 to the public," the President ordered Ebdane.

Donald Dee, head of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, who was also present, informed the President that the business sector will sign a memorandum of agreement with workers organization all over the country to formulate and conduct seminars on kidnapping, illegal drugs and street crimes.

He said there is a need to strengthen police visibility in some problem areas to deter kidnapping and the spread of illegal drugs.

Stressing the need to go hand in hand or have tie-up with the business sector, the President said the government intends to fund the anti-drug campaign and seek logistic support from the private sector.

“We’re funding the drug campaign, the private sector who is most affected by kidnapping could give logistical support. Lalo na yung mga areas na ang kidnapping is a problem. Let us come up with a tie-up within the PCCI and the police force,” the President said.

See through prosecution, conviction of drug traders, GMA orders PDEA

SILANG, Cavite – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) to intensify its illegal drug campaign not only through raiding of drug factories, but also by seeing through the prosecution and conviction of personalities involved in the shabu manufacturing trade.

The President issued the instruction during her surprise visit at the shabu factory raided by the combined elements of the Silang Municipal Police Station and PDEA agents at Brgy. Kabangaan here.

In her statement, the President explained that she wants to ensure that the case against arrested suspects in the drug manufacturing trade would not be bungled.

She said she does not want this particular case to be affected by the alleged bungling scandal in the level of the criminal justice system.

“We will move against law enforcers, prosecutors and judges who set drug offenders free in exchange for bribes,” the President said.

The Chief Executive ordered the PDEA to move against crooked law enforcers, prosecutors, and judges so that the criminal case filed against the culprits will be strengthened.

“The PDEA has been instructed to keep a watch list of crooked personalities and expose and proceed against them as the evidence warrants,” the President said.

During her quick visit here, the President congratulated Interior Secretary Jose Lina, PNP Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., PDEA deputy director for operation Chief Supt. Rodolfo Caisip, PNP Region 4 Regional Director Chief Supt. Jaime Caringal, Cavite Police Director Sr. Supt. Roberto Rosales, the elements of Silang Municipal Police Station and Barangay Kabangaan chairman Marcelo Cortez for their successful operation leading to the arrest of the suspects and confiscation of the shabu chemicals and components used for the manufacturing of shabu.

The President told the media that the successful operation against the drug laboratory is a great example of an effective barangay information network.

She presented to the media the Chinese Nationals and their Filipino companions in the shabu factory. They were identified as Wen Li Cheng, 27; Wilson Li, 26; Daniel Co, 28; Michel Pandag, 20; and Leandro Go y Lim, 50.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: July 12, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20070818200117/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july12.htm>

The President's Day: July 13, 2003

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- **Citizen participation key to anti-drug, crime campaigns**
- **GMA readies for forays into NPA target areas**

Citizen participation key to anti-drug, crime campaigns

Citizen participation is an important factor in the campaign against illegal drugs and street crime.

This President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo emphasized as she called for intensified police work and vigilant community participation to contain the illicit drug trade and street crimes in the country.

During the PNP Command Conference in Malacañang on Saturday, the President said the prime target in the anti-drug campaign is the drug pusher in the University Belt.

The President noted that good intelligence work, police presence and community participation could tighten up the campaign against illegal drugs and street crimes.

She instructed Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. to concentrate on enforcement functions rather than on educating the public on illegal drugs.

She reiterated that education and information dissemination on illegal drugs is one of the tasks of the local government units.

The President also stressed the need to institutionalize the Blue Guards (private security guards) in much the same way as the Barangay Tanods and to mobilize them against street crimes and drugs.

She said the creation of a neighborhood watch group is necessary for street crime prevention. However, she said they have to be under the supervision of a specific police officer.

"This neighborhood watch group should not only refer to Barangay Tanods but also the whole neighborhood association," she said.

GMA readies for forays into NPA target areas

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo takes a stab in the next couple of weeks into depressed areas in the Visayas and Luzon which are the likely targets of the New People's Army (NPA) terrorists seeking to expand their influence in the hinterlands.

"I want to know what the problems of the people are, why they are turning to the NPA, a group which claims to fight for democracy but really seeks to topple the government through violence," the President stressed during her weekly radio message aired this weekend.

Starting Tuesday (July 15), the President will make personal visits to the hinterland villages of Iloilo, Leyte and Eastern Samar to see for herself the extent and results of the government's security and development initiatives in poverty-stricken areas.

The following week, she will traverse the Southern Tagalog and Bicol to make similar assessments of the situation in these regions and, if necessary, take immediate action on certain issues concerning the people.

“A President cannot be satisfied with merely reading reports from the field,” the Chief Executive said. “A President must make personal, on-the-spot assessments of the most vital problems facing our people.”

In all these forays into the countryside, the President will mobilize the local government units, including the barangays, civil society and the business community to support the peace and development goals of the administration.

She will also launch and strengthen during these sorties the various anti-poverty offensives of the government under the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan, or Kalahi, program.

The President noted that the NPA has stepped up attacks in recent weeks, killing and maiming innocent civilians.

She also said the communists were continuing to target public facilities and businesses, attacking those whose owners refuse to pay “revolutionary tax.”

The President said she would launch “comprehensive countermeasures” in different sectors to fight an upsurge in communist rebel attacks in the countryside.

“The response to the violence of the NPA is our launch of comprehensive countermeasures where we will simultaneously use military, political and legal action to fight this group,” she said. “We are combining all necessary measures to stop this threat and defeat it by the use of force, political action and long term social reforms,” she added.

She also remarked that as the May, 2004 elections approach, the communists were preparing to go back to their old practice of demanding “election permits” from candidates who want to campaign in areas where they are active.

“If you refuse, something bad will happen to you,” the President said, calling on the public to show the communist rebels and terrorists that they could not thwart the democratic process.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: July 13, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514160911/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july13.htm>

The President's Day: July 14, 2003

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- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Statement of the President: Prime Minister Howard Visit**
- **Statement of the President: Iraq Issue**
- **Statement of the President: Ceasefire Talks**
- **Statement of the President: Provincial Visit**
- **Statement of the President: Visa Rules on RP Sailors**
- **Statement of the President: Drug War**
- **GMA credits community vigilance for successful raid on suspected shabu factory in Las Piñas**
- **Australian Prime Minister gets red carpet welcome**
- **GMA lauds Australia for assistance to RP in fight against poverty, terrorism**
- **GMA opens Strong Republic Transit System**
- **RP, Australia sign M.O.U. on cooperation in combating transnational crime**
- **GMA turns over P300-M for resettlement project**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Al-Ghozi Escape**
- **GMA urges stronger anti-drug drive nationwide**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

This is a milestone for justice and due process that must not be tainted by undertones of petty partisan politics.

We must set aside self-interest and welcome the fact that the wheels of justice turn blindly and inexorably to make our democracy strong and our Republic endure.

This should not portend destructive factionalism.

It is an opportunity to unite behind the inherent excellence of our political institutions and our capacity to build a strong Philippine Republic.

Statement of the President Prime Minister Howard Visit

We have a strong partnership with Australia in defense and development. We benefit from training assistance for our Armed Forces and in terms of official development assistance predominantly targeted on Mindanao. We hold agreements to fight terrorism and transnational crime. All these benefits and agreements are important in our common fight against terrorism and poverty. We have also shared a common approach to the liberation of Iraq and the solution to the problem in the Korean peninsula. All these commonalities make our ties with Australia vital and urgent, in terms of the interests of our region and the world.

Statement of the President: Iraq Issue

The safety and security of more than a million Filipinos in the Middle East have been well served by our decision to support the liberation of Iraq. This has also cut the links between the former Iraqi regime and terrorist networks in our country. I have no regrets over my decision. It was the right things to do and I leave history to judge me on that.

Statement of the President: Ceasefire Talks

Third party monitoring is important for the success of a prospective ceasefire once the talks start. It will help build confidence and stabilize the situation on the ground, which is one of our primary objectives aside from the return of the evacuees to their homes and ensuring the success of the peace negotiation itself. We welcome Malaysia's role in

facilitating the ceasefire process just as we welcome the role of the US in facilitating rehabilitation and development in conflict-affected areas. We are confident this tripartite approach will help seal the peace in Mindanao.

Statement of the President: Provincial Visit

This is part of good governance. My visit to the depressed areas in the Visayas and Southern Luzon will be an on-the-spot assessment of ongoing security and development initiatives. I am not satisfied with merely reading reviews, assessments or reports on the delivery of projects. I want to see how these are being carried out, I want to know the most pressing issues and problems in the minds of our people and whether or not we are effectively responding to these.

Statement of the President: Visa Rules on RP Sailors

We hope this thing could be ironed out the soonest time. Our seamen make up more than 20 percent of those employed by global commercial shipping. Their freedom to travel is important not only to themselves or their employers, but to our economy as well.

Statement of the President: Drug War

Drug courts are an important component of the overall campaign. We must beef up all components of the criminal justice system, from the police to the prosecution to the rehabilitation centers. This must be a comprehensive effort that targets the big fish, reduces supply and demand and strengthens the social fabric.

GMA credits community vigilance for successful raid on suspected shabu factory in Las Piñas

President Gloria Macapagal credited community vigilance through the Barangay Information Network last night for the successful raid and exposure of a suspected shabu laboratory at 277 Impex Compound, Pamplona 3, Las Piñas City.

The next step is to ensure that the case against the people behind the operation of the drugs factory is not bungled, the President said after she inspected the laboratory masquerading as an industrial warehouse. Found inside the warehouse, which was being rented by a certain Benito Sy, were boxes containing chemicals believed used in the manufacture of shabu, glass funnels and other laboratory equipment.

Stressing that the criminal justice system must prevail, the President said this case should not end with the raid itself.

Charges should be filed within 72 hours and the case should be pursued to its end with the prosecution and conviction of the people who own and run the factory, she added.

The President said that after the filing of the proper charges, she expects the factory to be re-inspected by the court and the materials and precursors – substances used in the manufacture of drugs – found therein subsequently destroyed.

Wearing a medical mask as protection from the chemicals stocked in the warehouse, the President conducted an on-the-spot check of the suspected shabu factory Sunday night shortly after the police swooped on the area.

“First of all, I would like to congratulate the team responsible for the discovery of another big shabu factory,” the President said. The raiders were composed of members of the Las Piñas Police Station 4 led by Sr. Superintendent Armando I. Pineda.

The President also praised the Barangay Information Network for gathering evidence and information that led to the successful raid.

She also instructed the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, led by Undersecretary Edgardo Avenido, to keep a watch list of crooked personalities and expose and proceed against them as the evidence warrants.

“We need the total participation of the community and civil society in this effort to clean up the system,” the President said.

Among those who accompanied the President during her inspection of the suspected shabu factory were Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., who is also chairman of the Dangerous Drugs Board; Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., PNP Anti-Drugs Task Force chief Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay, CALABARZON police Director Jaime Caringal, and Cavite PNP chief Sr. Superintendent Roberto Rosales.

Australian Prime Minister gets red carpet welcome

Prime Minister John Howard of Australia received a red carpet welcome in Malacañang today at the start of his two-day official visit to the Philippines.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo welcomed the Prime Minister and First Lady Janette Howard at the Malacañang Gardens where full military honors, including a 19-gun salute, were accorded the visiting Australian leader.

The President and First Gentleman then walked with the Prime Minister and First Lady to Malacañang Palace, where the visiting leader signed the Guest Book before proceeding to the Music Room for a brief meeting with the Chief Executive.

After the meeting, the President accompanied the Prime Minister to the State Dining Room for their expanded bilateral talks.

During their bilateral meeting, the President and the Prime Minister agreed to further strengthen the bilateral ties between the Philippines and Australia, specifically their partnership in investment development and defense strategy.

Prime Minister Howard assured the President that Australia is willing to open up the Australian market to Philippine products, especially agricultural products from Mindanao.

The two leaders also agreed to help each other in the fight against terrorism and transnational crimes.

The President and Prime Minister Howard later held a joint press conference at the main lobby driveway of the Malacañang Palace where they announced to the media the fruitful discussions they had during their expanded bilateral meeting.

During the press conference, the President announced in her opening statement that the two-pronged approach of Australian assistance to the Philippines amplifies the integrated thrust of fighting poverty and fighting terrorism that has fused the relationship of the two countries.

GMA lauds Australia for assistance to RP in fight against poverty, terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Australian government for its valuable assistance to the two major goals of her administration, in eradicating poverty and in wiping out local terrorism.

In her opening statement at a joint press conference held in Malacañang immediately following her bilateral talks with visiting Australian Prime Minister John Howard, the President said the two-pronged approach adopted by the

Australian government in assisting the Philippines amplifies the integrated thrust of fighting both poverty and terrorism that has infused the two countries' relationship.

The President said that fighting poverty includes the strengthening of the two countries' economic relations.

"I am grateful to Prime Minister Howard for his very positive response to our proposals to further open up the Australian market for our products, especially the agricultural products coming from Mindanao," the President said.

On the collaboration in the fight against terrorism, the President thanked the Australian leader for its additional grant of Australian \$5 million (about P175 million) worth of anti-terrorism and police assistance.

"We have a strong partnership with Australia in development and defense," the President said.

Since 1995, Australia has provided training for some 100 personnel from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the President said.

According to the President, a lot of assistance to the Philippines, currently some 65 million Australian dollars and mostly in grants rather than loans, goes to Mindanao.

Before the joint press conference, the President and Prime Minister Howard witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Australia and the Philippines on cooperation in combating transnational crimes.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., who is also the chairman of the National Police Commission, signed the MOU for the Philippines while the Australian Police Commissioner Michael Joseph Keely signed for Australia.

The President also said that in line with the administration's program of diversifying its sources of energy, the National Power Corporation has agreed to purchase coal from Australia with an assured quota of 975,000 metric tons for 2003 and 2004.

"This will revive a trade that has been dying down over the years between Australia and the Philippines," the President said.

The President said that all the cooperation in official development assistance, in economic and security matters, make the two countries' relationship vital and urgent "in terms of the interest of our region and the world."

GMA opens Strong Republic Transit System

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today launched the Strong Republic Transit System (SRTS), as she embarked on a program to color-name Metro Manila's rail lines to make people more aware of the railways integration.

The President performed a ceremonial walk from the Mass Rail Transit (MRT) 3 station along Taft Ave., Pasay City through interconnection facilities to the Taft Ave. station of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) 1.

From the LRT 1, she took a trip aboard one of the LRT 1 modern air-conditioned rail carriages from Taft Ave., to Monumento, Caloocan City.

During the trip, she received a briefing on the SRTS from Transportation and Communication Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Secretary for Priority Programs and Official Development Assistance (ODA) Projects Marita Jimenez.

She lauded officials for initiating the SRTS that would usher in a reliable, integrated mass transit system that would be on a par with international standards.

The SRTS, officials said, included the rehabilitation of old lines like the LRT 1 and that operated by the Philippine National Railways (PNR); the completion of the MRT 3 North Ave., Quezon City to Monumento run; and the construction of at least seven interconnection facilities, to include walkways with escalators and elevators, to physically integrate existing lines.

The links are those in Pasay City and Caloocan City (MRT 3 and LRT 1); Cubao, Quezon City (LRT 3 and LRT 2 or the Megatren); C.M. Recto, Manila (LRT 1 and LRT 2); Blumentritt, Manila (LRT 1 and PNR); Sta. Mesa, Manila (LRT 2 and PNR) and Magallanes Ave., Makati City (MRT 3 and PNR).

The rails have been renamed into colored lines: LRT 1 – Yellow Line; MRT 3 – Blue Line; LRT 2 – Purple Line; PNR Northrail – Green Line; and PNR Southrail – Green Line.

Earlier, the President ordered transport and other concerned officials to implement SRTS projects at the least cost but with appropriate quality.

She said these projects should be fast tracked within the next 12 months.

Meanwhile, Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) Administrator Teodoro Cruz Jr. reported that since the agency took over the maintenance of LRT 1 last May 16, it had generated savings of some P20 million.

Cruz said that from a monthly expense of P28 million for maintenance in the last three years, the LRTA has spent only P8.3 million from May 15 to June 15, 2003.

He said daily ridership has risen to 8.1 million in June from 7.6 million in May, this year.

He also reported decreases in power interruption, as the agency continued its alertness over saboteurs who police said were responsible for power glitches.

Cruz added that the line is running 61 rail vehicles, an increase from the 56 operating carriages before the LRTA takeover.

RP, Australia sign M.O.U. on cooperation in combating transnational crime

The Philippines and Australia today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would strengthen cooperation between the two countries in combating various transnational crimes and serious threats to the national security and interests of both states.

The MOU was signed this morning at Malacañang's State Dining Room by Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina, Jr., who is also chairman of the National Police Commission, and Michael Joseph Keelty, Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police

Under the MOU, the two countries recognized the rapid globalization that paved the way for the increase in incidence and magnitude of transnational crimes, and the need to have concerted, synchronized, and focused efforts between their respective law enforcement agencies to address these problems.

The two countries, under the MOU, will cooperate in the prevention and investigation of transnational crimes that include terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering, other financial and economic crimes, trafficking in persons, and human smuggling.

Other crimes covered by the MOU are fraud, counterfeiting of currency and negotiable instruments, piracy in the high seas, illegal trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives, illegal acquisition of cultural and historical treasures, violation of intellectual property rights, cyber crimes as well as other transitional crimes to be mutually determined by the authorities of the two countries.

The MOU also provides that there will be relevant cooperation between the two countries in law enforcement technology, equipment and personnel training, and other capacity-building measures.

The MOU, however, will not change the two countries' previous arrangements on formal mutual legal assistance under the treaty on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters of 1993 or the extradition treaty signed in 1990 by the Philippines and Australia.

Both countries agreed that the MOU will not prevent the two states from developing other mutually-acceptable forms of cooperation and will not affect cooperation involving other law enforcement agencies.

In implementing the MOU, the Philippine Center on Transnational Crime will serve as communication and liaison center for the Philippine government and the Australian Federal Police for the Australian government.

As contact points, they will coordinate, collaborate and facilitate the exchange of information between the two states and their respective national law enforcement institutions.

Disputes concerning the implementation or interpretation of this MOU will be resolved through diplomatic consultations between the two countries.

The MOU will remain in effect until either of the two states notifies the other country in writing, through diplomatic channels, of its intention to terminate the same and the notice of termination will become effective six months after the date thereof.

GMA turns over P300-M for resettlement project

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today turned over a P300-million check to the National Housing Authority (NHA) to spin off the resettlement of more than 70,000 families of informal settlers affected by the North and South Railways development projects.

The P300 million represents the first tranche of the P500-million loan committed by the Pag-IBIG Fund to the NHA.

The President visited Barangay Poblacion 2 in Malinta, Valenzuela City and turned over the check amid the cheers of members of the 2,500-strong Kapisanan ng mga Samahan sa Riles Valenzuela (KASARIVAL) and the 1,500-member Home Along Da Riles Valenzuela (HARV).

Accompanying the President were Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza, Secretary Marita Jimenez of the Priority Programs and Official Development Assistance Projects, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council Chairman Michael Defensor, NHA General Manager Edgar Pamintuan, Pag-IBIG Fund CEO Federico Quimbo, Philippine National Railways General Manager Jose Maria Sarasola II, Clark Development Corporation president Rufo Colayco, Northrail General Manager Jose Cortes Jr., and Valenzuela Mayor Emmanuel Carlos.

Defensor said the President approved the fund last week for the housing loans of an initial 2,800 families in Valenzuela and 3,500 families in Malabon.

The President said she found out that the authorities have been negotiating with the owners of the relocation site since 1994.

Defensor added the President lowered the P500 monthly amortization to a mere P300 per month.

For his part, Pamintuan said they would come up with the master list of the qualified beneficiaries by next week for relocation to the 7.4-hectare resettlement area in Barangay Bignay, Valenzuela City.

During the affair, the representatives of 11 people's organizations thanked the President and pledged their support to the railways project by voluntarily relocating themselves to Barangay Bignay.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Al-Ghozi Escape

The President has ordered that the custodians of Al-Ghozi and the other escapees be sacked immediately without prejudice to the filing of criminal and administrative charges for gross negligence, dereliction of duty and infidelity in the custody of detainees.

She likewise order a general alarm for the immediate recapture of the fugitives.

The President has ordered the secretaries of the DFA, DILG, DND, DOJ and the heads of NICA and Bureau of Immigration to contact their Indonesian counterparts for the purpose of coordinating efforts to recapture Al-Ghozi and the other escapees.

GMA urges stronger anti-drug drive nationwide

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said cases have been filed today against several suspects arrested during the recent drug raid in Silang, Cavite and Las Piñas.

"We must beef up all the components of the criminal justice system, from the police to the prosecution to the rehabilitation centers. This must be a comprehensive effort that targets the big fish, reduces supply and demand and strengthens the social fabric," the President said.

Based on leads gathered by police authorities, the suspects belonged to at least three of the 13 active and identified transnational drug syndicates operating in the country.

The President made the announcement when she and other top officials presented to the media several used equipment and bottles of liquid used in the making of metamphetamine hydrochloride, popularly known as shabu, recovered during a raid this afternoon in a subdivision in Parañaque City.

The President personally went to the rented house in New York St., Merville Park Subdivision after she was informed by authorities of the latest haul in the government's intensified crackdown on illegal drugs.

A certain Benito Sy rented the house in Merville October last year. Since then, the neighbors have been complaining of the foul odor emanating from the residence.

Sy is believed to be the same person who also rented the warehouse in Pamplona 3, Las Piñas that was raided Sunday night. The warehouse was found to be a shabu laboratory masquerading as an industrial warehouse.

As it turned out, the police today recovered several used bottles of the chemical Ethanol, one of the chemicals used in making shabu, and laboratory equipment.

Supt. Nelson Yabut of the Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) under the Anti-Illegal Drug Task Force headed by Chief Supt. Edgardo Aglipay, said that during the two raids, they did not find any ephedrine, the white substance that is the precursor of shabu. The big rotor and flask used in the laboratory were also missing.

He said this is the object of their massive follow up operations.

With the President were Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina Jr., Mayor Joey Marquez, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Director General Anselmo Avenido, Anti-Drug Task Force Chief Supt. Edgardo Aglipay and other police officers.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 14, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071123105545/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july14.htm>

The President's Day: July 15, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Al Ghazi**
- **Statement of the President: Prime Minister Howard Visit**
- **Statement of the President: Anti-Insurgency Drive**
- **GMA calls on people to remain calm but alert**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA orders DILG to put up only one maximum security prison for Camp Crame detainees**
- **GMA hails Bishop Fortich's concern for peace, the poor**
- **Statement of the President: On SC decision on Marcos wealth**
- **GMA assures Iloilo folk of gov't programs to address their needs in areas of peace and development**

Statement of the President: Al Ghazi

We call on the public to remain calm but highly alert, First, I am directing the Secretary of the Interior and Local Government to make full use of the media to generate public support for the ongoing manhunt, with widest dissemination of rewards. Second, I would like the immediate filing of charges against the culpable custodians, up to the highest level of command responsibility practicable. Third, the DILG must now establish a single, maximum security detention facility for high profile detainees within Camp Crame, directly under the responsibility of the PNP Chief. Camp Crame is gaining notoriety for its very porous detention centers, and it is becoming hard to believe that these escapes of heinous criminals are the result of ordinary laxity. We must pin the culprits down and find a permanent solution to this problem.

Statement of the President: Prime Minister Howard Visit

In behalf of the Filipino people, we thank Prime Minister Howard for his support and partnership in the fight against terrorism and crime as well as in the resolution of vital trade issues. Ties between the Philippines and Australia are maturing along a common vision of collective security and stability in the Asia-Pacific. More than ever, we realize that whatever happens in one part of the region affects the whole. Our interests are increasingly becoming intertwined, our efforts to ensure political and economic security must be holistic and integrated.

Statement of the President: Anti-Insurgency Drive

The government will continue to maintain utmost vigilance against the activities of the CPP-NPA-NDF. We shall involve the people in the communities in the tasks of vigilance and self-upliftment. I shall be traveling to dissident affected areas to bring a message of hope for our people so they will not fall into the trap of futile armed struggle. We must lead this effort to defeat insurgency by forceful countermeasures, social reform and economic development.

GMA calls on people to remain calm but alert

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the people to remain calm but highly alert following the escape of an Indonesian bomb expert and two suspected Filipino terrorists from their Camp Crame detention cell.

In a speech in Alimodian, Iloilo where she launched several government projects, the President also directed Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. to make full use of the media in generating public support for the manhunt for Fathur Al-Ghozi, an Indonesian self-confessed member of the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah, and suspected Abu Sayyaf members Abdulmukim Ong Edris and Omar Opik Lasal alias Meram Abante.

The government has offered P5 million in reward for the recapture of Al-Ghozi, P2 million for Edris and P1 million for Abante. The President said she wanted the reward offer disseminated widely.

In Manila, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez also assured that the Philippine National Police, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and other security agencies are on high alert on orders of the President.

“We can expect Al-Ghozi and the two others to lie low for a while, with all these forces running after them,” Golez said.

The National Security Adviser assured that the government is taking measures to harden all possible targets of terrorists.

“This started yesterday (Monday) when news came out about the bombing of the Indonesian parliament (in Jakarta). This alert status will be sustained,” Golez said.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye also said the President has instructed various government departments – including the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of National Defense, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Department of Justice, the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency and the Bureau of Immigration – to coordinate with their counterparts in Indonesia in connection with the manhunt for Al-Ghozi and the other escapees.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

NPA Ambush

The President sympathizes with the bereaved families of the soldiers who were ambushed in Bontoc.

The government will ensure that the perpetrators of such treachery will be brought to justice.

The President calls on the people and the leaders of the land, especially local government executives, to support the government’s comprehensive strategy to contain the insurgency. Together, we shall defeat terrorism and lawlessness.

Peace Talks with NDF

The government lines of communications remain open to those who are tired of the fighting, want to return to the fold of the law and rejoin their families.

Filipinos in Libya

The DFA and the DOLE, through OWWA, are on top of the situation. Secretary Ople has sought the help of the Libyan Ambassador to ensure the safety of our compatriots. He also instructed Charge D’ Affaires Benito Valeriano to immediately take this matter up with the local police and labor officials.

OWWA is currently coordinating with the recruiters and other concerned government agencies to determine the necessary actions required and assistance to be provided in case repatriation should be required.

Provincial Visit

In her visit, the President wants to see first hand the situation of our impoverished communities and assess the security and development of these areas. She will be launching various anti-poverty measures under the Kalahi program. She will be consulting with local government officials and civil societies for further enhance the anti-drug campaign.

She will promote distance learning in the remotest barangays.

She will also launch comprehensive countermeasures to fight terrorism in the countryside.

GMA orders DILG to put up only one maximum security prison for Camp Crame detainees

ALIMODIAN, Iloilo — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to put up “a single, maximum security detention facility for high profile detainees within Camp Crame.”

The President, in a statement here, said the facility should directly be “under the responsibility” of Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Director-General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr.

She chided the camp for “gaining notoriety for its very porous detention centers.”

“It is becoming very hard to believe that these escapes of heinous criminals are the result of ordinary laxity,” she said.

The President also directed officials to immediately file charges “against the culpable custodians, up to the highest level of command responsibility possible.”

“We must pin the culprits down and find a permanent solution to this problem,” she said.

The President made the statement after notorious terrorists Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi, Abdul Mukim Ong Edris and Omar Opik Lasal bolted out of their detention cell in Camp Crame early Monday morning.

She also directed DILG Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. “to make full use of the media to generate public support for the ongoing manhunt (of the escapees), with widest dissemination of rewards.”

The government has offered P5 million in reward for the recapture of Al-Ghozi, P2 million for Edris and P1 million for Lasal.

Meanwhile, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the President was irked by the escape of the terrorists.

“*Kaya nga’t hindi niya titigilan hangga’t hindi talaga malaman ang puno’t dulo nitong pagkakapuga ng mga preso* (Which is why the President would not stop at anything to get to the roots of the prison escape),” Bunye said in his regular media briefing.

He said there should be an immediate “credible investigation” of the incident.

GMA hails Bishop Fortich’s concern for peace, the poor

BACOLOD CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today hailed the late Bishop Antonio Fortich as a pillar of peace in the country.

The President, in a visit here on the first leg of her three-day Visayas sojourn, attended the Requiem Mass for Bishop Fortich at the San Sebastian Cathedral, Archdiocese of Bacolod.

Expressing her condolences for the Bishop’s demise, she said the Bishop served as a vital link in the people’s search for peace and justice as he spearheaded the establishment of the zone of peace.

Speaking in Ilonggo, she recalled how people depended on the Bishop during times of troubles and crises and how the Bishop responded by making himself the guiding light on the right road for many of his flock.

“Here is an Apostle of God who followed in His steps, serving the poorest of the poor. Let us emulate his example,” she said.

After the Mass, the body of Bishop Fortich was placed in a tomb at the right side of the Cathedral altar.

Known as the bishop of the poor, Fortich died last July 2 at the age of 89.

Statement of the President: On SC decision on Marcos wealth

The Supreme Court decision in favor of the government in the case regarding the estimated \$680 million of Marcos wealth held in escrow is a milestone in the people’s decades-long pursuit of justice.

The decision is likewise a welcome development for millions of landless farmers, since the law mandates that a big part of the ill-gotten funds should be used for land reform. The eventual release of the funds shall help in funding vital anti-poverty projects.

The high court ruling should also give added impetus to the landmark legislation now pending in Congress to allocate part of the funds for human rights victims under martial law.

GMA assures Iloilo folk of gov’t programs to address their needs in areas of peace and development

ALIMODIAN, Iloilo — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today told residents of this municipality that her administration is implementing several programs to address their needs, especially in the area of peace and development.

Speaking in fluent Ilonggo, the President said she visited the area to personally see to it that these programs are implemented and to find out what other things need to be done in Iloilo and in the rest of Panay Island.

The President saw to it that the P32-million Nichols Bridge in Alimodian is started, and that the development assistance provided to the proposed P10-million cable car or bi-cable tramline system to transport agricultural produce from the farms to the markets.

The bi-cable tramline system of Alimodian was designed primarily to eliminate the drudgery of manually hauling the vegetable products from the mountains where they are grown to the access road.

The President also announced the completion of the P18-million barangay energization project that will energize the whole Panay Island.

There is also the P10-million local water supply system and the P40-million road rehabilitation projects covering the three towns of Leon, Alimodian and San Miguel in Iloilo.

Meanwhile, the P5-million “Adopt-a-Mountain” program of the President was also launched here for rebel returnees.

The program, with the objective to accelerate the revegetation or greening of Alimodian’s denuded-degraded mountains and rangelands so as to improve water yield capacity and timber production, is supported by 6th district Representative Augusto “Boboy” Syjuco.

The Adopt-a-Mountain program is laid out in DENR Administrative Order No. 98-62 dated October 1, 1998 where denuded mountains are cited for greening under the community-based Forest Management Strategy per Executive Order No. 263.

After having lunch with the local officials of Alimodian and the members of her official party, the President motored to Sta. Barbara Comprehensive National High School where she presided over a meeting on drug testing in schools.

After learning that a seven consultation meetings on drug testing have already been held, the President said it is about time that the implementation of what had been agreed should now start.

With the President during the visit were Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus, Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, Press Secretary Milton Alingod, Justice Undersecretary Merceditas Guterrez, Education Undersecretary Ramon Bacani, and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency Chief Anselmo Avenido.

The President will motor to Barangay Tabiak, Igaras tomorrow to primarily witness the turnover of a Strong Republic School (SRS) techno van to the provincial government of Iloilo.

She will also presided over a peace and order council meeting there.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 15, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514160938/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july15.htm>

The President's Day: July 16, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Anti-Drug War**
- **Statement of the President: Marcos Wealth Decision**
- **Statement of the President: Al-Ghozi**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA brings development to remote Iloilo barangays**
- **GMA stresses two-pronged approach in solving insurgency problem**
- **GMA orders creation of fact-finding commission to probe Al-Ghozi escape**
- **GMA braves risks to be with poor Leyte villagers**

Statement of the President: Anti-Drug War

As we are now encountering discoveries of large stocks of shabu as a result of the cooperation of the public, I am ordering the PDEA to set aside a regular day of the week for the public burning of drugs, raw materials or precursors so that these cannot be recycled for the illicit market by unscrupulous law enforcers. I want a strict accounting of drugs confiscated and drugs destroyed, to the last gram. The accounting must be transparent and involve private groups as observers. Once charges are filed covering a drug stash, the latter must be immediately destroyed, save for the amount needed to be used as evidence in court. For every personality suspected to be involved in a drug case, I want his or her photo published and aired over the media, together with all names and aliases used, passport number, immigration record, places of residence, known cohorts, modus operandi and reward for capture. Let us put a face and identity to these people and get the public involved in hunting them down. I direct the PDEA to comply with these instructions, subject to any need to temporarily embargo information affecting ongoing operations.

Statement of the President: Marcos Wealth Decision

This is a high point for the prestige of the Supreme Court, which has proven itself to be a champion of impartial justice and social conscience. The value of this landmark decision lies not only in its positive repercussions on the socioeconomic life of our nation, but in affirming the high principles of democratic rule. It builds on the future of our nation by upholding the Filipino people's struggle for freedom and redemption.

Statement of the President: Al-Ghozi

We regret the negative repercussions of this incident and we shall get to the root of the matter. Even as the manhunt ensues, I am ordering today the creation of a fact-finding commission, whose members shall be persons of unquestionable integrity and probity, to determine the facts and circumstances surrounding the recent escape, and to come up with comprehensive recommendations. The commission shall submit to me the results of its inquiry within 30 days from its constitution, which we can expect to be done immediately. If there was collusion, this is the gravest act against our national security done so far by persons within the government. I urge Congress to include in the anti-terrorism bill, which is pending deliberations, a provision that would impose the harshest punishment possible to those found guilty of infidelity in the custody of terrorist suspects. Those found colluding with terrorists to enable the latter to escape detention must suffer severely from their aiding these enemies of humanity.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

Re Senator Villar's Remarks

It's an air ball. It's way off the mark. In the first place, Senator Villar has his facts all mixed up. The Indonesian government never made any request for the custody of Al-Ghozi.

Furthermore, it would be illogical for the government to risk political fallout just to accommodate the alleged request of a friendly government.

Re NBI

We understand that Secretary Simeon Datumanong is already seriously looking into this and he would be submitting his recommendation to the President shortly.

GMA brings development to remote Iloilo barangays

BARANGAY TABIAK, Igaras, Iloilo – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo motored to this NPA-influenced barangay for a least one hour and 20 minutes in rough roads from Iloilo City to “bring development” to this remote area.

Upon arrival in Igaras, the President first inaugurated symbolically small models of day-care centers located in Barangays Taytay and Sta. Barbara here in Igaras.

The President also announced the construction of a similar day-care center in Barangay Tabiak.

She also witnessed a demonstration of how to hold a distance learning class in a far-flung barangay under the Strong Republic School program of her administration.

“I want that in remote barangays with no classrooms or no teachers, that teacher is the television,” the President said in Ilongo, after turning over a key of a techno-van to Iloilo Governor Neil Tupaz.

The President herself turned the TV set on, signaling the launch of the Strong Republic School in this area.

The President said that today, July 16, is the first day of school in distance learning classes in Mindanao.

For a month, teachers were trained as para-teachers in the distance learning schools where special modules were developed.

Since the President launched the program the Strong Republic School in Iligan City last June 16, some 500 students here already enrolled.

The President said that in Barangay Tabiak the distance learning school will be opened after teachers are trained for one month.

GMA stresses two-pronged approach in solving insurgency problem

BARANGAY TABIAK, Igaras, Iloilo – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the government’s two-pronged approach in solving the country’s insurgency problem.

During a provincial Peace and Order Council (POC) meeting held at a classroom in Tabiak Elementary School here, the President said the government’s strategy in fighting the New People’s Army (NPA) has a left and a right hand.

“The right hand is through the arm of the law, and the left hand is the hand of peace and development,” the President said.

The POC meeting was attended by the local executives, top military and police officials and the members of the presidential party, which included Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Interior

and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., Secretary Teresita Deles, lead convenor of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, and Press Secretary Milton Alingod.

The President said the Peace and Order Council should specifically address areas with peace and order problems, such as Barangay Tabiak that is reported to be an NPA-influenced area.

Where there is no peace and order problem, the President said the left hand is very well taken care of by the regional and provincial development council.

The President said that her visit to the towns of Alimodian and Sta. Barbara in Iloilo were “pure development” trips.

The President directed the local officials to be aware of the 24-hour Area Coordinating Center (ACC) that has been set up in the Capitol building in Iloilo City.

She said that the ACC should also monitor what the left and the right hands of the government are doing. The ACC should also monitor the insurgency and drug problems, she added.

But the President emphasized that Iloilo is a relatively peaceful province where there is no “jueteng,” illegal fishing, and has enough schools, and with a “very small insurgency problem.”

“In monitoring the insurgency, you will not only monitor the right hand; you’ve got to monitor also the left hand,” the President said.

After an executive session, the President and her party flew to Leyte for the next leg of the presidential visit to the Visayas.

GMA orders creation of fact-finding commission to probe Al-Ghozi escape

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered today the creation of an independent fact-finding commission to get to the bottom of the recent escape of Indonesian terrorist Fathur Roman Al-Ghozi and two other suspected Abu Sayyaf terrorists.

The fact-finding commission, to be composed of persons of unquestionable integrity and probity, will submit to the President the results of their inquiry 30 days from its constitution.

“We regret the negative repercussions of this incident and we shall get to the root of the matter,” the President said. “If there was collusion, this is the gravest act against our national security done so far by persons within the government.”

She urged Congress to include in the anti-terrorism bill, which is pending deliberations, a provision that would impose the harshest punishment possible to those found guilty of infidelity in the custody of terrorist suspects.

She said those found colluding with terrorists to enable the latter to escape detention “must suffer severely from their aiding these enemies of humanity.”

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye, in a press briefing, said Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo is now going through the list of those possible members of the fact-finding commission. Secretary Romulo is chairman of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security.

“As soon as these prospective members confirm their acceptance of their nominations, we will make the appropriate announcement,” he said.

On why the President ordered an independent probe, Bunye said the President feels the incident is not an ordinary police matter. "It's an incident imbued with vital national interest that's why she's taking an extraordinary move of creating an independent fact-finding body," he said.

Bunye took exception to the comments of Sen. Manuel Villar that the escape was staged to allow the Philippine government to accommodate the request of the Indonesian government.

"It's an air ball. It's way off the mark. In the first place, Senator Villar has his facts all mixed up," he said. "The Indonesian government never made any request for the custody of Al-Ghozi."

He added that it would be illogical for the government to risk political fallouts just to accommodate the alleged request of a friendly government.

GMA braves risks to be with poor Leyte villagers

HINDANG, Leyte – Risky and dangerous. But nothing is impossible if one wants to help poor people living in remote and rebel-infested areas like Barangay Mahilum here.

This President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo demonstrated when she surprised Mahilum residents in a visit here.

The President arrived early afternoon on board the presidential chopper from Iloilo and spearheaded officials in delivering basic social services to the villagers.

In her brief impromptu speech, she told the villagers that the government has been doing its best to improve the quality of their lives and to bring development to their barangay.

"The government is really caring for you and we want to show to all of you that we are doing our best for the progress of your future," she said in the Visayan dialect.

In the middle of her speech, the President turned over to concerned persons a check for P100,000 to fund the construction of public toilets and another check for P200,000 for the livelihood project of 50 residents.

She further handed over a check for P100,000 to finance the construction of the water reservoir and the rehabilitation of fittings in Barangay Anolon and another P100,000 for the rehabilitation of fittings and expansion of the water system in Barangay Bulacan.

She also issued another P75,000 check to finance the construction of a rain water collection facility with roofing in Barangay Himokilan Island.

After her speech, she launched the Strong Republic School (SRS) Project and turned over the generator, television, VCD player and sets of instructional materials for the distance learning program to barangay officials.

The President observed a teaching demonstration conducted by para-*guro* or semi-teacher Gertrudes Claveria on 20 pupils in the Munting Nayon Elementary School here.

Later, she joined the municipal and barangay officials in a luncheon at the barangay chapel.

From Mahilum, the President visited Barangay Capudlusan, about two hours' walk along the river bank of Hindang, and conferred with local officials inside the 43rd Infantry Battalion detachment of the Philippine Army.

After Capudlusan, she flew by helicopter to Tacloban City where she would stay for the night.

Among the Cabinet members who accompanied the President in her visit here were Press Secretary Milton Alingod, Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, Secretary Marita Jimenez of the Official Development Assistance Program, Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and Secretary Gabby Claudio, Cabinet Secretary for Regional Development.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 16, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514160951/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july16.htm>

The President's Day: July 17, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Alleged Police Corruption**
- **Statement of the President: Anti-Dissidence Campaign**
- **Statement of the President: Ill-Gotten Wealth**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA poises top-to-bottom revamp of PNP**
- **Fact-finding body on Al-Ghozi escape to look into long-term solution to PNP security lapses**
- **Bunye: signs are Bush to visit RP**

Statement of the President: Alleged Police Corruption

I acknowledge the serious problem of corruption in the police organization and I am making no excuses for it. We must face the truth and do something about it. It is highly probable that this problem is also related to the escape of no less than 5 prominent detainees from Camp Crame over the past year. I hold the PNP Chief and the entire leadership of the PNP accountable for resolving the problem of police corruption once and for all because it is already eating into the security of our nation. Let us not lean on the argument that this is an endemic or perennial issue, or that only a few bad eggs are involved. The people are tired of these worn out explanations. I call on the entire PNP leadership to shape up or ship out, and I will not hesitate to undertake a top-to-bottom revamp if no results are forthcoming. In the meantime, an independent body will deal with the specific matter of the Al-Ghozi escape, the culpabilities involved, and long term preventive measures. We will get into the root of this case no matter who gets hurt.

Statement of the President: Anti-Dissidence Campaign

The intensified operation versus NPA will continue as we mop up dissident-affected barangays through political and socioeconomic measures. The release of 38 billion pesos for the land reform program as a result of the recent Supreme Court decision gives us wider strategic latitude to resolve the root causes of poverty and thereby defeat the insurgency. We will move on in all fronts while keeping the doors to peace open to those who renounce the option of arms in the pursuit of their political ends.

Statement of the President: Ill-Gotten Wealth

I support the allocation of part of the funds for the compensation of human rights victims. We must lend recognition to the Filipino people's struggle for freedom, justice and redemption—and the individuals who sacrificed life and limb for this cause.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

Alleged corruption in the police

We are not taking this defensively or sitting down. The President has acknowledged the weaknesses of the police force and has ordered the Chief to do something about it or face the consequences. We are not denying that corruption may have been involved. We are not making any excuses and will get into the root of the matter. We have an independent commission coming up to strengthen the investigation. We are interested in punishing the guilty as well as in the long-term measures leading to permanent solutions.

Bush visit

Dr. Frank Jenista of the US Embassy called to clarify that the US Ambassador is in regular touch with Washington, both before and after the Al-Ghozi incident, and that there is not the slightest hint that the Bush would not push through.

We also find no reason for canceling the Bush visit because of this incident. It is a freak event and we are hot on the heels of Al-Ghozi and his companions. They will not be given time to rest and to plan or to do their mischief.

Our relations with the US stand at a strategic footing and should not be affected by this incident. There is more reason now to sustain our joint efforts at counter terrorism and defeating poverty.

GMA poises top-to-bottom revamp of PNP

TACLOBAN, Leyte – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today threatened to conduct a top-to-bottom revamp of the Philippine National Police (PNP) leadership for corruption which she said was probably behind the escape of high-profile detainees at the PNP headquarters in Camp Crame.

Acknowledging that corruption in the PNP “is already eating into the security of our nation,” the President called on the entire leadership PNP to shape up or ship out.

“I hold the PNP Chief and the entire leadership of the PNP accountable for resolving the problem of police corruption once and for all,” the President said during her visit to the Department of Foreign Affairs office here at the Provincial Capitol Compound.

If no results are forthcoming, the President said, “I will not hesitate to undertake a top-to-bottom revamp.”

“We will get into the root of this case no matter who gets hurt,” she assured the nation.

The President said it is highly probable that the problem of corruption is related to the escape of no less than five prominent detainees from the headquarters of the PNP over the past year.

Among those who escaped recently were international terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi, an Indonesian bomb expert, and suspected Abu Sayyaf members Abdulmukim Ong Edris and Omar Opik Lasal alias Meram Abante.

In June last year, Faisal Marohombsar, the leader of the Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom gang, and two of his followers, also escaped from Camp Crame.

The President said the people are tired of the worn-out explanations that corruption within the police organization is an endemic or perennial issue or that only a few eggs are involved.

The President also said an independent commission will deal with the specific matter of the escape of Al-Ghozi, the culpabilities involved and long-term preventive measures.

Fact-finding body on Al-Ghozi escape to look into long-term solution to PNP security lapses

Malacañang today said that the fact-finding body created by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to look into the circumstances behind the escape of convicted Indonesian terrorist Fathur Roman Al-Ghozi and two other Abu Sayyaf bandits will have far-reaching effects on the overall security problem at the Philippine National Police (PNP).

In his regular press briefing this afternoon, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that the presidential commission is tasked not only to pinpoint responsibility for the escape up to the highest level but also to make recommendations on the long-term solution to the security gap at the PNP.

Bunye said that the investigation to be undertaken by the fact-finding commission would go hand in hand with the ongoing investigation ordered by PNP chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, on the incident.

“I believe the two investigations will go side by side, in a parallel fashion,” Bunye said.

Earlier in a formal statement, the President said that she will hold the PNP leadership responsible for resolving the problem of police corruption once and for all “because it is already eating into the security of the nation.”

In her statement, the President acknowledged that there is a serious problem of corruption in the police organization and that this problem could be related to the escape of no less than five detainees from Camp Crame over the past year.

She said that she will not hesitate to undertake a top-to-bottom revamp of the PNP if no results are forthcoming.

The President said that although the independent body will deal with the specific matter of the Al-Ghozi escape and the culpabilities involved, it will also look into long-term preventive measures.

“We will look into the root of this case no matter who gets hurt,” the President said.

Bunye explained that the fact that the President mentioned about the need to address the issue of police corruption means that something really has to be done.

“This deserves the support of all sectors and I feel that those who are really interested in serving the government should be one in this campaign,” Bunye said.

Bunye: signs are Bush to visit RP

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye today indicated that United States President George W. Bush might push through with his planned state visit to the Philippines this October, after the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit.

In his regular press briefing, Bunye said “there is not the slightest indication that there had been a change in the plan.”

He said the US Embassy in Manila has been in constant touch with Malacañang and with Washington.

“Dr. Frank Jenista called us to clarify that the US Ambassador is in constant touch with Washington,” both before and after the escape of Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi and two others from their Camp Crame cell, he said.

“The fact that they took the initiative to call us indicates that they really would like to clarify the situation,” he added.

The US Embassy, since early Wednesday afternoon, has been issuing clarifications on the issue, Bunye said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 17, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161005/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july17.htm>

The President's Day: July 18, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Travel Advisory**
- **Statement of the President: Peace Talks with MILF**
- **Statement of the President: AFP Issues**
- **GMA pushes anti-insurgency, anti-poverty drive in Samar**
- **GMA earmarks P72 million for depressed barangays in 5 Eastern Samar towns**
- **More farmers gain from GMA's AFMA commitment**
- **MILF's pledge to help recapture Al-Ghozi could help speed up peace process — Palace**
- **GMA bares breakthrough in gov't-MILF talks; panels agree on ceasefire starting tomorrow**
- **GMA names Ebdane to lead task force on Al-Ghozi hunt**

Statement of the President: Travel Advisory

We understand the position of the United States and other countries and we ourselves are concerned over the safety of their nationals as well as that of our own. We have played a very strong role in the global fight against terrorism and the capture of Al-Ghozi was part of that commitment. We are equally committed to bring him back to justice and to work with other nations, including the United States to stop terrorism in whatever form and wherever it may be.

Statement of the President: Peace Talks with MILF

Step by step, we are overcoming the obstacles to the resumption of peace talks with the MILF under conditions of stability on the ground. This will hopefully limit the roaming ground of Al-Ghozi and his cohorts in Mindanao. We hold the MILF to its word that it will help in the interdiction of terrorists and I am looking forward to Al-Ghozi as a primary test case. The peace process has a large stake on this issue.

Statement of the President: AFP Issues

I support any legitimate grievances of the young officers in the Armed Forces and I urge them to resolve these responsibly through the chain of command. The Chief of Staff is ordered to institutionalize a grievance mechanism for these matters, of which I want to be informed. We must strengthen a culture of disciplined transparency in the Armed Forces. This is the most effective way we can insulate the uniform from politics, avoid factionalism and promote professionalism.

GMA pushes anti-insurgency, anti-poverty drive in Samar

BORONGAN, Eastern Samar – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Thursday night said the fight against insurgency is not only a battle between government troopers and the Communist rebels but also a battle against the root causes of poverty.

“I want to say that the intensified operation versus the New People's Army (NPA) will continue as we mop up dissident-affected barangays through political and socio-economic measures,” the President said.

“The release of P38 billion for the Land Reform Program as a result of the recent Supreme Court decision gives us wider strategic latitude to resolve the root causes of poverty and thereby defeat the insurgency,” she said during a private dinner with local officials at the provincial capitol here.

While the military has intensified its operations against the dissident rebels, the President said the government is still not closing its doors to those who would want to return to the folds of the law.

“We will move the stones in all fronts while keeping the doors to peace open to those who renounce the option of arms in the pursuit of their political ends,” she said.

She added she has also ordered the military to beef up its forces in Eastern Samar after some 100 rebels attacked the Quinapondan police station last June 22.

Four days later, some 200 rebels overran the Army patrol base of the 52nd Infantry Battalion in Oras town, resulting in the death of five soldiers, 10 members of the Civilian Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU), and an innocent civilian.

After the dinner, the President promoted the three outnumbered policemen on duty who gallantly put up a stand and repulsed the rebels who attacked Quinapondan.

“*At dahil sa ginawa nila, sila ay binibigyan natin ng special meritorious promotion to the next higher rank (Because of their gallant stand, we are giving them special meritorious promotion to the next higher rank),*” she said.

Promoted were Police Officers 1 Raul Graza, and Alexander Villafior, and P/Insp. Cayetano Gannaban, the town’s police chief who was wounded on the right arm during the attack. The President also awarded to Gannaban the PNP Wounded Personnel Medal (Medalya ng Sugatang Magiting) for the heroic deed.

GMA earmarks P72 million for depressed barangays in 5 Eastern Samar towns

BORONGAN, Eastern Samar – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night announced the allocation of a P72-million fund for the three-year implementation of the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS) in 83 barangays of the five depressed towns in this province.

The President made the announcement Thursday evening during a private dinner with local officials at the provincial capitol here.

“*Ito ay bahagi duon sa nakuha kong biyaya para sa ating bansa nung ako’y pumunta sa Amerika nuong November 2001 (The amount is part of what the country obtained when I visited the United States in November 2001),*” the President said.

The P72 million is allocated as follows: P24 million a year for the KALAHI-CIDSS projects in 28 impoverished barangays in the town of Can-Avid; P8.4 million for 17 barangays in San Policarpo; P5.1 million for 13 barangays in Balangiga; P3.9 million for 13 barangays in Jipapad; and P3.6 million for 12 barangays in Maslog.

Under the KALAHI-CIDSS project, each depressed barangay is allocated P300,000 per year.

All of the beneficiary towns are classified as sixth-class municipalities, except for Can-Avid which is a fifth-class municipality.

The bulk of the fund comes from the World Bank, with counterpart funding from the national and local governments.

The President said that to be included in the KALAHI-CIDSS project, the World Bank requires a town to be among the most impoverished, with a local government willing to provide a counterpart contribution, and with an existing non-government organization (NGO) capable of implementing and monitoring social projects.

Among its scope are economic support, physical infrastructure, basic service infrastructure, and capability-building activities.

Economic support includes the construction, communal irrigation, production and post-harvest facilities; physical infrastructure includes road rehabilitation and road re-graveling; basic service infrastructure includes water systems, barangay health stations, and basic agriculture facilities; and capacity building includes training for enterprise development and farming technologies.

The President arrived 5:30 p.m. Thursday at the Eastern Samar State College in Can-Avid, some 65 kilometers north of this capital town, after a seven-hour trip from Tacloban City. The usual three-and-a-half hour trip took them seven hours due to the stormy weather prevailing at the time.

The President and her group were welcomed by the students and local officials led by Governor Cleotilde Salazar, Eastern Samar Lone District Rep. Marcelino Libanan, and Can-Avid Mayor Jil Norman Germino.

She was accompanied by Presidential Assistant Gabriel Claudio, CORD for Region 8; Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman, Secretary Marita Jimenez, National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Lead Convenor Teresita Quintos-Deles, and Press Secretary Milton Alingod.

The President witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement for the implementation of the KALAHI-CIDSS project between the mayors of the five identified towns, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), NAPC, and the representatives of non-government organizations (NGOs).

The KALAHI-CIDSS project, jointly implemented by the DSWD and the NAPC, is the government's major anti-poverty program for impoverished barangays in the country.

The President also launched the Strong Republic School (SRS) distance learning system at the state college by observing how classes are conducted with the use of a television set.

The local government, through Congressman Libanan, donated to the Can-Avid SRS project a television set, video equipment, modules and digital video discs (DVDs).

The SRS program seeks to improve the literacy rate in identified disadvantaged communities through the use of television, video compact discs (VCDs), and other modern means of communication.

The SRS program was commissioned by the President to be implemented in close coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), and various government line agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs).

More farmers gain from GMA's AFMA commitment

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's firm resolve to allot funds and make the 1998 Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) work in the last two years has provided millions of the country's farmers and fishermen the fighting chance to improve the quality of their lives.

Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, in a media briefing, today said the President's commitment to AFMA has resulted in the release of agricultural credit, a boost in agri-fishery output and new jobs for 1.78 million people.

Lorenzo said that in terms of AFMA-related credit, the DA lent P39.63 billion to more than a million farmers, fisher folk, food retailers and small agricultural businessmen.

Loans worth P858.6 million for 81,884 farmers and fisher folk were also guaranteed under AFMA.

The loans were provided through the facilities of the Land Bank and the Quedan Corporation.

From 2001 to 2002, the Department of Agriculture (DA) has used P20.1 billion out of the P20.43-billion AFMA budget, with P12.13 billion set aside for AFMA to sustain agricultural growth this year, Lorenzo said.

To the benefit of more than 340,000 farmers, the DA has opened 50,746 hectares (has.) of farmlands to irrigation and rehabilitated 441,116 has. with existing water systems as of June 30, 2003.

Complementing this was the completion of 1,045 farm-to-market roads and 15 municipal and regional fish ports.

Side by side with the provision of support infrastructure, the DA also distributed 641 post-harvest machineries and equipment and built or repaired 1,456 units more.

MILF's pledge to help recapture Al-Ghozi could help speed up peace process — Palace

Malacañang today said the pledge of the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to help in the recapture of convicted Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi and two others would help speed up the peace process in Mindanao.

In a formal statement, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the government is holding the MILF to its word that it will help in the interdiction of terrorists and that she is looking forward to Al-Ghozi as a primary test case.

“The peace process has a large stake on this issue,” the President said.

The President said that step by step, the government is overcoming the obstacles to the resumption of talks with the MILF under conditions of stability in the ground.

Later in a press briefing in Malacañang, Deputy Presidential Spokesman Ricardo Saludo said the government appreciates the statement of the MILF that it would help in apprehending Al-Ghozi and the two other terrorists.

“We will hold them to their word that they shall assist in ensuring or helping capture these individuals, and more importantly to prevent them or any terrorist around from undertaking any action that will hurt civilians and the country at large,” Saludo said.

Al-Ghozi and two Abu Sayyaf terrorists are now on the lam after they escaped early this week from their detention cell at Camp Crame in Quezon City.

GMA bares breakthrough in gov't-MILF talks; panels agree on ceasefire starting tomorrow

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced a breakthrough in the peace negotiations between the government panel and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), saying that they have agreed “on a mutual cessation of hostilities” effective Saturday, July 19.

As this developed, the President ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to downgrade its action “from punitive operations to active defense” against the MILF.

In a statement, she also reported that the court has suspended the warrants of arrest against members and staff of the MILF panel.

Further, the Department of the Interior and Local Government “shall lift the corresponding rewards for the arrest or capture” of the MILF peace panelists, she said.

Affected MILF panelists included MILF Chairman Hashim Salamat, MILF Vice Chairman for Military Affairs Al Haj Ibrahim Murad, Aleem Aziz Mimbantas, MILF Vice Chairman for Political Affairs Ghadzali Jaafar, MILF Spokesman Eid Kabalu Nortel, Datucan Abas Mohaqher Iqbal, Lanang Ali, Omar Pasigan, Commander Nurudin Ibrahim and Toks Ibrahim.

The MILF panelists would also be granted safe conduct passes and free passage within the Philippines, as provided under the GRP-MILF Agreement for Safety and Security Guarantees, for 90 days, according to the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

The President took time to express gratitude to Malaysian Prime Minister Mohammad Mahathir “for his sincere and abiding support for our (peace) efforts.”

The President’s statement follows:

Today the peace panels of our government and the MILF have agreed on a mutual cessation of hostilities. I am directing the Armed forces to downgrade our operational status from punitive operations to active defense. This is in line with the policy of calibrated reciprocity that will continue to guide our actions in the peace process.

The warrants of arrest against the members and staff of the MILF panel have been suspended by the court. The Department of Interior and the Local Government shall lift the corresponding rewards for the arrest or capture of the concerned persons. Safe Conduct Passes will be issued so that they can travel to the venue of the negotiations.

I call on the panels to immediately enter in formal talks towards a final peace agreement. I anticipated the deployment of a Malaysian ceasefire observer team soon. We are teaming up with our partners in the OIC to ensure the effectiveness and durability of this effort.

I thank Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir for his sincere and abiding support for our efforts. I also appreciate the role of President Bush for committing assistance to the rehabilitation of conflict-affected areas, which contributes greatly to the climate of peace to prosper.

This breakthrough is the result of relentless backchannelling efforts undertaken by government representatives over several months in the Philippines and abroad.

I ask our people to give peace a chance, even as we secure our absolute sovereignty and the enforcement of the law over all areas and at all times. As we address the roots of rebellion and secession, I am confident that we shall also effectively isolate and marginalize the dwindling terrorist cells in Mindanao and across our seas in the region.

Peace is at hand. We shall forge the political will to preserve it for all generations of Filipinos.

GMA names Ebdane to lead task force on Al-Ghozi hunt

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed Philippine National Police chief Director-General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. to lead a task force that would go after escaped terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi “until the terrorist leader is accounted for.”

“We are not giving any false assurances to our people ... but we assure that the government will leave no stone unturned in the manhunt and in the investigation of the circumstances that led to the escape,” the President said.

Guest speaker at the Mindanao Island Conference at the Century Park Sheraton, the President also ordered authorities to scrutinize every piece of information and to follow the leads both to Al-Ghozi and his cohorts and to possible collusion from within the police organization.

She said the capture of Al-Ghozi is part of the country's commitment to the fight against global terrorism.

"We are equally committed to bring him back to justice and to work with other nations to stop terrorism in whatever form and wherever it may be," she added.

She called on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to hold on to its word that it would help in the interdiction of terrorists "and we are looking forward to Al-Ghozi as a primary test case."

She announced that the government and the MILF peace panels have agreed to a cessation of hostilities starting tomorrow, a breakthrough in the peace process.

The President stressed that the framework to the government's peace initiatives "should be based on constitutionality," applying to dealings with rebels, insurgents and secessionists and those in the uniformed service.

She said she supported any legitimate grievances of the young officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and "I urge them to resolve this responsively through the chain of command."

She ordered AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya "to institutionalize a grievance mechanism for these matters for which I want to be informed."

She pointed out that the culture of disciplined transparency in the AFP should be strengthened to isolate the military from politics, avoid factionalism and promote professionalism.

The President called on all Filipinos to give peace a chance, "even as we secure our absolute sovereignty and the enforcement of the law for all areas and at all times."

The President expressed confidence the government would "effectively isolate and marginalize the dwindling terrorist cells in Mindanao and across our seas in the region."

"Peace is at hand. Peace is within grasp. We shall force the political will to preserve it for all generations of Filipinos," she said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 18, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161019/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july18.htm>

The President's Day: July 19, 2003

19 JULY 2003

- **GMA approves projects worth P8.23 billion**
- **DA projects higher RP rice self-sufficiency in 2003**
- **President's radio address to the nation**
- **GMA assures support for legitimate demands of AFP junior officers**
- **GMA cites valuable contribution of Filipino seafarers to RP economy**
- **Set aside a day every week to burn confiscated drugs, GMA orders PDEA**
- **All stakeholders will get a share in the recovered Marcos wealth — GMA**

GMA approves projects worth P8.23 billion

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, in her capacity as chairman of the National Economic and Development (NEDA) Board, has approved five projects worth P8.23 billion, including the P2.91 billion Countrywide Bridge Project, that is expected to spur economic growth in the countryside.

The Countrywide Bridge Project involves the construction and replacement of 200 priority local bridges nationwide with a total length of 5,306 lineal meters (lm), using modular steel bridging technology.

Of the 200 bridges, 120 will be double lane bridges with a total length of 3,538 lm while 80 will be single lane bridges with a total length of 1,768 lm.

The bridge project will be implemented in all regions except the National Capital Region (NCR), Region 13 and Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which have similar existing projects.

The bridge project is expected to improve local economies from merely subsistence base to thriving market economies because it will improve farm to market access and provide more services and opportunities to local communities.

The NEDA board also approved the procurement of pumps, drilling rigs and related equipment project worth P1.03 billion; rehabilitation of Cagayan Integrated Agricultural Development Project – Irrigation Component, P472 million; 20-MW Palinpinon III Geothermal Power Plant Project, P1.74 billion; and the 2003 US Public Law 480 Title Loan Program, P2.08 billion.

With the procurement of additional irrigation equipment, some 18,000 hectares of developed lands that are currently not irrigated due to inadequate water supply or lack of pumping facilities would be irrigated. The project is expected to trigger economic activities in the countryside.

The Rehabilitation of Cagayan Integrated Agricultural Development Project, on the other hand, aims to increase crop production from the current average yield of 2.65 metric tons (MT) per hectare to 3.98 metric tons per hectare. With this, NEDA said, the average annual farm income of farmers may rise from P22,725 to P26,775.

The 20-MW Palinpinon III Geothermal Power Plant Project would address the projected shortfall in power generation in the Visayas by 2005 by making use of the excess available steam in the existing Palinpinon II Geothermal steamfield.

It will involve the construction, installation and commissioning of a geothermal power plant and the construction of a switching station in Nasuji, Southern Negros.

The 2003 US Public Law 480 Title Loan Program involves the importation of 180,000 metric tons of rice.

The 180,000 MT of rice is about eight days of the country's national rice requirement and approximately 18 percent of the National Food Authority's (NFA) average annual imports.

DA projects higher RP rice self-sufficiency in 2003

The Philippines would be 97 percent self-sufficient in rice next year.

This was the fearless conservative forecast of Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, Jr. who attributed the projected feat to the increasing use of hybrid rice and certified seeds by Filipino farmers, barring bad weather.

"And with God's blessing, we may be 100 percent self-sufficient by that time," Lorenzo told the media in a briefing in Malacañang Friday.

Lorenzo said that presently, the Philippines is 94 percent self-sufficient in rice, higher than the 88 percent self-sufficiency figure in 2000 when the country could produce only 12.39 million metric tons (MT).

As of June 1, the country's total rice stock stood at 2.11 million MT, which is equivalent to an 80-day supply.

Lorenzo also reported rising self-sufficiency levels in corn, due to the grain's importance to the poultry and livestock sectors.

"We are 67 percent self-sufficient (in corn) today, compared to 60 percent sufficiency three years ago," he said.

The DA expects to produce 80 percent of the country's corn requirements by 2004, leaving only 20 percent for imports, Lorenzo added.

The total corn inventory as of June 1 stood at 184,000 MT.

Lorenzo said that for sugar, the country produces 97 percent of its needs as output this year is expected to hit 2.13 million MT, the highest in 30 years.

He said sugar self-sufficiency would reach 100 percent next year. He expressed confidence that by 2005 the Philippines would be rejoining "the ranks of sugar exporters, a status we used to enjoy two decades ago."

President's radio address to the nation

Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat

Ngayong araw na ito ay nagkasundo ang mga peace panels ng ating pamahalaan at ang MILF na itigil ng bawat panig ang labanan o magkaroon ng Mutual Cessation of Hostilities. Dahil dito ay intassan ko ang ating Sandatahang Lakas na ibaba ang kanilang operational status, mula punitive operations ay gawin itong active defense. Ito ay naaayon sa ating patakaran na Calibrated Reciprocity na siyang ating magiging gabay sa usaping pangkapayapaan.

Sinuspinde na rin ng ating korte ang mga warrant of arrest para sa mga kasapi at working staff ng MILF panel. Tinanggal na rin ang mga pabuya para sa mga kinauukulan. Magpapalabas din tayo ng mga Safe Conduct Pass para sila ay makarating sa negotiation venues ng maluwa at maluwalhati.

Hinihiling ko sa magkabilang panig na magsagawa kaagad ng mga pormal na pag-uusap para maipalabas agad ang isang kasunduang pangkapayapaan. Inaasahan ko ang pagpapadala dito sa lalong madaling panahon ng Malaysian government ng mga observers o tagapagmasid sa usapang ito.

Labis kong pinasalamatan si Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir sa kanyang buong-pusong pagsuporta sa inisyatibong ito. Pinasalamatan ko rin si Pangulong Bush sa suporta na patuloy niyang ipinagkakaloob sa atin, lalo na sa rehabilitasyon ng mga lugar na lubhang naapektuhan ng kaguluhan. Ang tulong na ito ang isa sa mga dahilan kung bakit patuloy na lumiliwanag ang ating pag-asa na makamtan ang tunay na kapayapaan sa Mindanao.

Ang mga napakahalagang kaganapang ito ay resulta ng masigasig na pagsisikap ng mga kinatawan ng ating pamahalaan na kanilang isinagawa dito at sa ibang bansa.

Hinihiling ko sa ating mamamayan, na sa gitna ng ating pagsisikap na maitaguyod ang pambansang kasarinlan at mapairal ang batas saan mang dako ng kapuluan, na lagi nating isapuso ang pagbibigay ng pagkakataon sa kapayapaan. Lubos ang aking tiwala at paniniwala sa ating matapat na pagharap sa mga tunay na kadakilaan ng rebelyon at sesesyon ay mahihiwalay natin ang mga grupo ng terorista dito sa Mindanao at mga kalapit bansa sa rehiyon.

Ako ay naniniwala na malapit na nating makamit ang tunay na kapayapaan. At pag ito ay ating makamit, gagawin natin ang lahat ng ating makakaya para ito ay matamasa ng mga susunod pang henerasyon.

Maraming salamat.

GMA assures support for legitimate demands of AFP junior officers

MARIVELES, Bataan — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the junior officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) that her administration would support their legitimate demands but at the same time called on them to course these demands through the AFP chain of command.

In her speech at the 1st Commencement Exercises of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) at the school's campus here, the President said she has ordered AFP Chief, Gen. Narciso Abaya, to institutionalize a mechanism that would address the legitimate grievances of the young AFP officers.

“Dapat palakasin natin ang kultura ng disiplinadong transparency sa armed forces at sa navy (We should strengthen the culture of transparent discipline within the armed forces and the navy),” the President said.

“This is the best way to isolate the uniformed officers and men from politics,” the President said.

The President also exhorted all AFP officers and men to observe professionalism and do away with factionalism.

To the graduating students, the President said that they should maintain their sense of discipline even when they are already on board merchant ships, especially those who would like to join the Philippine Navy later on.

The President also lauded the officers of the school, that included Captain Gregorio Oca, who founded the MAAP, and Vice Admiral Eduardo Santos, MAAP president, for their foresight in establishing the maritime institution.

She said that the MAAP, which has just received its ISO-9001 certification, is now one of the five top maritime academies in the whole world.

According to the President, the conferment of the ISO-9001 certification on the MAAP just 30 months after it was established is a record because normally it would take decades for a school to hurdle the requirements for ISO certification.

GMA cites valuable contribution of Filipino seafarers to RP economy

MARIVELES, Bataan — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the valuable contribution of Filipino seafarers to the country's economy as she assured them of the government's continued support for their welfare and well being.

In her speech before the first batch of graduates of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) in the school's campus here, the President said that last year, the almost 205,000 Filipino seafarers on board various ocean-going vessels contributed almost \$300 million every quarter.

She said that of the total \$8 billion remitted by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in 2002, about \$1.4 billion came from the Filipino seafarers.

The President said that for the first half of this year alone, over 112,000 Filipino seamen have already been deployed to ocean-going vessels.

"This indicates that the demand for Filipino seafaring and English language skills continues to climb, establishing the new maritime tradition," the President said.

According to the President, the Filipino seafarers today constitute one-fifth of the total global shipping force and Filipino marine officers are considered among the most competent and efficient anywhere.

The President also announced that Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas has requested United States consular officials to open more special windows to accommodate applications from Filipino seafarers.

She said that officials of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) will meet within the week with US consular officials to discuss the matter of enhancing the security features of the seafarer's registration certificate so that this will serve as an alternative to the present transit visa requirements.

The President also announced that last July 3, the Australian Maritime Authority has lifted its ban on the hiring of Filipino seamen that they imposed because of the leakage of the marine deck officers exam.

She said that the Professional Regulatory Commission has voided the 2001 professional licensure exams for marine deck officers and most examinees have retaken the exams and appropriate charges have been filed against the errant examiners.

Set aside a day every week to burn confiscated drugs, GMA orders PDEA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) to set aside a regular day of the week for the public burning of drugs, raw materials and precursors so that these cannot be recycled and sold illegally by unscrupulous law enforcers.

In her brief remarks at an inter-faith prayer rally held this afternoon at the Malacañang Grounds, the President said she wants a strict accounting of all confiscated drugs and drugs destroyed "to the last gram."

The President said that for the accounting to be transparent, the burning should be witnessed by observers from the private group and from the National Ecumenical Committee (NECCOM), which sponsored the "Drug-Free Philippines" rally.

NECCOM is an inter-faith body composed, among others, of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and other religious movements like Jesus is Lord.

The President said that the prayer rally was a "timely response" to the challenges that the country is facing.

“This prayer rally reinforces our collective commitment to our faith. It enhances our spiritual values, strengthens our institution and moral rearmament through prayer and worship,” the President said.

She also instructed the PDEA to have the photos of those suspected to be involved in a drug case, along with the details of their involvement, published and aired over the media.

The President said that through the media, the public could help in catching these criminals and putting them behind bars.

“Let us put a face and identity to these people. Let us get the Filipino people, the public, involved in hunting them down,” the President said.

After her remarks, the President led the prayer by imploring the Lord Almighty to guide and help the Filipino people “in our common fight and struggle to end the proliferation of illegal drugs” in the country.

All stakeholders will get a share in the recovered Marcos wealth — GMA

CALUMPIT, Bulacan — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured agrarian reform farmers, the former landowners and human rights victims that they would all get their share of the P36 billion, or \$682 million, in ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses that the Supreme Court has forfeited in favor of the government.

After the mass oath-taking here of officials of barangays in agrarian reform communities, the President instructed Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan to ensure the proper distribution of the money as soon as it becomes available.

The President said that part of the money could be used to pay landowners whose lands have been apportioned to tenants under the comprehensive agrarian reform program (CARP) of the government.

She also said that since there are already available funds, the entire country can now be declared a land reform area.

The President also said that with the money, all projects in the agrarian reform communities (ARCs) can now be implemented to improve the lives of the farmer beneficiaries.

She instructed Secretary Pagdanganan to coordinate with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Department of Education (DepED), and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) so that projects for ARCs, like schools and farm-to-market roads, can now be built.

The President said that a portion of the money would be also allocated to address the claims of human rights victims but added that this will have to wait for a specific law that would authorize such allocation.

She reiterated that she will continue to support the fight for justice of the human rights victims who suffered during the dark days of martial law.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 19, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161033/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july19.htm>

The President's Day: July 20, 2003

20 JULY 2003

- **Poverty drops to lowest level, personal optimism returns, says SWS survey**

Poverty drops to lowest level, personal optimism returns, says SWS survey

The Social Weather Stations said today its June 2003 economic indicators show improvements across the board, with poverty dropping to its lowest level in 16 years, hunger maintaining the same low level as last March, and personal optimism regaining its traditional dominance over pessimism.

The proportion of families rating themselves as *mahirap* or poor was only 53% in the June survey, or a very significant drop from 59% in March 2003, 61% in November 2002, and 66% in both September 2002 and May 2002, the SWS said in its report posted in the Internet.

Self-Rated Poverty is at its lowest point since the record low of 43% in March 1987. The recent improvement coincides with the rise in the public's net satisfaction with the national administration's performance in Helping the Poor to +27 in June from +14 last March.

Self-Rated Poverty declined most of all in the Visayas, from 78% to 58% between March and June 2003, followed by Metro Manila, from 40% to 29% over the period. Mindanao had an insignificant change from 74% to 70%, and the Balance of Luzon stayed at 49%, the SWS said.

The proportion of families reporting that they experienced hunger, without having anything to eat, at least once in the last three months was a very low 6.6% in June 2003, which is close to the 6.7% of March 2003 and the record low 6.5% of October 1999.

These are the only times for hunger to be below 7% since the SWS quarterly surveys of hunger began in July 1998. Previous to March 2003, the average proportion of Filipino families experiencing hunger was over 10%.

The June 2003 hunger proportion of 6.6% consists of 5.1% who experienced it only once or a few times, which is termed Moderate Hunger, and 1.5% who went through it often or always, which is Severe Hunger.

The SWS survey also found 30% optimistic that their quality of life would improve in the next 12 months, and only 19% pessimistic that it would decline, for a Net Optimism score of +12, without rounding error.

Optimism now prevails in all social classes (ABC +26, D +11, E +8).

Thus there has been a decided recovery from the Iraq war-affected time of March 2003, when only 24% were optimists and 28 were pessimists, or a Net Optimism score of -5, one of the rare times when pessimism dominated over optimism, SWS said.

Comparing their present quality of life to 12 months ago, 19% said they had gained and 41% said they had lost, for a Net Gainers score of -22. Although unfavorable, it is not as bad as in March 2003, when 14% were Gainers and 55% were Losers, or a very poor Net Gainers score of -41.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 20, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161046/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july20.htm>

The President's Day: July 21, 2003

21 JULY 2003

- **Statement of the President: Mutual Cessation of Hostilities**
- **Statement of the President: Al-Ghozi Manhunt**
- **Statement of the President: Corruption**
- **Statement of the President: NDF Talks**
- **GMA vows to make crackdown on corrupt officials as intense as war against terror, drug trade**
- **Rights victims, CARP beneficiaries to get share from recovered Marcos wealth, GMA assures**
- **Gov't readies for formal peace talks with MILF**
- **KALAHI reaches out to poorest of poor in 216 towers**
- **Livelihood projects improve Payatas victims' lives**

Statement of the President: Mutual Cessation of Hostilities

The mutual cessation of hostilities does not deter the enforcement of the law in all areas at all times. It must be understood that the Government must act on the basis of necessity to protect the communities from harm, proactively. It is the Government that defines the scope of action and there should be no hair-splitting. We are standing down from punitive actions but we have to provide an umbrella of active defense to give the people peace of mind.

Statement of the President: Al-Ghozi Manhunt

We have to focus on the manhunt with the same determination as we conduct the probe within the PNP to unearth possible collusion. The story will only be complete when these two tracks yield results. I am resolved to put back the terrorist in jail as much as getting to the root of his escape and putting his alleged cohorts in the police in jail with him. These twin objectives shall be pursued until accomplished. The dragnet has been spread far and wide while the newly formed fact finding commission shall soon buckle down to work.

Statement of the President: Corruption

We shall crack down on corruption in the same degree we are cracking down on terror and drugs. We will punish officials at any level in accordance with due process. Corruption does not only bring disgrace to the public service but strikes at the root of our national security and stability. We cannot tolerate the corrupt enrichment of a few at the expense of the good name and prestige of the majority of civil servants who serve honestly and devotedly.

Statement of the President: NDF Talks

We are leaving the door open to rebels who wish to return to the fold of law while we continue to protect the communities from NPA depredations. The employment of force shall be balanced by the hand of reconciliation extended to those who renounce violence in the pursuit of political ends.

GMA vows to make crackdown on corrupt officials as intense as war against terror, drug trade

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today vowed to intensify government efforts in ferreting out officials who have enriched themselves in office through corrupt and illegal means.

In an unscheduled press briefing in Malacañang, the President said her administration will crack down on corruption in public office in the same degree that it is cracking down on terrorism and drug trafficking.

“We will punish officials at any level in accordance with due process,” the President said, adding that corruption does not only bring disgrace to the public service but also strikes at the root of the country’s national security and stability.

The President said her administration will not tolerate the “corrupt enrichment” of a few at the expense of the good name and prestige of the majority of the civil servants who serve honestly and are devoted to their jobs.

She announced that just this morning, Assistant Secretary Emmanuel Bonoan of the Department of Finance (DoF) filed anti-graft cases against three officials of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and one from the Bureau of Customs who have failed in the lifestyle check undertaken by the DoF.

Those charged with alleged violations of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act for having enriched themselves beyond their legitimate income as government officials are Edwin Abella, BIR assistant commissioner; Percival Salazar, another BIR assistant commissioner; Lucien Sayuno, a BIR regional director; and Manuel Valencia, chief of the Customs warehousing division.

The President said that the four officials will also be relieved of their duties in their respective offices.

“This is a great moment in our fight against graft and corruption,” the President said.

She recalled that in her 2002 State of the Nation Address, she pledged to make the BIR and the BoC the showcases in the government’s unrelenting fight against graft and corruption.

The President said she is confident that winning the case against corrupt officials, coupled with the passage of revenue measures now pending in Congress, would help the government in solving its budget deficit for this year.

Rights victims, CARP beneficiaries to get share from recovered Marcos wealth, GMA assures

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured human rights victims of the martial law regime that they will get P8 billion from the \$682 million (about P36 billion) of the Marcos’ ill-gotten wealth as soon as the Supreme Court judgment forfeiting the money in favor of the government is finalized.

In an unscheduled press briefing in Malacañang this morning, the President also said the comprehensive agrarian reform program (CARP) will get the lion’s share of P30 billion as mandated by the CARP law.

The President clarified however, that the disbursement of the money for human rights victims will have to wait for the passage of a law that would authorize its allocation, adding that in the meantime, the P8 billion will be put in escrow.

As to the P30 billion earmarked for the CARP, the President said the P8 billion budget of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) is now assured, and the balance of P22 billion to be allocated in accordance with the obligations and other budget proposals of DAR.

The President said she has instructed Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan to ensure that the available funds should be used in addressing the four major thrusts in the agrarian reform communities (ARCs).

The four thrusts in the ARCs, especially those with insurgency problems, are the construction of school buildings, farm-to-market roads and irrigation systems, and the provision of health insurance to land reform beneficiaries.

“These four items should be in the template for agrarian reform communities and land reform beneficiaries,” the President said.

Gov't readies for formal peace talks with MILF

When the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front panels sit down for the first time to start formal talks towards a final peace agreement, the first thing that will have to be threshed out is the reconstitution and review of the functions of the coordinating committee for the ceasefire as well as the membership of the monitoring teams.

This was revealed in a press briefing today by Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita after receiving the signed copy of the ceasefire agreement from Al Hadz Ibrahim Murad of the MILF Sunday.

“So today, what we have is the signed order of cessation of hostilities. Then we have the safe-conduct pass for all those whose warrants of arrest have been suspended. And also the order for the lifting of the reward money imposed on their head sometime immediately after the attack in Siocon,” Ermita said.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had earlier announced the mutual cessation of hostilities and the mutual downgrading of the military’s operational status from punitive action to active defense.

The warrants of arrest against the members and staff of the MILF panel have been lifted by the court while the Department of National Defense and Department of the Interior and Local Government have lifted the corresponding rewards for their arrest and capture.

Ermita said safe-conduct passes good for 90 days have also been issued to the MILF panel to be headed by Hashim Salamat. Also covered by the safe-conduct passes are Murad, Aleem Aziz Mimbantas, Ghadzali Jaafar, Eid Kabalu Nortel, Datucan Abas Mogagher Iqbal, Atty. Lanang Ali, Omar Pasigan, Commander Nurudin Ibrahim and Toks Ibrahim.

“We are awaiting the action of Malaysia to constitute the third-party monitoring observer team,” Ermita said. “We will try to get this to the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs,” Ermita said.

He said it is important for the government to find out if Malaysia would agree to the involvement of some members of the Organization of Islamic Conference who have signified interest in being part of the third-party monitoring team. At the moment, he said, Libya, Bangladesh, Bahrain and even the United States have signified their wish to participate.

As host, Ermita said, “Malaysia should tell us whether it is alright for the Philippines to bring so many number of people and, for that matter, if there are arrangements on mass media.”

“We will have to ask from the Malaysians whether they would welcome media teams coming from the Philippines. What are the media policies? What are the media management rules while on the ground? So these are matters, these are details that are very, very important,” Ermita said.

He also revealed that Eid Kabalu has been replaced as MILF spokesman by Datucan Abas Mogagher Iqbal who will now act as official spokesman on things happening on the ground. As far as negotiations however, are concerned, the spokesman is Atty. Mushib Buat, who is a member of the MILF panel.

KALAHI reaches out to poorest of poor in 216 towers

Over 135,750 families have so far been reached by the Kapit-bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI) program of the government, covering 509 poorest of the poor and conflict-affected barangays in 216 municipalities across 58 provinces, according to the National Anti-Poverty Commission.

NAPC Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles said in a press briefing today in Malacañang that most of the poverty reduction campaign of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration has been addressed through the KALAHI program.

In the last two years, Deles said, the KALAHÍ program has taken root and moved to very poor communities through a convergence of 30 to 40 government agencies organized at the national and regional levels, together with the leagues of local governments, provincial governments and representatives from the different non-governmental organization.

She said around P140 million from the President's Social Fund and Contingency Fund of 2002 have been allocated by the President to finance the 67 projects for micro-finance livelihood assistance, potable water systems, social facilities and barangay access roads to 100 barangays.

The KALAHÍ also delivered social projects such as access basic social services, formal education, micro financing and markets for livelihood to address the roots and aggravating problems of the insurgency to 120 conflict-affected barangays. These barangays are primarily in Regions 3, 4, and 5 in Luzon, 6, 7, and 8 in the Visayas and 11 and 13 in Mindanao.

Deles added that in the 32 barangays affected by the conflict in Central Mindanao, particularly in Pikit in North Cotabato and Pagalungan and Pagagawan in Maguindanao around the Buliok Complex, a total of P99,134,650 funds for the rehabilitation and development projects are being disbursed for core shelter, road repair and agriculture livelihood needs to 13,556 families.

Deles also said that aside from the successful poverty reduction program, the President's microfinancing for 300,000 women borrowers per year has an overwhelming positive gain with the direct action of government financial institutions and government-owned corporations.

She said the accomplishments for July 2001 to 2002 stood at 327,577 new borrowers or 109% of target. For July 2002 to May 2003, at least 396,198 new women borrowers were enrolled or 132% of target for the period, with a total of P896.28 million released.

"The policy and program environment to make microfinance a cornerstone of poverty alleviation was enhanced and institutionalized by government. The KALAHÍ has incorporated microfinance as key intervention in the livelihood and employment strategy for poor communities," Deles said.

Livelihood projects improve Payatas victims' lives

"We have constructed a modest extension of our house," says Dionisio Pabalan whose thriving gas stove repair shop was funded from the livelihood assistance provided by the Arroyo government through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Dionisio Pabalan is the father of Jomer Pabalan, one of the three Payatas children who floated "bangkang papel" (paper boats) along Pasig River and were presented by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during her 2001 State of the Nation Address (SONA).

The Pabalan family received P10,000 as a start-up capital for a livelihood project. A year after the project was started, improvement in the Pabalan's house were seen. They have also started planting their backyard with various kinds of vegetables.

Like the Pabalan family, the families of the other two children presented in the SONA were also given P10,000 livelihood assistance. Erwin Dolera's family into piggery while Jayson Banogon's family operate a car accessory business.

Apart from Jomer, Erwin, and Jayson the families of three other children — Christian Custodio, Rachel Manadong, and Ricadonna Sayson — who also floated paper boats received the same amount of assistance. Their families also operate their own livelihood projects: sari-sari store and piggery for the Custodio family; piggery for the Manadong and vending and dress shop for Sayson's family.

Aling Edith Custodio, mother of Christian, said their sari-sari store is doing very well. She explained that from their profits, they were able to start a backyard piggery which improved their income level and standard of living.

“Our earnings now suffice not only for Christian’s needs but of the entire family,” Aling Edith said.

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman said the provision of livelihood assistance to the families of the six children was among the commitments of the government to the Payatas victims. The other commitments were provision of educational assistance to the children which is on going and benefiting the six kids as well as some other 400 children and youth; provision of socio-economic or livelihood support to their parents or guardians; provision of housing assistance to direct and indirect victims; and help for the families in their quest for justice.

Secretary Soliman pointed out that the provision of socio-economic or livelihood support to the other families affected by the tragedy has also been realized. She explained that a total of P1.2 million from the President’s Social Fund was equally distributed among the three organizations representing the affected families as capital for their livelihood projects.

Samahang Tunay ng Phase II Lupang Pangako (Samahang Tunay) operates a credit cooperative, Sandigang Magkakapit Bahay ng Payatas (SANKAP) is into waste management and the July 10 Payatas Victims Organizaiton (J10PVO) undertake a waste recycling center.

DSWD social workers together with a partner NGO the Kristong Hari Foundation, continue to provide technical assistance to the three groups. The DSWD is also the process of linking the organizations with other government agencies for a product marketing and packaging.

*Source: **Office of the Press Secretary***

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: July 21, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100622224426/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july21.htm>

The President's Day: July 22, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Presidential Fact Finding Commission**
- **Statement of the President: MILF Talks**
- **Statement of the President: Anti-Corruption Drive**
- **Statement of the President: Jeepney Strike**
- **DSWD has released P121-M in assistance to displaced families in Central Mindanao**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Oil firms to reduce sulfur contents of their diesel products ahead of schedule — Gozun**
- **Textbook backlog in public schools eased**
- **GMA to barangay tanods: 'defeat criminality in your communities'**

Statement of the President: Presidential Fact Finding Commission

I am directing the PNP Chief to ensure that every person whose testimony has a bearing on this case is secured, and every bit of evidence is preserved—for presentation before the Presidential Fact Finding Commission. This investigation must be done meticulously and thoroughly because it concerns our national security. If there was collusion, all those involved up to the mastermind must be prosecuted and locked up. More than this, the people must know the truth because this is a matter that concerns their own safety and that of their communities. We must leave no stone unturned because this is a primary test case for the rule of law and the integrity of the police. A dead end in this investigation, just as a dead end in the hunt for Al-Ghozi, is not acceptable.

Statement of the President: MILF Talks

We are steadily building confidence in the peace process to ensure that the projected formal talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) will not be derailed by sporadic clashes or law enforcement operations. We have no intention to disengage from the peace talks just as we have no intention to let down our guard as far as the security of our communities are concerned. We are working with all stakeholders to insulate the peace process from tactical issues, and to consolidate our strategic position for a durable settlement. We will work with the MILF towards one final peace agreement that would silence the guns and seal a common future under the Constitution.

Statement of the President: Anti-Corruption Drive

A continuing purge of the high echelons of the Government will be sustained under the law and due process. Our democracy has the means and tools to check and contain corruption and we will use these tools to the fullest extent. We will combine prosecution and procedural reforms. The crackdown will be on live suspects as well as on red tape. I ask the support and cooperation of the public to bring this campaign to a higher level of vigilance that will make potential grafters think twice before they act. The people must be the eyes and ears of the Government to deter corruption from the street level to the corridors of the bureaucracy.

Statement of the President: Jeepney Strike

I have instructed the DOTC to sustain the dialogue with the jeepney groups involved, as well as to ensure that transport facilities are fielded to temporarily to serve stranded passengers. We shall pursue a comprehensive solution that will combine appropriate relief measures for jeepney drivers and the overall modernization and expansion of the transport sector. We must avert disturbances in the mass transport system and act expeditiously both on grievances as these arise, and on the immediate needs of the riding public.

DSWD has released P121-M in assistance to displaced families in Central Mindanao

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has already provided a total of P121 million worth of assistance to the families affected by the armed conflict in Mindanao since February this year.

DSWD Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman said that of this amount, a total of P87 million was spent on relief assistance to augment the resources of the local government units (LGUs) in conflict areas.

She said that a total of P34 million was spent for core shelter assistance to families whose houses were either partially or totally damaged.

Another P80,000 was spent to repair day-care centers damaged during armed encounters between government and combatants of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Soliman said.

Soliman said that about 33,454 families, or 162,033 persons, are still affected by the armed conflict in 37 municipalities of Zamboanga del Norte (Region IX); Bukidnon and Lanao del Norte (Region X); North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and South Cotabato (Region XII); and Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), particularly Maguindanao, Sulu and Lanao del Sur.

According to Soliman, more families are going back to their places of origin as peace and order situation becomes stable in most areas in Mindanao.

Soliman said that to date, only about 12,098 families, or 59,931 persons, remain inside 17 evacuation centers while 21,356 families, or 102,102 persons, are staying with their relatives and friends outside the evacuation centers.

She said the DSWD has institutionalized the use of family access card for identified and validated victims to maximize the use of government resources.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

Anti-Corruption

The President is determined to use all possible means consistent with due process to rid government of thieves posing as civil servants.

Travel Advisories

The President understands the concern of other governments for the safety of their nationals. But the negative travel advisories should, in all fairness, not encompass the whole country inasmuch as the peace and order problem is generally confined to some places in Mindanao.

Oil firms to reduce sulfur contents of their diesel products ahead of schedule — Gozun

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Elisea Gozun today said fuel companies would reduce by 75 percent the sulfur contents on their diesel products as early as November this year, two months ahead of the deadline set under the Clean Air Act.

In a briefing in Malacañang, Gozun said oil companies were required under the Clean Air Act to reduce the sulfur content on their diesel products by 75 percent not later than January 1, 2004.

Gozun said she and Energy Secretary Vicente S. Perez, Jr. were able to convince the oil companies to accelerate the reduction of the sulfur contents by not later than November of this year.

Gozun said this would be implemented initially in Metro Manila and eventually nationwide.

She said this would mean a reduction of the sulfur content in diesel from 2,000 parts per million (ppm) to 500 ppm.

“One key problem which is really in our mandate is to protect public health and encourage investments by making sure that we have a clean and healthy environment. One way of doing that is to make sure that we clean our air of the poisonous gases that we have,” she said.

To improve air quality, Gozun said the government has required emission testing for motorized vehicles prior to registration with the Land Transportation Office (LTO).

She said the DENR is also coordinating roadside enforcement with the different groups already deputized by the LTO such as the Bantay Kalikasan, Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the different local government units (LGUs).

“And then, of course, we do continue to provide technical seminars. We need to enable especially our public utility drivers and owners to know how they can properly maintain their vehicles while providing service to the public without necessarily causing pollution,” she said.

She added the government is also promoting the use of renewable energy such as the that compressed natural gas (CNG), liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) as well as the coco diesel or bio-diesel.

“Hopefully before the end of this year, we will actually have buses running on CNG already servicing Metro Manila,” she said.

With all of these efforts, Gozun said she is hoping the government could further improve air quality by reducing the level of total suspended particulates by at least 25 percent by next year.

From January to June this year, Gozun reported that the DENR was able to distribute a total of 67,397 hectares of public land to 49,496 families. This first semester accomplishment represent 53 percent of their total target of 127,250 hectares for land distribution this year.

She said 21,686 households were also given renewable tenurial rights to some 180,179 that hectares of forests under the Community-Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) that would ensure the security of tenure of upland dwellers.

“Giving them tenure over these land, we hope to encourage more agro-forestry. And by allowing the people to benefit from this forest land, we also are able to harness them as partners of government in forest protection,” she said.

Gozun said 6,343 hectares of coastal areas were also issued to 4,942 coastal dwellers under the CBFMA. She said this is a partial report that would be completed soon.

All of these land distributions, she said, were mainly to address injustice and poverty.

Presently, she said the DENR is working for the conduct of the survey of 10,000 lots covered by Presidential Proclamations and the issuances of Certificates of Entitlement to Lot Allocation to an estimated 10,000 qualified beneficiaries of housing projects in Metro Manila.

Textbook backlog in public schools eased

Some 10 million copies of textbooks have already been distributed by the Department of Education (DepEd) in 19,000 public elementary and secondary schools nationwide, easing the textbook backlog.

This was the report given by Education Undersecretary for Operations Ramon Bacani DepEd during a press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon.

In his report, Bacani said the 10 million textbooks distributed is part of the 35 million textbooks and manuals the DepEd is set to deliver this year.

Bacani said with these deliveries, the past textbook-pupil ratios ranging from 1:4 to 1:8 for the core subjects of English, Science, Math, and Filipino in priority Grades 1-4 and Years I-II, will now improve to 1:1 to 1:4 in all subjects and grade/year levels, except Grade 3, Year III and Year IV.

He explained that the latter deficiency is due to the failure of bidding last year for these Grade/Year levels. He added that there will be a re-bidding next September for the additional 7.8-million textbooks.

Bacani also reported that 1,608 barangays without access to elementary education have already been identified.

Of this number, he said, a total of 564 barangays now have access to elementary education and 519 schools have been provided with teacher items. Moreover, 43 sites will have their school buildings by the end of next August, he added.

He also said that the revised Basic Education Curriculum has been implemented since June 2002 and now focuses on the five learning areas of English, Science, Math, Filipino and Makabayan from the previous eight per Grade/Year level.

Since the classes were opened this year, he added, the teaching of science has been given an extended time allotment from 300 minutes to 400 minutes each week to promote the culture of science among students.

The use of English as the medium of instruction in Science, Math and English is also being reiterated to improve the competitive edge of the Filipino students with other countries in the world, particularly in Southeast Asia.

Bacani also said the DepEd has succeeded in improving teacher welfare by cleaning up its automatic payroll deduction systems (APDS) for teachers with loans.

GMA to barangay tanods: ‘defeat criminality in your communities’

STA. CRUZ, Laguna – “Crime cannot wait. Let’s defeat crime in the streets and in the communities.”

With this as the underlying theme, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo set into action here today some 6,000 Barangay Tanods who have been tasked to help in the fight against criminality and drugs.

In a consolidated graduation ceremony at the packed New San Luis Recreational, Educational, Cultural and Sports Village, the President swore in the new batch of Barangay Tanods who completed the first part of the government’s Barangay Tanod Professionalization Program.

The three-part program hopes to train and update some 6,000 Barangay Tanods all over the country on crime prevention and control, then mobilize them into action.

“*Sana itong pagsasanay na dinaanan ninyo ay magdadagdag ng kagalingan at kompiyansa sa inyong mga gawain, kaya congratulations sa inyo* (I hope this exercise that you went through would add to your skill and confidence in your work, so congratulations),” the President told the newly graduated tanods.

She likened the quiet preemptive strike being done by the tanods in their respective areas to the efforts of the Customs officials who recently intercepted a shipment of imported explosives.

“I commend the efforts of our customs officials in the campaign against terrorism. This is another quiet preemptive strike but they contribute to the safety and security of our people,” the President said.

She took the occasion to direct Interior and Local Governments Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. to make sure that all witnesses in the escape of Indonesian terrorist Fathur Roman Al-Ghozi would be given protection and all pieces of evidence preserved for presentation to the Presidential Fact-Finding Commission.

“Itong imbestigasyon ay dapat masinsinan ang trabaho at kompleto dahil may kinalaman sa seguridad ng ating bansa (This investigation should be thorough and complete because it concerns national security),” she said.

The Chief Executive said that if there’s any collusion between those involved, they should be tried and jailed.

She said the government will leave no stone unturned in getting to the bottom of the case because “it is all about the safety of our communities, the integrity of the police and law enforcement.”

The President then cited the role of the tanods in the dismantling of several shabu laboratories in the government’s ongoing campaign against illegal drugs, saying it is the result of their vigilance and concerted efforts.

Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency chief Anselmo Avenido reported that after only one month since the intensified campaign started, three shabu laboratories have been dismantled, already meeting their target for three months.

He said the agency has also neutralized six of the 175 drug syndicates and caught 25 “big fishes.”

“I don’t see any reason why we cannot achieve our targets. We expect to meet them,” Avenido said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: July 22, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161112/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july22.htm>

The President's Day: July 23, 2003

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- **Statement of the President Re: Fact-finding Commission**
- **Statement of the President Re: Typhoon Victims**
- **Statement of the President Re: Lifestyle Check**
- **Statement of the President Re: Anti-Drug Campaign**
- **Let fact-finding body do its work on Al-Ghozi escape, GMA urges public**
- **RP, Indonesia lead in seeking W.T.O. safeguards vs. unfair foreign competition — Lorenzo**
- **DAR confident of surpassing target of lands for distribution this year**
- **More Filipinos have shelter security under GMA's housing program**
- **Labor force grew by 3.4 percent this year, Sto. Tomas reports**
- **Mindanao leaders back peace talks with MILF**

Statement of the President Re: Fact-finding Commission

Let us allow the fact-finding commission to sift through all the facts and allegations and come up with its own judicious findings and recommendations. Speculations will get us nowhere and will play into the hands of the enemy by fragmenting our efforts. The PNP Chief will coordinate with the fact-finding commission to come up with a unified system of handling the public disclosure of findings as these evolve in the investigation, in a manner that will not prejudice ongoing operations. Since the commission has officially begun its work, it must be at the forefront of the public information aspect of this case. All PNP units must concentrate on the job at hand and refrain from engaging the rumor mill.

Statement of the President Re: Typhoon Victims

I sympathize with the victims of the latest typhoon. The National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) will extend assistance to them, and others affected, through the proper agencies and in coordination with the local government units. Our disaster mitigation measures are up and ready but I ask the people to buttress their own community measures.

Statement of the President Re: Lifestyle Check

The entire Office of the President and the Cabinet are open to a lifestyle check. We are all bound to serve with a sense of dignity and public responsibility. While I do not want to cramp the personal taste and lifestyle of those who closely work with the Presidency, there is no place for ostentation or living it up not only at this time of formidable constraints facing our people, but at all times. I encourage a professional ethic that stands on simplicity and forthright public service, untainted by pomp and show and an inordinate display of influence or power.

Statement of the President Re: Anti-Drug Campaign

We want to check the proliferation of drugs among the most vulnerable age groups, but I would like to stress that random drug testing must not unduly stigmatise minors because their future must be protected. We must undertake these tests with prudence, working closely with parents, teachers, school administrations and students organizations. The campaign must be backed up by a clear message that we are determined to clean up the schools of drugs, but we do not aim to shame any particular youngsters or drag them into the limelight.

Let fact-finding body do its work on Al-Ghozi escape, GMA urges public

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today asked the public to allow the Presidential Fact-Finding Commission investigating the escape of Indonesian terrorist Fathur Roman Al-Ghozi and two others to proceed with its work unhampered and refrain from engaging the rumor mill.

“Speculations will get us nowhere and will play into the hands of the enemy by fragmenting our efforts,” the President said in a statement.

The President said Philippine National Police chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane will coordinate with the fact-finding commission to come up with a unified system of handling the public disclosure of findings as these evolve in the investigation “in a manner that will not prejudice ongoing operations.”

Ebdane has been named by the President to lead a task force that would hunt down the escaped terrorists.

“Since the commission has officially begun its work, it must be at the forefront of the public information aspect of this case,” the President said. “Let us allow the fact finding commission to sift through all the facts and allegations and come up with its own judicious findings and recommendations.”

The President ordered all PNP units to concentrate on the job of tracking down Al-Ghozi and his cohorts and refrain from engaging the rumor mill.

The fact-finding commission was given 30 days by the President to come up with a recommendation on the mysterious escape of Al-Ghozi and company. It is headed by former Justice Secretary Sigfried Ordoñez, with concurrent Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong and businessman Miguel Varela as members.

RP, Indonesia lead in seeking W.T.O. safeguards vs. unfair foreign competition — Lorenzo

Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo today said that the Philippines and Indonesia are in the forefront of efforts within the World Trade Organization (WTO) to institutionalize special safeguard mechanisms (SSM) to protect developing countries from unfair competition from developed or industrialized nations.

In a press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, Lorenzo said that an enhanced SSM and the adoption of the strategic products (SP) concept would be beneficial to the country’s agriculture sector since these products would be allowed minimal tariff reductions on account of their importance to food and livelihood security and rural development.

Lorenzo said that the SP concept has been a major item in the Doha Development Agenda on the full integration of special and preferential treatment of products from the developing countries.

He explained that under the SSM, developing countries like the Philippines can impose additional special tariffs, on top of regular tariffs, when our industries are threatened by unhampered importation of cheap products coming from developed countries.

“Given the intransigence of the developed countries to still maintain their large subsidies to the detriment of the developing countries, we must be adequately armed with these defense mechanisms to protect our rural sectors,” Lorenzo said.

According to Lorenzo, the basic imbalance and inequality stems from the reluctance of developed countries to eliminate their trade-distorting subsidies that developing countries cannot afford, while forcing developing countries to further open their markets through the elimination of tariffs.

The proposal of the Philippines, Lorenzo said, is to have an automatic balancing mechanism that would slap subsidized imports with additional tariffs on top of the negotiated tariffs.

“If the developed countries remove their subsidies, then their exports to our markets would just be levied with regular tariffs,” Lorenzo said.

Lorenzo said that in the special session of the WTO Committee on Agriculture in Geneva, the Philippines coordinated with Indonesia in presenting a Statement and Declaration articulating the position of developing countries on the need for safety nets that would protect their products from excessive imports under the WTO agreement.

Aside from the Philippines and Indonesia, the Statement and Declaration was signed by Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, India, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Turkey, Uganda, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

The Philippines and other developing countries have complained that their agriculture sectors, livelihood security, rural development and the full and unhampered competitiveness have been unduly prejudiced by the “unfairness” of the WTO agreement.

“We do not believe that rural livelihood and food security concerns can be negotiated in exchange for market access. These are vital public concerns and are, therefore, non-negotiable,” the Statement and Declaration said.

DAR confident of surpassing target of lands for distribution this year

A total of 53,000 hectares of land has been distributed by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) for the first six months of the year, putting it on track to surpass the targeted 100,000 hectares pledged by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her State of the Nation Address (SONA).

Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan said that this is the first time that DAR has reached half of its distribution target in the first half of the year and with the trend in their land distribution, he is confident of going beyond the target.

Pagdanganan’s enthusiasm has been bolstered by the recent Supreme Court decision declaring Marcos money worth P38 billion as ill-gotten and therefore, as provided by law, must go to the agrarian reform program.

The President has announced that her administration is earmarking P8 billion of the P38 billion Marcos ill-gotten wealth for human rights victims and will hold the amount in escrow pending amendments in the agrarian reform law to allow for such use.

“Imagine what we can do for the farmers and even the former landowners with the resources?” Pagdanganan said. “The program must be able to give landowners just compensation so that they can also engage in farm enterprises.”

In line with the President’s instructions, the DAR, according to Pagdanganan, will also treble the number of Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs) and fast-track the provision of support services, such as farm-to-market roads, bridges, irrigation and post-harvest facilities and even electrification through solar energy.

On top of land distribution, DAR will also boost farm productivity through various support services, including marketing and product development.

Pagdanganan revealed that with a target of 101,321 hectares for distribution this year, 14 regions have actually accomplished already more than 50 percent of their target as of the first semester.

Topping the list is Region IX which already accomplished 16 percent of its target in land distribution. Second is Region I, with 78 percent and Region XII, with 71 percent.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), on the other hand, has distributed 67,000 hectares of land as of the end of June. The DAR and DENR are tasked to distribute 200,000 hectares for this year.

Pagdanganan said that the accomplishment is remarkable considering that Congress has slashed the DAR budget by more than P2 billion, thereby restricting its capability to acquire and pay for more lands for farmers.

More Filipinos have shelter security under GMA's housing program

The Macapagal-Arroyo administration has achieved outstanding gains in its housing program by providing thousands of Filipinos with shelter security.

Secretary Michael Defensor, chairman of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), announced this during the press briefing in Malacañang, as part of the HUDCC accomplishment report for the year 2001 to 2003.

Since she assumed the presidency three years ago, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has proclaimed more government lands as housing sites, approved the highest amount as home loans to informal settlers, allocated the biggest funding for housing, and implemented lowest interest rates and efficient process in the granting of housing loans.

Defensor said the President signed 46 issuances as of June 2003, proclaiming a total of 22,600 hectares of unused government lands as potential sites for socialized housing.

These proclamations, Defensor said, secured the tenure of an estimated 202,702 families nationwide

According to Defensor, some 28,312 informal settlers have benefited from the record-setting P1.12 billion funds released by the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation (NHMFC) in the two and a half years of Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

This excludes the issuance of letters of guarantee to pay the amount of loans applied for, totaling P597 million, upon completion of requirements. An additional 19,529 households are expected to benefit from this.

The said amount — the highest under any administration for a similar period — represents loans granted under the Community Mortgage Program (CMP) to finance the development of 209 urban poor settlements nationwide.

He noted that the housing for formal sector also got a big boost with the P30 billion committed by Pag-IBIG fund for its institutional and end-user financing programs.

Defensor added that since 2001 Pag-IBIG funded the construction or purchase of 131,894 housing units, exceeding by a margin of 3.7 percent its target of 127,165 housing units for the period.

He also said the Pag-IBIG made housing loans more accessible to low-income earner families by bringing down interest rates to their lowest levels. Interest rates now range from 6 percent to 12 percent per annum, depending on the loan amount — the lowest rates in the market to date.

The Pag-IBIG also reduced the number of required documents and the processing time for housing loan applications to seven working days for certain types of loans.

The National Housing Authority (NHA) has added to the list of housing beneficiaries some 62,861 families through its various projects under the socialized housing component of the shelter program since January 2001.

These projects include slum upgrading, sites and services, land tenurial assistance, community land acquisition support, grants-in-aid, cooperative housing, resettlement, emergency housing assistance, housing materials assistance and completed housing units.

The Home Guaranty Corporation (HGC), under its regular corporate guaranty programs, has also invested a total of P31.006 billion in its retail and development guaranty lines from January 2001 to June 2003, resulting in the construction of 57,567 shelter security units.

Labor force grew by 3.4 percent this year, Sto. Tomas reports

The country's labor force grew by 3.4 percent, reaching 33.93 million workers last year, according to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

This was revealed by Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas today as she underscored her department's mandate of curbing unemployment and fighting corruption in line with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's 2002 SONA commitments.

She said the employment rate grew by 3.1 per cent, with more than 906,000 persons employed during the same period.

For the year 2002, the full-year unemployment rate of 11.4 percent (3.874 million) was about the same as the 2001 rate of 11.2 percent, according to Sto. Tomas.

She said the average underemployment rate edged down to 17 percent (5.109 million) from 17.2 percent in 2001.

The strike incidence in year 2002 was also the lowest in 21 years, according to her, with only 36 strikes reported nationwide.

Sto. Tomas said that DOLE's top priority strategies entail employment promotion and facilitating job search.

Sto. Tomas likewise noted that the unemployment rate also decreased to 12.2 percent in April this year compared to the same period last year.

She added that the number of unemployed persons had decreased by 649,000 while the underemployment rate also drop by 4.0 percent as compared to 19.6 percent in April 2002 to 15.6 percent this year.

Sto. Tomas said DOLE will continue to intensify campaign against the two perennial problems of unemployment and corruption.

The labor chief noted that for the first semester of 2003, DOLE forged 24 bilateral agreements with other foreign governments to promote the welfare and enhance the protection of OFWs in host countries.

On its pledge to create and improve job opportunities, DOLE's Kabuhayan 2003 Action Center assisted 57,459 job seekers, including youth, workers in the informal sector and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

The DOLE, she added, has listed under the Computerized National Manpower Registry of Skills (CNMRS) a total of 944,744 skills. This database provides readily available and useful information on Filipino workers' skills and competencies for easier job-matching and referral system.

It has also facilitated the deployment of OFWs which totaled 461,041 in the first six months of the year or a daily average of 2,547 and implemented streamlined procedures on the deployment of Filipino overseas.

The Labor Department also spearheaded the operation of the Philippine Seafarer's One-Stop Center (PSOC) which accelerates the verification of the qualifications of Filipino seafarers by manning agencies and international seafaring vessels anywhere and anytime.

Sto. Tomas stressed that it has established 13 POEA satellite offices to bring the government services closer to potential OFWs, as well as reduce opportunities for illegal recruitment.

She said the death benefit for both land-based and sea-based OFWs who died of natural causes was increased by 42.9 percent while of those accidents, by 66.7 percent.

For the DOLE's anti-corruption drive, she reported that a total of 434 illegal recruitment cases were filed in court out of the 788 cases handled while 12 suspected illegal recruiters were arrested and 20 establishments closed and padlocked due to illegal recruitment activities.

She reiterated that they have instituted reforms in the labor adjudication process through the issuance of DO No. 40-03 (amending the implementing rules of Book V of the Labor Code of the Philippines) which established uniform and simplified adjudication processes for resolving labor disputes.

The DOLE has also provided employment assistance to over 60,000 youths under the 2003 Summer Youth Employment Program. And has enrolled 2,159 informal sector workers under the Social Protection Scheme for Workers in the Informal Sector.

"We believe that the war against unemployment and corruption has just begun. For the DOLE, the work ahead nonetheless appears exciting and the goals achievable," Sto. Tomas said.

Mindanao leaders back peace talks with MILF

Mindanao leaders today expressed their full support to the government's peace initiatives with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), saying that they all want peace to prevail so that Mindanao can finally catch up with the rest of the country in economic growth.

In a meeting this afternoon in Malacañang with the Mindanao leaders, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the MILF has not done any offensive move since the signing of a cessation of hostilities accord between the government and the MILF.

"So I think that we have a very good chance of success at this particular moment," the President said.

The President said that if there are no terrorist attacks or atrocities, the military could go to normal deployment even as she vowed that the safety and security of our communities remain to be the highest consideration and would not be compromised.

"While we want peace, we also want to defeat terror and I want to clarify this to everybody," the President said.

The President then called on those present to extend their support to the peace panel that would be leaving soon for Kuala Lumpur for the resumption of the peace talks with the MILF.

"I ask you to have confidence in them. I believe we are on the verge of a major breakthrough to be able to deliver peace with security and development," the President said.

In an earlier statement, the President said the government will work with the MILF in forging "one final peace agreement that would silence the guns and seal a common future" with them under the Constitution.

Present during the meeting were Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Presidential Management Staff head Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr., Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Presidential Adviser on Strategic Concerns Renato de Villa, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye, Presidential

Chief of Staff Rigoberto Tiglao, Armed Forces Chief, Gen. Narciso Abaya, Senators Loren Legarda, Ramon Magsaysay Jr., and Aquilino Pimentel, Jr. and Archbishops Orlando Quevedo and Fernando Capalla.

Also present were the governors, vice governors, board members, city mayors, and congressmen in Mindanao, including the officials of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) led by ARMM Gov. Parouk Hussin.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 23, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100622224513/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july23.htm>

The President's Day: July 24, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Coup Rumors**
- **Statement of the President: Peace Process**
- **Statement of the President: Al-Ghozi**
- **Statement of the President: GSIS**
- **Dureza cites positive growth in former conflict areas in Mindanao**
- **House Oversight Committee satisfied with GMA's performance in fulfilling her SONA pledges**
- **GMA on the road again dispelling rumors of coup**
- **Stay calm, don't believe coup rumors, GMA tells public**
- **More barangays now have electricity, DOE says**
- **GMA releases P35M for Cagayan Valley**

Statement of the President: Coup Rumors

We call on the public to remain calm amid these rumors of destabilization. I acknowledge the existence of legitimate grievances among the young officers in the Armed Forces. I have already talked to their representatives and they assured me of absolute fealty to the chain of command. We are acting on their grievances and I do not blame the young officers for pushing for internal reforms. It is the duty of every commander to look after the welfare of the men and women in uniform, and to contribute to reform in the organization. The expression of their grievances has been proper and lawful. The Chief of Staff is on top of the situation and there is no cause for alarm.

Statement of the President: Peace Process

I am glad to acknowledge the snowballing international support for the peace process, especially from Indonesia – the largest Muslim nation in the world. It is important that the prospective negotiations are secured by a strong international consensus that will lend the necessary impetus to peace and development programs on the ground. The confluence of favorable global, regional and domestic conditions is elevating the prospects for peace. We must grasp this opportunity and not let go until we succeed.

Statement of the President: Al-Ghozi

The fact-finding commission will inform the public of developments based on the facts that will be accumulated in the inquiry. The teamwork of the commission and the law enforcement agencies must be seamless so that efficiency and accuracy can be achieved. There is no sense in keeping this issue in the theater of speculation. If there was a conspiracy, the probe must unearth the mastermind and bring the evidence against everyone involved.

Statement of the President: GSIS

The GSIS must make its position clear before the people, especially if there are vital constraints that have to be hurdled with full public support and understanding. Faith in our institutions of social security is paramount because these stand at the front line of service.

Dureza cites positive growth in former conflict areas in Mindanao

The peace and development strategy of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Mindanao has paid off with the former conflict affected areas contributing to the growth rate of the region's economy.

Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus G. Dureza, chairman of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCO), said the good news about Mindanao's economic performance for 2002 was based on the latest data released by the National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB).

According to Dureza, in 2002, the gross regional domestic product (GRDP) of Mindanao grew by 2.87 percent, which is 0.41 percentage point higher than the growth rate in 2001.

Dureza said Mindanao's economy is largely driven by the combined agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors, which contributed 37.21 percent followed by services sector at 35.91 percent and industry sector at 26.88 percent.

He said the former conflict affected areas that contributed to the growth rate of the region are Central Mindanao, Western Mindanao and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Dureza noted that Central Mindanao, which is the SOCSARSKGEN (South Cotabato, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat and General Santos City) area registered the highest growth rate of 5.6 percent, followed by Western Mindanao with 5.4 percent and then by the ARMM with 4.8 percent.

"So the conflict affected areas before had registered and even outpaced the more progressive regions in Mindanao like Northern Mindanao or Southern Mindanao. This shows and reaffirms the peace and development strategy of the President," Dureza said.

These former SZOPAD (Special Zone of Peace and Development) regions, where most of the conflicts happened, outpaced the performance of more progressive regions, such as Northern Mindanao at 1.3 percent and Southern Mindanao at 2.2 percent. The CARAGA (Surigao del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Agusan del Sur and Agusan del Norte) posted negative growth of 0.4 percent.

More than one-third of Mindanao's GRDP comes from Southern Mindanao followed by Northern Mindanao with 21.6 percent, Western Mindanao with 15.4 percent, Central Mindanao with 15 percent, CARAGA with 7.9 percent and ARMM with 5.4 percent.

Dureza added that the "Mindanao Natin Program" and positive developments like the resumption of the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) could further accelerate the socio-economic growth of Mindanao.

House Oversight Committee satisfied with GMA's performance in fulfilling her SONA pledges

The House of Representatives Committee on Oversight is satisfied with the performance of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in meeting her commitments spelled out in her 2002 State of the Nation Address (SONA).

In a press briefing in Malacañang this morning, Albay 3rd District Representative Joey Sarte Salceda, chairman of the House Oversight Committee, said that based on his committee's findings, the President had 21 favorable accomplishments and 11 "underperformances."

"More importantly, the Macapagal-Arroyo administration gained more ground on the more politically sensitive indices of performance in 2002 than in 2001 with remarkable achievements in land redistribution, barangay electrification, farm jobs generation, microfinance lending, housing takeouts, easing traffic congestion and garbage collection in Metro Manila," Salceda said.

The independent lawmaker from Bicol said that the "O-Ilaw" project or energization of the rural areas stands out as the 2002 SONA best performer, at 89 percent (as of June 2003) and by end of 2003, the energization rate would likely hit 91 percent.

Salceda said that before the end of her term, the 3,600 energized barangays would already exceed the performance of the past three presidents (Aquino with 2,844 barangays; Ramos with 3,335; and Estrada with 2,075).

“This achievement can only be the result of the single-minded focus and a strong coordination of DOE, NEA and other agencies like Philippine National Oil Corporation-Energy Development Council (PNOC-EDC) and National Power Corporation,” Salceda said.

Salceda said that agriculture is second place with 1.8 million jobs generated in the farming sector over the past two years since SONA 2001, exceeding the target of 1 million and way ahead of the four-year deadline.

The Oversight Committee also found that the biggest accomplishment of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration was in land redistribution with significant achievements in all three categories: agricultural lands (Department of Agrarian Reform); public lands (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) and ancestral domain (handled by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples).

“These were realized mainly through bureaucratic innovation, mainly devolution of signing authorities and effective lobbying for budgetary priority. This should further gain ground with the recovery of \$658 million Marcos deposits,” Salceda said.

Salceda also explained that although there were shortfalls posted in the “A School in Every Barangay” program, out of the 2002 SONA commitment of 517 classrooms, 44 were completed while 200 are under construction as of July 22, 2003.

“Nevertheless, shortfalls are being aggressively addressed with the launching of P4 billion lending window by the National Development Corporation for local government units (LGUs) to build schools,” he added.

On the urban sector, some major positive strides were made in easing traffic congestion and garbage collection in Metro Manila. Average speed in Metro Manila improved from 16.5 kph (January to October 2002) to 17.37 kph in January 2003. The capability of Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to handle garbage also improved, the committee said.

On the issue of peace and order, the Oversight Committee admitted that the strong visibility of the President in the handling of police matters enabled dramatic advances in the war against drugs with 10,360 operations that led to the arrest of 14,585 individuals.

Kidnapping incidents declined by 32 percent, from 99 in 2001 to 67 in 2002. Out of the 37 cases in January to June 2003, 28 cases have been solved.

The committee also said that the efforts of the President in the war against terrorism resulted in a 52 percent reduction in the strength of Abu Sayyaf group, while the strength of insurgents has also been reduced by 22 percent, from 11,930 in 2001 to 9,257 in 2002.

Salceda noted that on the issue of graft and corruption, public perception remains skeptical despite the spirited efforts of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration on this matter.

GMA on the road again dispelling rumors of coup

Malacañang today dismissed coup rumors as mere speculations, stressing that everything is normal, otherwise President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would not have left this morning for an unscheduled visit to Bulacan and to the typhoon-ravaged province of Isabela.

In his regular press briefing this afternoon in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye also said that there was nothing unusual about the meeting at the palace Wednesday evening with some 35 young officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Bunye said that the meeting was requested by the officers and as their Commander in Chief, the President has acceded to the request.

“The President has said that every commander has the duty to know the situation of the men and the women serving under the Commander in Chief,” Bunye said.

Bunye emphasized that during the meeting, the young officers pledged their continued loyalty to the chain of command even if they have aired their grievances.

He said that the President feels that expression of grievances by representatives of the young AFP officers are legitimate and should be looked into by the AFP hierarchy.

The President, Bunye said, is confident that the AFP, under Chief of Staff, Gen. Narciso Abaya, is on top of the situation and rumors about restiveness in the military are unfounded.

“There is no cause for alarm on any possible coup, whether today or the following day,” Bunye said.

Stay calm, don't believe coup rumors, GMA tells public

SAN MIGUEL, Bulacan — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the public to remain calm amid rumors of a coup d'état even as she bared the existence of legitimate grievances among the young officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

“We call on the public to remain calm amid rumors of destabilization. I uphold the existence of legitimate grievances among the young officers of the Armed Forces. I already talked to many of their representatives and they assured me of absolute loyalty to the chain of command,” the President said during the turnover of command of the First Scout Rangers Regiment (FSRR) at Camp Tecson here.

She said it is the inherent duty of every commander-in-chief to look after the welfare of the men and women in uniform.

“I do not blame the young officers for pushing for internal reforms. The expression of their grievances, so far, I assume, has been proper and lawful,” she said.

She said Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Gen. Narciso Abaya, is on top of the situation and there is no cause for alarm.

The turnover of command at Camp Tecson was presided by major General Alan Cabalquinto, commanding General of the Special Operations Command (SOCOM).

Brig. General Gabriel Ledesma, the outgoing FSRR commander, relinquished his post to his deputy, Col. Danilo Lim. Ledesma was assigned as the new commander of the 2nd Infantry Division of the Philippine Army.

Among the accomplishment of the FSRR under Ledesma's three-year term were the successful combat operations against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Misuari Breakaway group, the local communist movement, the Abu Sayyaf and other kidnap-for-ransom groups.

During his remarks, Lim said that as long as he is the regiment commander of the FSRR, the most elite unit of the Armed Forces, his unit “will not be involved in or be utilized for selfish, political and partisan ends.”

“In the event that a destabilization move materializes, no matter how remote the possibility, this unit, the FSRR, will be the first to oppose and block such move,” Lim said.

After the turnover ceremonies, the President joined a “boodle fight” with Lim, Ledesma and the men and officers of the First Scout Ranges at the mess hall.

Among those who joined the President were Region 3 CORD Secretary Renato Diaz, Press Secretary Milton Alingod, Gen. Abaya, Philippine Army Commanding General Gregorio Camiling, Mayor Santi Sevilla and Police Regional Office (PRO) 3 Superintendent Vidal Querol.

The President then shook hands and chatted with the men and company commanders of the FSRR before taking the presidential chopper at around 12:30 p.m. to Cauayan, Isabela to inspect the typhoon-ravaged province.

More barangays now have electricity, DOE says

A year after President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo unveiled the government’s agenda of building a Strong Republic by delivering basic services to everyone, whether rich or poor, some 1,525 barangays nationwide are now enjoying for the first time the benefits and comforts of electricity.

Energy Secretary Vicente S. Perez, Jr. today reported that the country’s barangay electrification level has already reached 88.7 percent with the energization of 1,525 barangays as of June 30, 2003. This leaves only 4,753 barangays out of the 41,999 barangays nationwide that are still without electricity.

The energization of 1,525 has surpassed the President’s SONA commitment of four barangays per day or a total of 1460 barangays in one year.

“Given the geographical and funding constraints, rural electrification has only made snail-paced progress in the previous years. But the President’s strong commitment to deliver basic services to everyone has made it clear that we can no longer take this for granted. Electricity is a key component in improving the lives of our people especially our less privileged rural countrymen,” Secretary Perez said.

Through the accelerated Enhanced Rural Electrification program some 512 barangays were given electricity in Luzon while another 488 barangays were lighted in the Visayas.

In the Mindanao region, about 525 barangays were energized after the President promised to bring the government’s war against poverty to rural Mindanao especially in the areas most affected by the past conflicts.

Perez added that the economic policies and structural reforms being implemented by the administration further strengthen efforts towards attaining complete electrification of all barangays in the country.

Specifically, the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) mandates that the DoE consolidate all efforts by government agencies, and the private sector in rural electrification.

Recently, the DOE together with other government agencies created an expanded rural electrification team to manage the implementation of rural electrification program through enhance public and private partnership.

With the creation of the new electrification administration management team, the government aims to increase barangay electrification level to 91 percent by the end of this year and hopefully attain 100 percent barangay electrification by 2006.

In addition, a major part of the government’s focus on building a Strong Republic is to implement a long-term structural reform that would bring down the cost of electricity. And the only way to reduce the cost of power is to fully implement the benefits brought about by the Power Sector Reform Law.

Perez said that preparations on the establishment of the wholesale electricity spot market (WESM) are underway and near completion. The demo market, which is expected to commence operations by September this year, is seen to

result in clear and understood rules for the WESM and at the same time prepare and educate all the industry participants for the operations of the final WESM.

With WESM in place consumers will be empowered to choose their supplier of electricity with the main goal of purchasing the least cost of power.

The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has also fast-tracked the approval of the electric cooperatives (ECs) application for loan condonation as mandated under Sec. 60 of the EPIRA, condoning all outstanding financial obligations of electric cooperatives to the National Electrification Administration (NEA) and other government agencies which were incurred for purposes of financing rural electrification program upon the effectivity of the law.

Perez said as of June 20, 2003 the ERC has granted provisional authority to 100 ECs to reduce rates as a result of loan condonation. In Luzon, 49 ECs have been given provisional authority, 25 in Visayas and 26 in Mindanao.

“Some five million electricity consumers nationwide are expected to enjoy lower electricity rates of debt condonation,” Perez said.

Perez also said that the resolution of 25 out of 35 IPP (Independent Power Producers) contracts has generated savings of about \$832 million in net present value (NPV) to the government without undermining the viability of the firms to earn fair and reasonable returns.

GMA releases P35M for Cagayan Valley

ILAGAN, Isabela – President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo today authorized the release of P35 million for the rehabilitation of typhoon-ravaged Cagayan Valley, hardest hit by super typhoon Harurot which pummeled the country for two days.

The President made the announcement after making an aerial inspection of the region to personally see for herself the extent of the damage caused by Harurot.

“Sa ganitong mga pagkakataon nakikita ang pagdadamayan ng mga Pilipino. Tulung-tulungan tayong lahat,” she told the leaders and officials of the provinces of Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino.

In a briefing for the President at the Isabela provincial capitol here, Vice Gov. Santiago Respicio estimated the damage to agriculture and infrastructure in Isabela at more than P1 billion.

In Cagayan, Gov. Edgar Lara reported that 85 percent of corn in their flowering stages in some 7,000 hectares of fields was affected. Although electricity has been restored in most areas of the province, he said telecommunication firms have yet to fully resume their services.

Most roads, he said, are already passable and no major bridge has been damaged although the level of water in the Cagayan River is only a meter away from critical.

Regional officials, including Gov. Pedro Bacani of Quirino province and Congressman Rodolfo Albano of the first district of Isabela, called on the National Disaster Coordinating Council and other relief agencies of the government to speed up the rehabilitation work.

The President assured that as she spoke, trucks and helicopters of the Department of Energy carrying equipment for the repair of the transmission lines felled by Harurot are already on the way.

She said telecommunication firms like Smart, Globe, Sun Cellular and Digitel are already working round the clock and vowed to resume operations in the region today.

The President thanked local officials for their speedy reaction to the disaster, saying it is only through the cooperation of both the local and national governments that the country can surmount various odds.

“I’m grateful for the support of the people of Cagayan,” she said. “Salamat din at handa kayong gumastos ng inyong sariling kakayahan at suporta na lamang ang ibinibigay ng pamahalaan (Thank you also that you are ready to spend on your own and the government will support you).”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: July 24, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161136/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july24.htm>

The President's Day: July 25, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Fact-Finding Commission**
- **Statement of the President: Al-Ghozi Manhunt**
- **Statement of the President: Advisories**
- **Statement of the President: Dialogue with AFP Officers**
- **Statement of the President: GSIS**
- **GMA lauds PNP, PDEA for raid on big shabu laboratory in Cavite**
- **GMA honors 16 SMEs, banking organizations**
- **DOJ reports legal victories in high-profile cases**
- **RP back in game as tourist destination — Gordon**
- **1.4 million indigent families benefit from health care insurance**

Statement of the President: Fact-Finding Commission

The Presidential Fact-Finding Commission has acquired full jurisdiction over the investigation and will have control over the custody, security and questioning of potential witnesses. We shall pursue the truth to the end just as we shall hunt down Al-Ghozi without letup. I call on anyone who has information on this case to get in touch with the commission and come forth. This is a matter that is important to our national security and to the safety and well being of every Filipino and other citizens of the world.

Statement of the President: Al-Ghozi Manhunt

The threat of Al-Ghozi is real and we will hunt him down until he is accounted for. The Filipino people and our international allies are on the lookout and he will be caught in the dragnet one way or the other.

Statement of the President: Advisories

There is a perception of instability in our country because of the renewed threat of terrorism. I am neither dismissing these things nor pointing the blame on anybody. The plain truth is that these perceptions are exaggerated and they do not merit the judgment that our country is generally unsafe. The basis of travel advisories adverse to the Philippines is not valid. Our people go on with their day-to-day lives in peaceful and lawful interaction and commerce, despite the many anxieties in their minds. We are not an arena of random, irrational violence.

Statement of the President: Dialogue with AFP Officers

There has been some understandable restiveness but I have resolved this matter directly with the troops. While I urge all soldiers to speak their minds through the chain of command, I shall not hesitate to engage any levels of command in constructive dialogue. The imperatives of leadership dictate this, in view of the growing complexity of national security issues and the speed at which these impinge upon the everyday lives of soldiers, whether in combat or at home. I shall not be armchair Commander in Chief. I want to know the live issues that are going around in the barracks.

Statement of the President: GSIS

I commend the GSIS for its expressed transparency on this matter. For all the vital issues affecting our people, every Government institution must be prepared to lay the truth before the public. GFIs must set the example as part of good corporate governance. I will expect seasonable reports on this matter.

GMA lauds PNP, PDEA for raid on big shabu laboratory in Cavite

TANZA, Cavite — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) for the successful raid of “the mother of all shabu laboratories” in a coastal barangay of this town.

When informed about the raid, the President immediately boarded a helicopter and personally inspected the biggest laboratory and warehouse of methamphetamine hydrochloride or “shabu” inside the Beverly Subdivision in Barangay Capipisa here.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., who was also present during the raid, informed the President that a pressurized mixer/chamber found inside the shabu laboratory was the biggest they have discovered and has the capacity to produce 30 kilos of shabu per day.

Lina then asked for the President’s approval to convert the laboratory into a rehabilitation center that will house drug dependents under the Justice Department’s rehabilitation program.

Lina added that a speedboat docked in the compound was used to deliver illegal drugs and possibly in exporting the finished product of “shabu” to other countries.

He said the authorities will seek a court order for the forfeiture of the compound in favor of the government.

The joint operatives of PDEA and PNP conducted the raid on the shabu laboratory based on a search warrant issued by Judge Aurelio Icasiano of the Regional Trial Court of Trece Martires City, Cavite.

The shabu facility is housed in a two-story beachfront mansion in a 10,000-square meter compound in Capipisa. This is the same coastal barangay which became notorious in the 1970s as entry point of smuggled “blue seal cigarettes” during the time of Lino Bocalan who later became Cavite governor.

The facility, which can produce an estimated P10 million worth of shabu daily, is reportedly run by Lee Lan Yan alias Jackson Dy, a Chinese national, and another Chinese by the name of Huang Li Na.

The PDEA described Jackson Dy as the “Number 3” drug lord in its order of battle.

The volume of illegal drugs seized in the raid was not immediately available because chemical laboratory personnel of the PNP and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) are still doing the inventory.

Also present during the raid were PDEA Executive Director Anselmo Avenido, Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo and Chief Supt. Edgardo Aglipay, head of the PNP’s Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force.

GMA honors 16 SMEs, banking organizations

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today cited the achievements of the top 16 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the country and the banking organizations that guaranteed the loans to these small businesses that are now considered the backbone of the Philippine economy.

At the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang, the President awarded the Distinguished Partner trophies to the Bank of Commerce, Banco de Oro, Export and Industry Bank, Philippine Bank of Commerce, BMS Rural Bank of Pasig City, Philippine Rural Banking Corporation of Cauayan, Isabela, and the Planters Development Bank.

Planters Bank was the Most Distinguished Partner and was also given the Consistent Excellence Award for 2003 for providing the biggest loan of P396 million for SMEs.

Assisting the President were Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II and Zorayda Amelia Alonzo, the chairman of the Small Business (SB) Corporation and coordinator of the National SME Development Agenda.

Under the National SME Agenda, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), through government financial institutions, has allocated P10 billion loans for the first semester of this year to help SMEs obtain additional capital to improve their productivity and competitiveness.

Roxas said the SMEs comprise more than 90 percent of all businesses in the country contributing more than a third of economic output and providing employment to almost two-thirds of all working Filipinos.

The President also awarded a certificate to DTI Provincial Director Ruben Diciano, whose work and perseverance paved the way for a lively SME sector up north.

The top 16 SMEs awarded by the President were chosen from among 271 candidates nominated by the DTI provincial directors nationwide and were ranked according to their growth in sales, employment and assets.

The top 16 SMEs were the Estacios' Antiques and Hidden Arts, Tropics Agro-Industries, Kimmayongs Primitive Craft, JBRL Enterprises, ATM Ber-Aqua Water Services, Silver Handicrafts, Tito Mike's Food Company, Mother Earth Products, SL Technology Foundation, Along Potteries, Sto. Niño Furniture and Sash Factory, Jonald's Home and Office Furnishing Enterprises, Arlyn's Handicraft, Base Wood Products, The Trader's Design Furniture Shop, and top performer Northlandia Enterprises.

Northlandia owner Paulino Tan, in his speech, said the commitment and perseverance of the Filipino entrepreneurs would not be possible without the intervention of the government's program for the SMEs.

"The private sector is very grateful for the help given to us. You give us encouragement to go on. We commit in enriching our vibrant SMEs to propel our country to become globally competitive," Tan said.

DOJ reports legal victories in high-profile cases

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has scored several legal victories that included the dismissal of one erring judge, conviction of high profile drug smugglers and drug traffickers, and the filing of graft cases against corrupt revenue and Customs officials.

In a report, the DOJ said that in its crackdown of erring judges, one was dismissed, identified as Judge Arnulfo Cabredo, after he was charged with grave misconduct before the DOJ by the Bureau of Customs. He was charged with violation of Republic Act 3601 in relation to the Supreme Court circular prohibiting judges from issuing temporary restraining orders (TROs).

The DOJ has also initiated complaints against Bureau of Corrections Director Ricardo Macala and Prosecutor Oscar Corpuz that resulted in their dismissal from the service.

The DOJ also notched six convictions out of its 27 high-profile drug cases. The quantities of specimen seized ranged from 812.8 gms. to 503 kilograms of shabu; 41 to 91 kgms. of marijuana and 692.16 gms of cocaine hydrochloride.

Among those convicted were Johnny Tan, Jimmy Tan, Henry Chua, Sandra Lim and others who were all meted life imprisonment or *reclusion perpetua*.

The DOJ has also acted on 47 complaints for violation of Tariff and Customs Code and filed cases against alleged sugar smugglers Jesus Galleto and Jaime Beron.

On anti-terrorism, the DOJ indicted Tahir Alonto of the Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom group for kidnapping Dr. Vicente Cavalida, Jr., Engr. Eduardo Cavalida, and Cheryl Pagales. Alonto was meted the death penalty by lethal injection.

The Justice Department also indicted international terrorist Fathur Roman Al-Ghozi in connection with the 2000 LRT bombing while it has pursued the cases against the leaders and members of the Abu Sayyaf Group like Nadzmi Sabdulla a.k.a. Commander Global, Khadaffy Janjalani, Galib Andang, a.k.a. Commander Robot, who were involved in a series of kidnapping incidents in Pearl Farm in Davao, Basilan, Sulu and Palawan.

The DOJ has also vigorously prosecuted the plunder cases against former President Joseph Estrada and his son, Jinggoy. It has already presented 76 witnesses and is ready to rest its case.

Finally, the DOJ has successfully extradited to the United States Manila Congressman Mark Jimenez who is now facing criminal charges in the Florida District Court and currently working on the possible extradition to the Philippines of Dante Tan from Australia and Atong Ang from the United States.

RP back in game as tourist destination — Gordon

Back in the game as a tourist destination.

That's how Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon described the Philippines as far as visitor arrivals last year is concerned, saying government efforts to project the country as a safe and attractive destination is finally paying off notwithstanding the threat of SARS and terrorism.

In a media briefing yesterday, Gordon said that after a four-year decline in tourist arrivals from 1998 to 2001, visitor arrivals rose 1.93 million in 2002, an increase of 7.6 per cent compared to 2001.

He said that the growth in Philippine tourism was achieved despite the adverse effects of the 9/11 attack in New York, the bombing in Bali, Indonesia and internal terrorism and peace and order crises.

Tourism receipts, according to him, likewise increased by 83 per cent from \$1.722 billion in 2001 to over \$1.874 billion in 2002.

"With each tourist generating at least \$1,000 in foreign exchange earnings, the potential of tourism as a huge dollar earner can be further tapped through focused and aggressive promotions in pre-selected short-and long haul key markets," he said.

The tourism chief said international tourist arrivals have been increasing by 13.2 per cent to 175, 728 in January, by 9.6 per cent to 338,354 in February and 2.6 percent to 495,390 in March compared to the figures in the same months last year.

There was a slight decrease of four per cent in April because of the adverse global conditions from SARS, terrorism and the weak global economy. March, April and May were the months hardest hit by the SARS outbreak.

To sustain the momentum from 2002, the DOT, with the endorsement of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), launched the "Visit the Philippines Year 2003" last Feb. 1.

"The Visit the Philippines Year aims to project the Philippines as a safe and attractive destination and to create a rallying call for Filipinos to inculcate a culture of tourism that will make the Philippines a World Class Wealth of Wonder (WOW) that will attract many tourists from over the world," he said.

The DOT chief added that running parallel to the international efforts of the DOT is a domestic tourism promotions effort.

“Visit Philippines Year is geared towards foreign and domestic tourists,” he said. “It is also our objective to make the Filipinos aware of their own destinations and attractions and to either bring them to these through efficient means of transportation like the Strong Republic Nautical Highway, or to bring these to them by way of showcasing these in Intramuros.”

1.4 million indigent families benefit from health care insurance

Some 1.4 million indigent families this year have benefited from the health care insurance system of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration under the Department of Health-Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC) program.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said the number of indigents enrolled in the PHIC program has increased by one-third, with almost seven million members at present, compared to 4.7 million last year.

This translates to an increase in the number of indigent families enrolled from 935,000 to 1.4 million during the middle of the year. It is expected to go up to about 8 million before the year ends.

The PHIC granted to its indigent members a 67-percent increase in benefit ceilings for room and board for primary hospitals. The PHIC also accorded an increase in benefit ceilings of 36 percent for secondary hospitals and 16 percent for tertiary hospitals.

In a press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, Dayrit noted that the “GMA 50 Program of the DOH” addresses the need for affordable, quality medicines through four initiatives, namely: parallel importation of high-quality branded essential medicines and low prices; procurement of locally-manufactured high-quality generic medicines at low prices; promoting financial and geographic accessibility of high quality essential medicines to small communities through the Botika ng Barangay initiative; and making efficacious household remedies available to more people at the rolling stores of the National Food Authority (NFA).

He said that when the President approved the importation of low-priced but high-quality medicines to other countries like India, many poor Filipinos already benefited from this.

In fact, Dayrit said, the low-cost, high-quality generic medicines are already accessible to the public through 76 hospital pharmacies of the DOH and 112 pharmacies of the local government units.

To date, there are now 42 popular and essential drug preparations being imported by the Philippine International Trading Corporation and distributed through government hospitals, and district and regional hospitals nationwide.

The low-cost medicines are also available to some 284 Botika ng Barangay outlets. Another 200 outlets are expected to open before the end of the year.

Dayrit noted that aside from the broadening health insurance coverage for indigents and low-cost medicines for the poor, the DOH got its exemplary performance when they successfully contained the spread of endemic diseases such as dengue and measles, and the new global disease threat posed by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The successful campaign of the government against SARS was caused by the vigilance and astuteness of the country’s health personnel and the perseverance of epidemiologists in tracing possible suspects and contacts of the dreaded disease.

To date, Dayrit said over 655,000 incoming airline passengers from various countries have been screened, yielding 92 suspected cases. Over 900 contacts of SARS suspected cases were traced and subjected to clinical examination.

He added that the DOH established two SARS isolation centers at the Fabella Hospital in Manila and Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) in Muntinlupa City as well as in 15 regional hospitals during the height of the SARS threat.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 25, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20070403074349/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july25.htm>

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GMA's micro-finance program exceeded target, says House Oversight Committee

The Macapagal-Arroyo administration has exceeded its target of women beneficiaries in its micro-finance program, thereby improving the lives of people in the countryside, according to the Committee on Oversight of the House of Representatives.

In a report, Albay Congressman Joey Salceda, committee chairman, said that the total number of women beneficiaries of the micro-finance program as of May this year is already 398,198, or already 133 percent of the target of 300,000 per year.

In her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) in 2001, the President vowed to make micro-finance a cornerstone in her administration's war against poverty.

She has committed to increase the number of women who could borrow without collaterals from government financial agencies to 300,000 a year.

Salceda said that even before the half-year period, the number of women-borrowers has already exceeded the yearly target by almost 100,000.

He said that despite the absence of collateral, repayment rate in the program has remained at a high 95 percent due to peer pressure being implemented among the borrowers.

Salceda said that aside from boosting the income of poor households, micro-finance has also empowered women as breadwinners of their families or in partnership with their husbands.

Micro-finance, which is patterned after the highly-successful lending scheme of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, has proven to be an effective tool in the fight against poverty.

It is aimed to provide small loans without collateral the "unbankable" sector of society, like housewives, who would want to open small businesses like sari-sari stores or food stalls, or engaged in other income-generating ventures.

At present, the People's Credit and Finance Corporation (PCFC) is the biggest micro-lending arm of the government, having released some P829.42 million for the period from July 2002 to May 2003.

The other micro-lending agencies are the National Livelihood Support Fund (NLSF), Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC), Small Business Guarantee and Financing Corporation (SBGFD), Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

President's radio address to the nation

Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat.

Mga panibagong kaso na naman ng korupsiyon ang isinampa ng ating pamahalaan sa ilang kawani ng ating gobyerno, kabilang na dito ang ilang mga opisyal ng BIR at Bureau of Customs.

Ako ay nagagalak at patuloy na nagkakaroon ng magandang resulta itong ating pinaigting na kampanya laban sa korupsiyon sa iba't-ibang ahensiya ng ating pamahalaan. Isang kampanyang hindi lamang nakatuon sa pagpaparusa sa mga nagkasala kundi sa pagbawi ng mga ninakaw sa ating pamahalaan at sa taong bayan.

Bilyun-bilyong piso ang nawawala sa kaban ng taong bayan taon-taon dahil sa korupsiyon, kaya hindi lamang dapat maparusahan ang mga nagnanakaw na ito kundi kailangan maibalik nila ang kanilang ninakaw.

Ang nakakasiya sa pinaigting na kampanyang ito ay ang katotohanang ang lahat ng antas sa ating pamahalaan ay aktibo dito – ang lehislato, sa paglalabas ng mga karagdagang batas para lalong mapasigla ang kampanyang ito; ang hudikatura, para mabigyang katarungan ang mga kasong kaugnay dito; at ehekutibo, na nagsasakatuparan ng mga batas na may kaugnayan dito.

Halimbawa sa parte ng Kongreso, nitong nakaraang Enero lamang ay ipinasa nito at nilagdaan ko naman kaagad ang R. A. 9184 o ang Government Procurement Reform Act na kung saan lahat ng mga bidding ay gagawin ng on-line o e-procurement. Nakabawas ng malaki ito sa mga anomalya sa pamimili ng ating gobyerno. It has helped improve efficiency, standardized bidding procedures and encouraged competition. Nariyan din ang ipinasa nilang Anti-Money Laundering Act na panangga laban sa tinatawag na “dirty money”, at isang paraan para mabawasan ang korupsiyon sa ating banking system.

Ang ating hudikatura naman kamakailan lamang ay may mga desisyon na lubhang ikinasiya ng taong-bayan. Kabilang na dito ang desisyon na ang coco levy, na bilyon-bilyong piso na ngayon ang halaga, ay tunay na pag-aari ng mga magniniyog at ang daan-daang milyong dollar na deposito sa Switzerland ill-gotten at dapat lamang maibalik sa Pilipinas. Ito ay mga ay desisyong ikinatuwa ng milyun-milyong Pilipino, higit sa lahat ang mga land reform beneficiaries.

Samantala, hinihiling ko sa Kongreso na magpasa ng batas na maglalaan ng 8 bilyong piso bilang kabayaran ng mga human rights victims noong martial law.

Kami namang nasa ehekutibo ay lubos at patuloy ang pagkilos laban sa korupsiyon dahil ang lahat ng mga taong-gobyerno ay dapat maglingkod ng may dignidad at responsibilidad. Kaya nga bilang Pangulo at punong-ehekutibo, ang unang Administrative Order na aking ipinalabas ay tungkol sa pagpapalaganap ng malinis na pamamahala o good governance, at dito ipinagbawal ko sa lahat ng mga ahensiya ng gobyerno na makipag-negosasyon sa aking mga kamag-anak at kamag-anak ng aking asawa, tungkol sa kontrata, supply o appointments sa mga posisyon.

Inatasan ko rin ang lahat ng ahensiya ng pamahalaan na magbuo ng kanilang Internal Audit System para tiyakin ang maayos at malinis na pagpapatakbo ng kani-kanilang tanggapan.

Itinatag ko ang Presidential Anti-Graft Commission na siyang nag-iimbestiga at dumidinig sa mga kasong administratibo ng lahat ng presidential appointees. Kasama ang Civil Service Commission, Office of the President, NBI at PNP, isinasagawa nila ang lifestyle check sa mga opisyal ng pamahalaan, kasama na ang mga huling kinasuhan mula sa BIR at BoC.

Binuo rin natin ang Bureau of Customs Task Force on Good Governance and Anti-Corruption para maipatupad ng mabuti ang Customs Code of Conduct and Rules of Ethics.

Pilit na rin nating inaalís ang red tape sa gobyerno sa pamamagitan ng pagbabawas ng mga dapat pumirma sa mga papeles. Halimbawa sa housing permits, dati umaabot sa 90 days ang processing, ngayon ay 30 to 45 days na lamang. At ang mga pumipirma ay nabawasan mula 188 hanggang 40 na lamang.

Pinaiiral na rin natin ang “Substitute Filing System” sa pag-file ng Income Tax Returns para doon sa purely income earners, na ikinasiya ng may tatlong milyong taxpayers dahil hindi na sila kailangan pumila pa para mai-file ang kanilang ITR.

Naglunsad din tayo ng kampanya laban sa mga taong may mga pekeng professional licenses.

Naglagay din tayo ng Resident Ombudsman sa bawat ahensiya ng gobyerno para maaksyunan kaagad ang mga tiwaling opisyal at kawani ng pamahalaan.

Lingid marahil sa kaalaman ng karamihan, ilang libong kawani at opisyal mula sa ibat-ibang ahensiya ng ating pamahalaan ang nahaharap ngayon sa iba’t-ibang kaso sa mga tanggapang may hurisdiksyon sa kanilang mga indibidwal na usapin. Kabilang na dito iyong mga sensational cases kamakailan, tulad ng mga DPWH officials na sangkot sa vehicle repair scam, iyong mga opisyal ng PEA na sangkot sa ma-anomalyang pagpapagawa ng President Diosdado Macapagal Avenue, yung mga sangkot sa pag-divert sa private account ng taxpayers money sa Land Bank, yung limang judges na involved sa corruption cases, at marami pang iba, kabilang na ang may 20,000 na indibidwal na taxpayers.

Ito ay ilan lamang sa ating mga nagawa at patuloy na ginagawa para maayos at malinis ang takbo ng ating pamahalaan. Pero ang lahat ng mga ito ay lubos na magtatagumpay lamang kung ang ating mismong mamamayan ay lubos din suporta, kung kayo mismo ang magmamatyag at magsusuplong ng mga katiwaliang nangyayari sa inyong paligid. Marami na rin sa atin ang gumagawa ng mga pagbabantay at pagsusuplong na ito. Ang iba nga ay bumubuo pa o sumasali sa mga organisasyon para mas matatag nilang maisagawa ito. Pero ang karamihan pa rin ay takot dahil ayaw nilang madawit sa kaso o kaya ay takot sila sa maaring maging ganti ng kanilang isusuplong.

Ito ngayon ang binibigyan ko ng matamang atensyon kung papaano natin mapoprotektahan ang mga may malasakit na ito sa ating pambansang kapakanan. Sa ibang bansa tulad ng Amerika ay may mga batas ukol dito – na kung saan ang ganitong mga mamamayan na kung tawagin nila ay whistleblowers ay binibigyan ng proteksyon ng pamahalaan. Alam ko na sa ating Kongreso ay may panukalang batas na ukol dito at naghihintay lamang ng delibirasyon.

Sa parte naman ng ehekutibo ay inatasan ko na ang PAGC na pag-aralang mabuti ang bagay na ito at magbigay sa akin ng rekomendasyon sa lalong madaling panahon. Kailangang mabigyan natin ng sapat na proteksyon at pangangalaga ang mga nagmamalasakit sa ating bansa.

As I have said before, we shall crack down on corruption in the same degree that we are cracking down on terror and drugs. We will punish officials at any level in accordance with due process. Corruption does not only bring disgrace to the public service but strikes at the root of national security and stability. We cannot allow the few bad eggs to tarnish the good name and prestige of the majority of civil servants who serve honestly and devotedly. I encourage a professional ethic that stand on simplicity and forthright public service, untainted by pomp and show and on inordinate display of influence of power.

Gusto kong tiyakin na ang ating mamamayan ay nabibigyan ng serbisyong matapat at malinis na nararapat lamang sa kanila.

Maraming salamat.

Positive growth of former conflict areas in Mindanao cited

The peace and development strategy of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Mindanao has paid off as shown by the positive growth of the former conflict affected areas, particularly in Central Mindanao.

In a report, Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus G. Dureza, who is also chairman of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCO), said the good news about Mindanao's economic performance for 2002 was based on the latest data released by the National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB).

According to Dureza, in 2002, the gross regional domestic product (GRDP) of Mindanao grew by 2.87 percent, which is 0.41 percentage point higher than the growth rate in 2001.

Dureza said Mindanao's economy is largely driven by the combined agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors, which contributed 37.21 percent, followed by services sector at 35.91 percent, and industry sector at 26.88 percent.

He said the former conflict affected areas that contributed to the growth rate of the region are Central Mindanao, Western Mindanao and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Dureza noted that Central Mindanao, which is the SOCSARSKGEN (South Cotabato, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat and General Santos City) area registered the highest growth rate of 5.6 percent, followed by Western Mindanao with 5.4 percent and by the ARMM with 4.8 percent.

"So the conflict affected areas before had registered and even outpaced the more progressive regions in Mindanao like Northern Mindanao or Southern Mindanao. This shows and reaffirms the validity of the peace and development strategy of the President," Dureza said.

These former SZOPAD (Special Zone of Peace and Development) regions, where most of the conflicts happened, outpaced the performance of more progressive regions, such as Northern Mindanao at 1.3 percent and Southern Mindanao at 2.2 percent. The CARAGA (Surigao del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Agusan del Sur and Agusan del Norte) even posted a negative growth of 0.4 percent.

More than one-third of Mindanao's GRDP comes from Southern Mindanao followed by Northern Mindanao with 21.6 percent, Western Mindanao with 15.4 percent, Central Mindanao with 15 percent, CARAGA with 7.9 percent and ARMM with 5.4 percent.

Dureza added that the "Mindanao Natin Program" and positive developments like the resumption of the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) could further accelerate the socio-economic growth of Mindanao.

GMA confident of making RP drug-free as gov't tightens noose on suspected drug lord

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo expressed confidence that the country would be drug-free within a year as the authorities further tightened the noose around a Chinese national believed to be the third largest manufacturer in the Philippines by raiding his townhouse in Pasay City and uncovering another P3.5 billion worth of illegal drugs, precursors and equipment.

The President said that this was the biggest drug haul in the history of law enforcement in the country as she congratulated the Philippine National Police (PNP), particularly the task force headed by Deputy Director General Edgardo Aglipay, and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) for "a very good job."

"I commend all the members, all the task forces under the PDEA ... they have done a very good job," said the President during an inspection this morning of the Pasay city townhouse of Li Ya Lan alias Jackson Dy, listed as No. 3 in the order of battle of the PDEA.

It was the second successful strike in two days against Dy, whose seaside mansion in Barangay Capipisa, Tanza, Cavite was raided yesterday and found to be what the PDEA and the Philippine National Police called "the mother of all drug factories in the country."

The President said that at the rate the law enforcement authorities are going and with the support of the community and based on the current successful anti-drug campaigns, “maybe we can hope and dream that within a year, Metro Manila will be drug-free.”

On Friday, the President also personally inspected the biggest shabu laboratory and warehouse in Barangay Capipisa where a 10-foot pressurized chamber that can produce 30 kilograms of shabu daily valued at P60 million, was found.

This morning, another raid was conducted on Dy’s townhouse on Lancaster St. in Pasay City where P3.5 billion worth of shabu and chemicals, including ephedrine and iodine, as well as shabu-making equipment and paraphernalia, were discovered and seized by authorities.

Dy, who was arrested Friday at Bayview Park Hotel in Manila, reportedly admitted to the PNP anti-drug task force that he maintained the shabu laboratory in Tanza, Cavite.

Aglipay said it is possible that the “state of the art” drug factory in Tanza, Cavite, probably the biggest uncovered by the police since 1997, was exporting shabu to other Southeast Asian countries.

Five other Chinese nationals, identified as Li Tian Wah, Yao Shiao Mei, Li Huo Long, Sy Suan Hong, and Wang Li Na, were also arrested.

Aglipay, chief of the Presidential Task Force Against Illegal Drugs, said Dy and his companions would be slapped with drug charges and violations of immigration laws.

Authorities said that Dy ranks third in the country’s illegal drugs business and could have been operating for the last 15 years.

GMA vows continued crackdown vs corrupt public officials

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today her administration will crack down on corruption in the same degree that it is now cracking down on terror and drugs.

In a radio message this morning, the President said the government will punish officials at any level in accordance with due process.

“Corruption does not only bring disgrace to the public service but strikes at the root of national security and stability,” she said.

“We cannot allow the few bad eggs to tarnish the good name and prestige of the majority of civil servants who serve honestly and devotedly.”

She encouraged a professional ethic that stand on simplicity and forthright public service, “untainted by pomp and show and on inordinate display of influence and power.”

The President expressed elation over the results on her intensified campaign against corruption which she said focuses not only in punishing the guilty but also in recovering whatever loot that belongs to the government and the people.

Concerted efforts by the legislative, judiciary and the executive branches of government, she said have exposed those who are doing the people a great disservice.

“Pero ang lahat nang ito ay lubos na magtatagumpay lamang kung ang ating mismong mamamayan ay lubos din ang suporta – kung kayo mismo ang magmamatyag at magsusuplong ng mga katiwaliang nangyayari sa inyong paligid (But all these will be completely successful only if the entire citizenry would be vigilant and expose those who are committing corruption around them),” she said.

GMA orders arrest, court martial of rogue junior officers, soldiers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered tonight the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police to hunt down and arrest a small band of rogue junior officers and soldiers who have deserted their posts and illegally brought weapons with them.

The order came following the uncovering of a plot by this same group to undermine the chain of command and engage in an unconstitutional adventurist exercise, according to AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya.

“In the spirit of dialogue and understanding, I have bent backwards and listened to the legitimate grievances of some of our young officers, they being officers and gentlemen, imbued with honor and loyalty to the Flag and Constitution,” the President said.

“But in spite of this, these rogue officers have broken the AFP’s chain of command. They have broken the law. They will be court martialed.”

The 10 unaccounted officers have been identified as follows:

1. LTSG Antonio F. Trillanes IV PN
2. LTSG James A. Layug PN
3. CAPT Gerardo O. Gambala PA
4. CPT Laurence Louis Somera PA
5. CPT Milo Maestrecampo PA
6. CPT Albert Baloloy
7. 1LT Laurence San Juan
8. 1LT Florentino Somera PA
9. 1LT Jose Enrico Demetrio Dingle PA
10. 1LT Warren Lee G. Dagupon PA

Following is the President’s statement:

On my orders, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police are hunting down to arrest a small band of rogue junior officers and soldiers who have deserted their posts and illegally brought weapons with them.

They are fugitives from military justice. This is an exercise doomed from the start. It has no moral cause. It violates the welfare of the people, aggravates their prevailing hardships, and affects their jobs and livelihood.

In the spirit of dialogue and understanding, I have bent backwards and listened to the legitimate grievances of some of our young officers, they being as officers and gentleman, imbued with honor and loyalty to the Flag and the Constitution.

But in spite of this, these rogue officers have broken the AFP’s strict chain of command. They have broken the law. They will be court-martialed.

The Republic of the Philippines will exact the maximum penalty for the purveyors of mutiny or rebellion. This warning extends to unscrupulous politicians who exploit the messianic complex of these rogue officers for their naked ambitions.

I call on our people to be vigilant and denounce these misguided elements.

I assure all that we are in full control of the situation.

Following is AFP Chief of Staff Narciso Abaya's statement:

The Armed Forces of the Philippines has uncovered a plot by some rogue junior officers and soldiers to undermine the chain of command, break ranks and engage in an unconstitutional adventurist exercise. We have confirmed that these officers and soldiers have deserted their posts bringing with them weapons and have associated themselves with some groups with personal and or political interest.

I have already issued orders for them to be arrested, charged and court-martialed for mutiny and conspiracy to commit rebellion. We are closely monitoring the situation and we will keep the public informed.

In the meantime, I enjoin our people to remain calm with the assurance that the AFP is taking aggressive yet appropriate counter measures against these small group of rogue officers and men. The Armed Forces and the chain of command express our loyalty to the constitution and our democratic institutions, and our solid support to our Commander-In-Chief.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 26, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161211/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july26.htm>

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GMA gives ultimatum to soldiers occupying Makati

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo gave the military junior officers and soldiers occupying a part of Makati until 5 this afternoon to stand down, surrender their weapons and return to barracks or face the force of military action.

Going on the air nationwide at about 9:40 a.m. today and addressing the officers and soldiers as "your Commander in Chief," the President warned that beyond the 5 p.m. deadline, "the Chief of Staff (Gen. Narciso Abaya) is authorized to use reasonable force to dislodge your group quickly and efficiently, and arrest you."

"I urge you, in the interest of those who still believe in your cause, to make the right decision," the Commander in Chief added.

"I remind you that there is absolutely no justification for the action you have taken," the President said.

Following is the full text of the President's statement:

I would like to address this message directly to the soldiers in Makati

This is your Commander in Chief

I would like you remind you that there is absolutely no justification for the actions you have taken.

You have crossed the line of professionalism and are now engaged in unlawful political action backed by the use of force.

Your actions are already hovering at the fringes of outright terrorism. You will find no support for your actions among our people and the world.

I asked you to remember your oath to the flag. You have already stained the uniform. Do not drench it with dishonor I ask others in the Armed Forces to keep to the constitutional side of the line.

I am duty bound, under the same oath you took, to uphold the Constitution at all times. For this reason, I am giving you up to five o'clock this afternoon to stand down, surrender down your weapons and return to barracks.

Past this deadline, the Chief of Staff is authorized to use reasonable force to dislodge your group quickly and efficiently, and arrest you. I urge you, in the interest of those who still believe in your cause, to make the right decision now.

Even if you think you can gain political power in this way, which you cannot, you will realize that there is no substitute for democracy and constitutional means to solve the problems of our people. Do not believe that force will change our nation overnight

I do not take this assault on our Constitution personally. I have no personal rancor against anyone of you. I am sad that your career has gone astray and to waste, in this manner. I hope there is still time to repair it. I pray that God will extend to you his supreme guidance.

Lines of communication open to soldiers gone astray, says Malacañang

Malacañang said today that the lines of communication remain open for a dialogue with military officers and soldiers who have gone astray.

In a press briefing in Malacañang and in interviews with various radio and television stations, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the entire government is on top of the situation, finding a speedy and peaceful solution to the crisis.

Bunye at the same time appealed to the public to remain calm and to avoid the Makati area, particularly the area now being occupied by a band of soldiers.

He also said the entire Armed Forces of the Philippines remains in full support of the Macapagal-Arroyo government and the people.

“Our lines of communication remain open, and we remain hopeful that a speedy and peaceful solution to the problem would be reached through dialogue,” Bunye said.

“We’re willing to wait the whole morning” in order to have a dialogue with them, the Presidential Spokesman said.

Bunye also appealed to the officers and men occupying Makati not to worsen the situation and to confine their action to where they are now.

The Presidential Spokesman also appealed to the various political leaders and factions now to fuel the present crisis.

“Let’s not try to aggravate the situation. Let’s try to confine the extent of the effects of this situation to the present level,” he added.

“Itong insidenteng ito ay isolated at walang suporta mula sa ibang miyembro ng Armed Forces (The present situation is isolated and does not have the support of other members of the AFP),” Bunye also said.

Addressing the soldiers who have gone astray, Bunye said “let us consider the safety of our countrymen and the foreign guests” visiting the country who were caught in the Makati siege.

Statement of Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr.

We need sobriety. The call of the hour is to be calm and deliberate. Any misstep can further inflame what already is a very tense and explosive situation. While we need to listen to the legitimate grievances of soldiers who have dared to stand up for what they believe in, the greater and immediate challenge is to defuse this explosive state and resolve the crisis peacefully without bloodshed. Let us pause and use and use this crisis as an opportunity to heal the

division in our land. Let this heightened passion be the impetus for all of us to one nation again, despite our diversity and our differences.

Finally, let us be one in praying to our God Almighty that His power reign over all of us and His peace be our refuge. Let us pray for a meaningful resolution to this crisis.

Malacañang warns of negative impact of Makati mutiny on national economy

Malacañang warned today of the severe impact on the economy of the siege by the rebel military officers and soldiers in the Makati business district.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II said the Makati mutiny “will certainly have a negative impact on our economy and, even now, the business sector is reeling in a state of shock.”

“Our economy cannot tolerate military adventurism. Peace and order are among the major considerations of investors in their decision to locate and remain in the Philippines,” Roxas said.

“This action of the military rebels will not do good for the development of our economy, *lalu na sa paghahanap ng trabaho at hanapbuhay*,” Roxas said.

He expressed hope that the Makati siege will be resolved soon to wipe away its negative impact on the capital market, especially the stock market.

“We must remember the 1989 coup that brought down our economy to nearly zero growth – it took us several years before our economy began to recover,” Roxas said.

He said he is in constant communication with the leaders of various business organizations and assured them of a speedy solution and return to stability.

Roxas also assured that the DTI is also monitoring the prices of basic commodities.

Tourism Secretary Richard J. Gordon echoed the sentiment of Roxas, further assuring the people that other parts of the country are moving business as usual.

While the military mutiny has the nation’s attention riveted on Makati, Gordon said “the rest of the country is moving business usual. Nonetheless, this (rebellion) certainly would take its toll on the economy and the big loser here is Juan de la Cruz.”

Gordon thus appealed to the mutineers to open the lines of communication lines and resort to peaceful negotiations.

He added that past coups d’etat had a negative impact not only on the country’s economy but also pulled down the tourism industry as well.

Ebdane calls on all PNP officers, men to support GMA, gov’t, Constitution

Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, chief of the Philippine National Police, called today on all police officers and men all over the country to “continue to assure the public that the PNP and AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) are squarely behind the leadership” of President Macapagal-Arroyo and fully support the Constitution.

In a statement and guidance addressed to all regional police directors, Ebdane also called on the PNP officers and men to “remain calm and vigilant and strictly follow the chain of command.”

Meanwhile, the members of Philippine Military Academy Class 1994 today expressed their full support to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the government and the Constitution.

In a statement, Capt. Noel Tolentino, PMA Class 1994 president, said: “We believe in the chain of command and abhor military adventurism.”

Any change for good should be done through peaceful means, Tolentino stressed.

“We believe in the existing military system and, with that, we will continue to perform our entrusted duties for the Filipino people,” he added.

Martial Law anathema to GMA, says Golez

Not for a single moment did President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo consider the declaration of martial law during the two and a half years that she has been in power.

“The President has gone through a lot of crises in her administration,” said National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez during a press briefing in Malacañang today. “But not for a single moment did she consider martial law.”

Martial law is almost anathema to her instinct, Golez added.

“We had May 1, 2001, and not once was martial law discussed at the time,” said Golez. “And of course we had the Abu Sayyaf situation, and then the bombings in Zamboanga and Davao. But not for a single moment did the President consider martial law,” he went on.

Golez noted martial law can be declared only in the case of two events – rebellion and invasion. “And then it (declaration) has to be submitted to Congress within 48 hours for concurrence.”

If Congress concurs, martial law would only be for 60 days, so it’s a tough proposition, the National Security Adviser said.

This is a legacy of former President Corazon C. Aquino which changed the constitution of former President Ferdinand Marcos, Golez said.

GMA declares State of Rebellion

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today issued Proclamation No. 427 declaring the whole nation under a state of rebellion and ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police to suppress and quell such rebellion.

President Arroyo said that certain elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, armed with high-powered firearms and explosives, had acted upon the instigation and command and direction of known and unknown leaders and seized a building in Makati City.

Arroyo said these elements have put bombs in the area, publicly declared withdrawal of support for, and took arms against the duly constituted Government, and continue to rise publicly and show open hostility.

She said the purpose of these elements is to remove allegiance to the government, certain bodies of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police, depriving the President of the Philippines, wholly or partially, of her powers and prerogatives which constituted the crime of rebellion.

The President added that these misguided elements of the AFP are being supported, abetted and aided by known and unknown leaders, conspirators and plotters in the government service and outside the government.

“Now therefore I... by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, hereby confirm the existence of an actual and on-going rebellion, compelling me to declare a state of rebellion,” the President said.

The President also issued General Order No. 4 directing the AFP and the PNP to suppress the rebellion now going on in Makati City.

Under Section 18, Article VII of the present Constitution, she said that whenever it becomes necessary, the President as the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines may call out such Armed Forces to suppress the rebellion.

“I hereby direct the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Chief of the Philippine National Police and the officers and men of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police to immediately carry out the necessary and appropriate actions and measures to suppress and quell the rebellion with due regard to constitutional rights,” the President said.

U.S., Australia air support for GMA, condemn coup

The United States and Australia today threw their support behind the government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and condemned the coup plot by some military officers and soldiers.

“Let there be no doubt that the United States supports the government of President Arroyo,” US President George W. Bush said in a statement read by US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone.

“We have no reason to believe that there is no real threat to the Arroyo government,” Bush’s statement added.

Meanwhile, Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer denounced the alleged coup plot by a handful of junior officers and soldiers, saying “it couldn’t have come at a worse time,” noting that President Macapagal-Arroyo’s government was engaged in a campaign to curb terrorism.

“We’ve been deeply concerned about the attempted coup in the Philippines. We believe that if such a coup were to be successful, this would have a very serious impact on the Philippines’ relations with Australia and with other countries around the world,” Downer said in Singapore, where he is engaged in bilateral meetings.

Leaders of various political parties declare support for gov’t condemn armed protest

The leaders of the various political parties in the country today declared their support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the constitutional government, at the same time condemning the armed protest staged by junior officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. said that among the largest political parties who expressed support for the President were the Liberal Party, Nacionalista Party, Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, PDP-Laban, and the Nationalist People’s Coalition (NPC).

“All of us overwhelmingly declare our support, if not unanimously declare our support, for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, for constitutional government,” de Venecia said during a press conference in Malacañang.

Aside from the political parties, De Venecia noted that even the Governors League of the Philippines representing 79 governors; the City Mayors League with 115 mayors; Municipal Mayors League composed of 1,500 town mayors; and Barangay Officials League composed of 420,000 barangay officials have declared their all-out support to the President.

During the briefing, De Venecia urged the junior officers and soldiers conducting an armed protest and siege at the Oakwood Hotel in Makati to sit down with government authorities to thresh out grievances.

De Venecia noted that if the President and the government would be willing to sit down and negotiate a peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and with the New People's Army, why not with their group.

"I think we can sit down and talk under a flag of truce with you – young, idealistic but apparently misguided — officers of the AFP. You don't have to be ashamed because I, too, have made mistakes in life. All of us have made our mistakes in life. So let's sit down and we will listen to your grievances," De Venecia said.

The House Speaker said lawmakers from the House of Representatives are willing to meet the protesting officers and soldiers anywhere if they want to settle the issue.

People will not support military adventurism to address grievances, says Senate president

Senate President Franklin Drilon said today the military adventure by some junior military officers and soldiers does not have the support of the people.

"Our recent political history will show that the people will never support such adventurism resorted to in order to address grievances, no matter how legitimate," Drilon told reporters during a press conference in Malacañang.

The Senate president said the people would continue to support democratic institutions and resist any form of adventurism by a very small element of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Drilon also said the incident in Makati is not enough reason for the President to cancel her State of the Nation Address tomorrow before both houses of Congress.

Drilon said he and House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. were in agreement that the State of the Nation Address should proceed because that is what is called for under the Constitution.

Deadline for surrender extended

Malacañang announced this afternoon a two-hour extension of the deadline for the junior officers and soldiers staging an armed siege in Makati to stand down, surrender their weapons and return to barracks or face the force of military action.

Barely 15 minutes before 5 p.m., Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye announced that the deadline was extended as a breakthrough in the standoff was reached, with the mutineers expressing willingness to negotiate.

Bunye said former Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Roy Cimatu has also been tasked to negotiate with the protesting soldiers.

Mother of mutineer thanks GMA for extending deadline, hopes to see son alive on birthday

"Thank you, Mrs. President, for extending the deadline for my son."

After expressing these words of gratitude, Mrs. Estrellita Trillanes, mother of Navy Lt. Sr. Grade (equivalent of captain in the Army) Antonio Trillanes, Jr. one of the leaders of the rebel soldiers holed out at the Oakwood Hotel in Makati City, assured President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that she would convince her son to surrender peacefully.

Mrs. Trillanes, who was accompanied by former President Fidel V. Ramos to Malacañang to meet the President and the press, said she hopes the Makati siege would be over soon, expressing a mother's wish to see her son celebrate his birthday on August 6.

Mrs. Trillanes is the widow of Navy Captain (equivalent of Colonel) Antonio Trillanes, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class 1959 who served as signal officer in the Navy during the time of former President Ramos.

Also with Mrs. Trillanes were Commodore Carlos Agustin, chairman of the Philippine Military Academy Alumni Association, and some of the PMA classmates of her husband. The Palace meeting came just minutes after Malacañang announced a two-hour extension of the 5 p.m. deadline for Lieutenant Trillanes and his group to give themselves up peacefully, lay down their arms and return to barracks.

Mrs. Trillanes assured the President that she's willing to help convince her son to surrender. She said that before she left the vicinity of the Oakwood Hotel, she was able to talk to her son on the cellular phone and told him to leave the place right away.

She said she wanted to see her son alive on his birthday.

FVR tags rebel soldiers' grievances as valid but pursued through wrong kind of action

Former President Fidel V. Ramos said today he believed that the grievances aired by the young officers and soldiers staging a siege in a Makati hotel are legitimate ones but nonetheless tagged them as "rebel soldiers."

In a press briefing at Malacañang this afternoon, Ramos said he has considered the rebel soldiers' grievances as valid grievances but added that they should have coursed these through the military chain of command and process.

Ramos said he regarded the Makati uprising as a surprise action, and not a premeditated one, by young military officers.

He noted that previous coups were premeditated moves, complete with scenarios of full military backing and political support.

"I believe that this is something *na biglaan* (spur of the moment). I do not think that this was premeditated in the sense that previous coup attempts have been premeditated. I'm saying *na biglaan* ito because, maybe, the officers and soldiers concerned became emotional over the problems facing them," Ramos said.

The former President urged the government to give utmost attention to the grievances aired by the rebel soldiers in order to attain a sincere reconciliation between the military and the present leadership.

He also expressed hope that the uprising will soon come to an end that would be favorable to the government.

He appealed to the rebel soldiers to think twice and consider their future and the plight of their families because their call for reforms could be undertaken under a united program for a more effective and stable future for the country.

Ramos lauded President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for moving in the right direction by giving the two-hour extension to the rebels to surrender peacefully.

Statement of the President

The crisis in Makati is over.

Two hundred ninety six soldiers, including 70 officers are standing down and returning to barracks.

They will be investigated and their cases will be disposed of in accordance with the Articles of War. They have not asked and they shall not be given special treatment.

I have directed the Chief of Staff to immediately restore normalcy in the military organization. I commend the officers and men who have handled the crisis with the loyalty and professionalism.

Civilians shown to be involved in any conspiracy will be prosecuted.

I thank the leaders of Congress, the church and the civil society for their support.

I am also thankful for the support extended by the diplomatic community. I assure the world that this event does not in any way injure our national security and political instability. The issues involved are domestic, operational or administrative; they do not involve ideological or fundamental policy areas. Our decision to enter dialogue reaped positive results.

Once more, this has been a triumph for democracy.

May God bless the Philippines.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 27, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161222/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july27.htm>

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Statement of Secretary Ignacio Bunye

SONA

The crisis is finished; the President is preparing for the SONA. Democracy has triumphed and justice is taking its course.

The SONA goes on, rain or shine. The President looks forward to the opportunity to share her thoughts with the people and join the nation in celebrating our collective accomplishments.

Makati Siege Investigation

On one hand, all the accusations raised by the Magdalo group will be looked into and studied via a mechanism to be announced by the President. She is very determined to get at the root of the matter.

On the other hand, all civilians shown to be involved in this destabilization attempt will be prosecuted. It is the height of disloyalty to the democratic system to exploit the grievances of soldiers by turning them into mutineers. Let the axe fall where it may. There will be no holy cows in this investigation.

GMA asks Congress to pass Anti-Terrorism Law

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today announced that she will constitute an independent commission to look into the roots of the short-lived and ill-conceived military mutiny in Makati City over the weekend and the provocations that inspired it.

In her third State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered before a joint session of Congress this afternoon, the President said such actions are deplorable and will be met with the full force of the law, including their political components.

"Yet they signal an underlying problem that we must address," the President said.

The President said that at the request of Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, she is also constituting an independent commission to investigate the Davao bombings.

She said this will also be matched by a PNP Reform Commission.

The President said that she was sure the PNP itself would welcome a comprehensive report that would cure the organization “not only of the failures of the scale of the Al-Ghozi escape but also the daily devils that are the *kotong* cops.”

The President thanked the PNP for its solid support to the government during the Makati siege Sunday.

She said it is a pity that after the government has scored successes in its anti-drug and anti-terrorism campaigns and is in the process of forging a permanent peace in Mindanao, some ill-advised military officers tried to destabilize the situation.

The President said the nation cannot stay divided as “there is so much we need to do together.”

“I address myself not only to the joint houses here assembled but to the nation at large: I need you; we need each other,” the President said.

In a statement she read in national television late Sunday night after the Makati City siege was resolved peacefully, the President said the 296 soldiers, including 70 officers, who participated in the mutiny will be investigated and their cases will be disposed of in accordance with the Articles of War.

“They have not asked and shall not be given special treatment,” the President said.

But at the same time, the President stressed that civilians shown to be involved in the conspiracy would be prosecuted.

GMA to constitute an independent commission to look into roots of Makati mutiny

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But at the same time, the President stressed that civilians shown to be involved in the conspiracy would be prosecuted.

GMA: Gov’t delivered in great part on commitments

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said that for the past year, her government delivered in great part on its commitments.

In her third State of the Nation Address (SONA) before the joint session of Congress at the Batasang Pambansa this afternoon, the President said that a day after overcoming an ill-conceived mutiny by some misguided military officers without bloodshed or damage to property, the country by now, should be at peace.

“At peace in the South, at peace in the countryside, safe in our homes and secure in our communities,” she said. “But we remain at war. At war against terrorism, at war against corruption, at war against disease. At war against drugs, the greatest menace facing our country today.”

She said Filipinos cannot stay divided with so much to be done together.

“I address myself not only to the joint houses here assembled but to the nation at large. I need you, we need each other,” she said.

“Many of our reforms have yet to bear fruit, but there should be no doubt that our country in the fullness of time will reap what was carefully picked, planted and nurtured. And it will be a harvest of plenty,” she said.

The harvest has in fact started, she said.

In the area of peace, the Chief Executive said her administration has hit hard at terrorism and made advances towards a negotiated peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Barely five months since launching an intensified campaign against illegal drugs, the President said several shabu laboratories have already been closed, with the amount of confiscated illegal drugs already reaching P8 billion. A big fish, Jackson Dy, No. 3 in the Order of Battle, led 14,000 other drug pushers who have been caught.

In the area of education, the President said her government has already built schoolhouses in 600 barangays where previously there has been none. She has also launched massive distance learning program or education TV in areas that cannot be reached by conventional schools or teachers.

In housing, the Macapagal-Arroyo administration has built more than 300, 000 units, more than 100,000 of which are for the poor while the rest are for employees with meager incomes.

The President said the country has a steady supply rice worth only P16 per kilo; sardines has remained at P8.50 since she became President, contributing greatly to the lowest inflation rate in the country’s economy in 20 years.

She said she has distributed more than 500, 00 hectares of land under the agrarian reform.

The Chief Executive said the economy grew by 4.4 per cent GNP last year and 5.6 per cent in the first quarter of this year. Foreign investments, she reported, rose 26 per cent compared to the same period last year.

“They will grow faster when we reduce business costs by providing basic infrastructure: roads, transport and a more efficient and rationalized power sector,” she said.

She proudly reported that basic transport fare has not increased since her first SONA. She had set up the nautical highway to reduce transport costs from Mindanao to Luzon.

From having the second most expensive power in Asia-Pacific, the Philippines now rank seventh, according to the President. Interest rates, she added, continue to go down.

She said that with full financial support from the government, the registration, counting and transmission of votes in the May 2004 election would be completely computerized.

In geopolitics, President Macapagal-Arroyo said: “Our country has come much closer to re-attaining its strategic importance in geopolitics as an active and respected voice in international affairs. The Filipino is now recognized as a truly global worker, both at home and abroad. Increasingly, the Philippines is being recognized as an ideal site for industrial operations requiring an English-educated work force.”

She said poverty is now being slowly licked.

“Self-rated poverty is at its lowest percentage of the population in the last 16 years. Optimism about the future is higher than early this year. Self-rated poverty has gone down to 6.6 per cent compared to 12.7 per cent just before I became President,” she stressed.

No let up in anti-drug war; no death penalty moratorium for drug lords — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said there will be no letup in her administration’s intensified campaign against illegal drugs, vowing to bring the anti-drug war to every household in the country, if necessary.

In her third State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered this afternoon before a joint session of Congress, the President said the drug problem has endangered the lives and the future of some one million Filipinos.

The President also said there will be no moratorium on the death penalty for big fish in the illegal drugs trade.

But the President assured the nation that on other matters, she remains pro-life. “I will veto any bill that would smuggle abortion into it,” she said.

The President said she will bring the fight against illegal drugs to every province, every town and every barangay, every community in the country.

“This is one fight I am taking everywhere, if we have to knock on every door,” the President said.

She said the government will cripple the operations of the notorious drug lords and their “padrinos” who are in the corridors of power.

“*Pipigain natin ang supply sa kalye sa paraang kahit ang masasalapi ay mahihirapang sustentohan ang kanilang bisyo* (We will cut off the street supply of drugs so that even the rich could not afford to maintain their vices),” the President said.

The President said the government would launch a stepped-up campaign to educate the people, especially the students, on the dangers of drug abuse and would rehabilitate drug users and see to it that they would not become drug dependents again.

The President reported that during the past five weeks after she ordered an intensified anti-drug campaign, some P8 billion worth of illegal drugs have been seized by police authorities, a number of big shabu factories raided, and some of the big-time drug lords and traders now put behind bars.

“Ito ay ating laban at tayo ay magtatagumpay (This is our fight, and we will win),” the President said.

GMA asks Congress to pass two vital laws to benefit small farmers, human rights victims

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today formally asked Congress to enact two vital legislations that would speed up countryside development and compensate thousands of victims of human rights abuses during the Marcos regime.

In her third State of the Nation Address (SONA) that she delivered this afternoon before a joint session of Congress, the President said there is now a need to pass a law that would allow small farmers, especially the beneficiaries of the land reform law, to use their farmlands as collaterals for agricultural loans.

The President said that with easy credit, the land reform beneficiaries could increase the productivity of their newly acquired lands and therefore improve their lives.

She also asked Congress to pass a legislation that would allocate P8 billion from the recovered Marcos ill-gotten wealth as compensation for human rights victims during the martial law years.

The President congratulated the Supreme Court and the Sandiganbayan for restoring to the government huge sums of money that rightfully belong to the Filipino people.

“I congratulate the Supreme Court for finally granting what has taken much too long to materialize: authoring the allocation and use of private loot for laudable public purposes,” the President said.

She said the bulk of the recovered ill-gotten money amounting to P38 billion would be used to fully implement the government’s Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

On the coconut levy, which the Sandiganbayan has decreed as public funds, the President said this would be primarily used to improve the lives of the coconut farmers.

“Sisiguruhin ko na ang makikinabang sa coco levy ay ang magniniyog. Hindi ko papayagang madehado ang mga magsasaka (I would ensure that the coconut farmers would benefit from the coconut levy, I won’t allow the farmers to be on the losing end),” the President said.

GMA asks Congress to pass indexation of “sin” taxes to finance Universal PhilHealth coverage

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today asked Congress to pass the bill on the indexation of “sin” taxes to finance the universal coverage of PhilHealth, or health insurance.

In her third State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered this afternoon before a joint session of Congress, the President said all Filipinos, including the poor, should be covered by health insurance.

She also said that there is also a need to ensure that cheap medicines should be made available to everybody, especially the poor.

Today, cheap medicines are only available in government-run hospitals.

According to the President, when she was not yet President, only about one and a half million Filipinos were covered by PhilHealth. Now, she said, almost seven million are covered by the government health insurance program.

She said she is more convinced on the need to strengthen the government's health services after she visited the Calisaan couple who lost their quadruplets for lack of proper medical care.

"Tila nawasak ang aking puso nang narinig kong namatay ang Calisaan quadruplets (I feel that my heart was torn after I heard about the death of the Calisaan quadruplets)," the President said.

GMA pays tribute to Filipino workers in SONA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today paid tribute to Filipino workers, both here and abroad, for having an unbeatable comparative advantage because of their English-language education, advanced skills and "a uniquely-caring nature."

"The Filipino is now recognized as a truly global worker, both at home and abroad," the President said in her third State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered this afternoon before a joint session of Congress at the Batasang Pambansa.

The President said that there are now more than eight million Filipinos who live and work abroad, in jobs where they have excelled and have competitive advantage over other foreign workers.

According to the President, the Filipino will work anywhere because he is not afraid, as she particularly mentioned the victory of Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao over his Mexican opponent in their fight in Los Angeles City Sunday.

"Given the chance to compete, he will take it and he will win," the President said.

The President said that it is only fitting that the overseas Filipinos be given the chance to vote in the elections.

She said that the Philippines is now on the global map as the new emerging source for high-quality workers for European and American firms outsourcing some of their most critical functions to the country.

Creation of 3 commissions to help restore investor confidence, says Concepcion

One of the country's top businessman today said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's creation of three independent commissions to investigate the Davao bombing, reorganization of the Philippine National Police (PNP), and to address the Makati mutiny would return the confidence of investors in the country.

"If these bodies work very fast and make the recommendations and she implements them, then foreign investors will come back again," Jose Concepcion, a barangay chairman in Forbes Park, Makati City, said after the President delivered her State of the Nation Address (SONA) at the Batasan session hall in Quezon City.

He said the creation of the three commissions means the President is determined to address graft and corruption "that is prevailing in the PNP and in certain sectors of the military."

"I think she did a good presentation. She appealed to the people that she cannot do it alone, we're all in this together, and that is a good effort," he said.

He said what the President presented in her SONA were all valid.

“All the accomplishments she presented were all valid accomplishments. We’re very hopeful the system will improve,” he said.

He said there is no problem in the local economy despite the mutiny staged by more than 200 soldiers the other day.

“Tungkol sa local economy, wala tayong problema. Basta trabaho lang, yun lang ang gusto namin,” he said.

RP power rates lower than other countries — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced in her third State of the Nation Address (SONA) today that the country has a lower power rate now compared to other countries in the Asia-Pacific and the consumers still could expect a reduction in their electric bills in the next few years.

The President said that in Metro Manila, a consumer using 100 kilowatts now pays only P423.20 compared to the P526.48 last May, a drop of over P100 or 20 percent.

She said this reduction in power rates benefits the almost 2-million households in Metro Manila who gained from the lifeline rate program of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC).

She said another 119 electric cooperative franchise areas will also soon reduce their rates under the loan condonation program of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act that Congress has passed.

“That is why, believe me when I say that, from having the second most expensive power in Asia-Pacific, we now rank seventh,” she said.

The President, however, said the country would still need 6,000 megawatts of additional power over the next 10 years.

“That is why we need to pass the TRANSCO Bill to maintain a favorable ranking as we take on this added capacity,” she said.

She also reported that the government has already provided electricity to more than 1,500 barangays throughout the country.

Energy Secretary Vicente S. Perez, Jr. said this is one of the biggest accomplishments under the term of President Macapagal-Arroyo to help combat poverty in the countryside.

He said the present administration has provided electricity to more barangays compared to the Aquino, Ramos and Estrada administrations combined.

GMA speech applauded 79 times

The third State of the Nation Address of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during the opening of the third regular session of the 12th Congress was applauded at least 79 times by the lawmakers and a jampack crowd of government officials, business leaders, members of the diplomatic corps and ordinary citizens at the gallery.

Last year, her State of the Nation Address was interrupted by applause for only 75 times.

The most applauded portions of the President SONA, which she delivered in 45 minutes, was when she declared that there will be no moratorium on the death penalty for all drug lords; when she asked the Congress to allocate P8 billion for victims of human rights violations during martial law; when she revealed the series of surprise visit she

made to government offices to find out who were working or sleeping on the job; and when she announced the full computerization of the 2004 elections.

When House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. formally called out her name to take the speaker's stand to deliver her SONA, the crowd stood up and, for three minutes, remained standing and applauding.

The President got her first long applause when she warned all the big fish in the illegal drugs trades that they faced the death penalty and, in the next breath, declared she was pro-life and would veto any bill that will seek to legalize abortion.

The most applauded part of the President's speech was when she mentioned her series of surprise visit to the government offices.

The audience reacted positively and were obviously touched when the President said she would do everything for the future of the youth, particularly the generation of her granddaughter Mikaela.

"Just as I will do everything to make sure that the future will be kind to Mikaela and her generation, so must we all strive to turn our fears into a resolve to do right not just by ourselves, but by our children and grandchildren," she said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 28, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161236/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july28.htm>

The President's Day: July 29, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: SONA**
- **Statement of the President: Reconciliation with Justice**
- **Statement of the President: Arrest of Estrada Aide**
- **Statement of the President: Peso Fall**
- **S. satisfied with GMA's handling of Makati siege**
- **State of rebellion still in effect — Bunye**
- **GMA names 2 former justices, professor to commission to probe Makati mutiny**

Statement of the President: SONA

While the themes of the SONA linger in the horizon, we must quickly get back to our most basic priorities—creating jobs and waging peace—fighting poverty, corruption, terrorism and drugs. I will not be distracted by the partisan agenda that will be pursued by others. I know very well that the electoral issues of 2004 will soon heat up, but I will neither be dragged into these issues nor be distracted in my course. The hopes of our people must be buoyed and sustained by an unfading vision. The SONA is but a renewal of my vow of service, performance, results and moving forward to a brighter future.

Statement of the President: Reconciliation with Justice

Our priority in the aftermath of the Makati crisis is to build unity and reconciliation with justice. We shall take all means to repair the division caused by the incident by rectifying the grievances that caused it and bringing its plotters to justice. Our Constitutional democracy can only be strong if we move on both fronts of dialogue and just retribution. This is true for our Armed Forces as it is true for the entire society. All plotters will be brought to justice.

Statement of the President: Arrest of Estrada Aide

The resort to destabilization can only be the handiwork of the most desperate groups that have completely lost their moral compass. We must not only bring them to justice; we must awaken them to the modern world in which the use of force to attain political ends is no longer an accepted model of change, especially in open democratic societies such as ours. Sadly, there are those who still live in the dark ages of dictatorship and deception. They must be enlightened if misled. They must be crushed if they persist.

Statement of the President: Peso Fall

The mutiny was quelled in a day and the Armed Forces fully consolidated the day after. Our political stability and national security are unimpaired. The normal course of governance and business has been quickly restored. There has been a setback in confidence but the fundamentals are sound and stable. This is a blip in the screen that does not forebode instability. The Armed Forces is fully united and staying the course of reform and modernization.

U.S. satisfied with GMA's handling of Makati siege

The United States today said that it was satisfied with the way President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo handled the mutiny staged by a group of young officers and soldiers in Makati City over the weekend.

In his daily briefing in Washington, D. C., Richard Boucher, spokesman of the Department of State, said the US was pleased that the Makati siege ended peacefully and without any loss of life.

Boucher said Washington has noted the announcement of President Macapagal-Arroyo to conduct investigations on the circumstances that led to the mutiny and the allegations of corruption aired by the dissident troops.

“She has promised to look into them. I think we’ll leave that to her. And we’ve supported the way she handled the crisis,” Boucher said.

Boucher also reiterated an earlier assurance of US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone that the US is fully behind the government of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

“No one should be under any doubt that we support the legitimate civilian government of President Arroyo,” Boucher said.

In a press conference during the height of the Makati standoff last Sunday, Ambassador Ricciardone also assured the President and the Armed Forces of the Philippines that the US was behind their efforts in resolving the crisis “in appropriate and lawful ways.”

Ricciardone said that while President George W. Bush has been informed of the mutiny, the US government did not see the situation as a threat to the government of the Philippines and to Philippine democracy.

The US envoy also brushed aside speculations that the visit here of President Bush in October would be postponed because of recent developments in the Philippines.

“I can assure you that the planning for President Bush’s visit here in October has been continuing all week,” Ricciardone said.

State of rebellion still in effect — Bunye

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said today that the state of rebellion declared by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to quell last Sunday’s mutiny by junior military officers will stay in effect until such time as loose ends in connection with the incident have been tied up.

In a press briefing today, Bunye said he has yet to receive instructions from the President on the lifting of the declaration.

Reacting to queries on the duration of the declaration, Bunye said it is becoming clear that there are some civilian elements whose participation took place before, during and probably a little after the July 27 uprising.

“There are many circumstances that point to wide support from outside groups, like the presence of supplies which are not normally available to the regular officers and men of the Armed Forces, the possible use of private funding to be able to check into the Oakwood apartelle even before the actual incident, the types of materials which indicate that these were prepared and fabricated or put together way in advance and in cooperation with some outside groups,” he said.

Saying it does not wish to point fingers at any particular group, Bunye said the government is looking at all angles including physical evidence that would tend to show that the mutineers could not have launched this without any outside help.

He said these pieces of evidences are now being collected.

GMA names 2 former justices, professor to commission to probe Makati mutiny

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today created an independent commission led by a former Supreme Court justice to look into the roots of the Makati mutiny and the provocations that inspire it.

The President said during a meeting with soldiers at the Camp Aguinaldo grandstand that retired Associate Justice Florentino Feliciano has agreed to chair the commission.

She added that retired Associate Justice Minerva Gonzaga Reyes and Professor Carolina Hernandez also agreed to be members of the probe body.

The President said the destabilization try in Makati City on Sunday “can only be the handiwork of the most desperate groups that have completely lost their moral compass.”

“We must not only bring them to justice. We must awaken them to the modern world in which the use of force to attain political ends is no longer an accepted model of change, especially in open democratic societies such as ours,” she said.

In the aftermath of the Makati crisis, the President said the government’s priority is to build unity and reconciliation with justice.

“We shall take all means to repair the division caused by the incident by rectifying the grievances that caused it, and by bringing its plotters to justice,” she said.

Justice Feliciano, 75, was appointed as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court on August 1986.

He obtained his bachelor of laws from the University of the Philippines, *magna cum laude*, in 1952. He also obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts, *summa cum laude*, also from the state university.

He earned his Master of Laws degree in 1953 and his Doctor of Juridical Science (JSD) in 1955 from Yale University.

He was a former managing partner of the Sycip, Salazar, Feliciano and Hernandez Law Office and member of various academic and professional organizations here and abroad. He sat in various international commercial arbitration boards and has contributed pieces to local and international publications.

Justice Gonzaga-Reyes was an Associate Justice at the Court of Appeals (CA) for 13 years and chairman of the Third Division of the Appellate Court before she joined the Supreme Court on January 1999.

Right after graduating *magna cum laude* and class valedictorian at the UP College of Law, she started her government career at the Department of Justice (DOJ) in 1954. She assumed various positions and became Assistant Chief State Counsel from 1968 to 1983.

She also represented the country in several peace and trade-related and foreign loan negotiations abroad, notable of which were the RP-MNLF Talks on the Tripoli Agreement of 1977, the RP-US Trade and Investment Treaty and the RP-Japan Treaty on Amity, Commerce and Navigation.

She also served as consultant at the Advisory and Administrative Support Office, RP Panel, of the RP-US Military Bases Agreement Joint Committee and president of the Philippine Women Judges Association.

Professor Hernandez is currently a professor of political science at UP and the holder of its Carlos P. Romulo Professorial Chair in International Relations.

She is founder and president of the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies, an independent, non-profit think-tank on foreign policy, domestic politics, and security concerns and development issues.

In 1989-1990, she served as a member of the Commission that investigated the failed coup of 1989, a body appointed by former President Corazon Aquino that produced the Final Report that is seen as a critically important document in the country's march to re-democratization.

Dr. Hernandez is widely published in international, regional and Philippine academic journals in the fields of regional security and foreign relations, military in politics, democracy and development, and Philippine domestic politics and foreign policy.

She holds a B.S. in Foreign Service, *cum laude*, from UP, and an M.A. in International Relations from the University of Karachi where she finished first in her class.

She also holds a Ph.D. degree in Political Science from the State University of New York at Buffalo where she wrote a pioneering study on Philippine civil-military relations.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 29, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161251/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july29.htm>

The President's Day: July 30, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: The Feliciano Commission**
- **Statement of the President: Parallel Congressional Inquiry**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **LEDAC okays 15 measures for inclusion in common legislative agenda**
- **Shunning politics allows her to make unpopular decisions, says GMA**
- **Effect of mutiny on economy being assessed**
- **'Time' magazine cites gains of GMA administration its cover story this week**
- **GMA presents Sikatuna award to 3 envoys**
- **GMA names 3 more to Makati mutiny probe body**
- **GMA, not Honasan, peacefully resolved Makati seige, says Palace official**

Statement of the President: The Feliciano Commission

I would really want to know how and why idealistic and intelligent young officers are inveigled to join these plots by self-serving politicians. Either there is something wrong about how we educate our soldiers or there is something wrong with the way we manage our military or some unscrupulous politicians have superb persuasive skills – or all of the above. I want to see a clear picture of how a conspiracy like this ripens into armed action. I expect the commission to give me that picture.

Meanwhile, we will take all evidence delivered to the Commission. I urge anyone who has information relative to the allegations of the mutineers to come forward. We will get to the root of these matters and proceed against those found culpable, and undertake the necessary reforms if warranted. There will be no whitewash or cover-up.

Statement of the President: Parallel Congressional Inquiry

I welcome it. It is best to bring this matter into a clear and sober light so that we will see who is telling the truth and who is simply engaged in propaganda and brinkmanship. I urge the Senate to commence an inquiry immediately. This will contribute to national stability and security.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

The President accepted with deep regret this morning the resignation of Brig. Gen. Victor N. Corpus as ISAFP Chief.

The President made clear, however, that she is not accepting General Corpus offer to retire from the service.

The President described General Corpus as a noble officer.

A copy of Gen. Corpus letter dated July 29 is attached:

“The current political crisis is far from finished. There is still a deep restiveness in the Officer's Corps of the AFP. The putchists are asking for my resignation. Although I can honestly say that their accusation that I had a hand in the Davao bombings is without basis, I think that it is best for all that I get out of the picture.

“In chess, when a queen is beleaguered it is sometimes necessary to sacrifice a knight to save the game. I felt that the restiveness will not calm down with my continued presence. I therefore tender my irrevocable resignation from my position as Chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and retire from the Armed Forces of the Philippines effective upon the approval of my resignation.

Thank you for the trust and support you have given me in the past. It was my pleasure to serve under your leadership.”

LEDAC okays 15 measures for inclusion in common legislative agenda

The Legislative–Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) formally approved for adoption today 15 priority measures and other specific bills representing a doable but high-impact common legislative agenda.

Nine priority legislative measures which were highlighted in President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday and six others in the common legislative agenda as approved last May 7 make up the list representing the government’s resolve to address priority concerns.

The 15 measures approved for adoption as priority measures by the LEDAC meeting today presided over by the President are:

1. Farmland as loan collateral
2. Compensation to human rights victims
3. Anti-Terrorism Act
4. Transco franchise
5. Reforms in campaign finance
6. Rationalization of automobile tax
7. Rationalization of documentary stamp tax
8. Indexation of sin taxes
9. National Revenue administration
10. Judiciary compensation rationalization
11. Dual Citizenship Act
12. Quarantine program for SARS
13. Optical Media Act
14. Securitization Act
15. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Of these, only the rationalization of the automobile tax has been approved by both chambers of Congress.

The farmland as loan collateral, Transco franchise, rationalization of documentary stamp tax, Optical Media Act, Securitization Act and Department of Housing and Urban Development were already approved by the House but are still on second reading in the Senate undergoing interpellation.

Twenty-eight other significant measures are to be considered by both houses of Congress for inclusion in the remaining 104 session days.

Shunning politics allows her to make unpopular decisions, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said that her declaration not to run in next year’s election has allowed her to make unpopular decisions, including making peace with the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

In a recent interview with *Time* magazine, excerpts of which were carried by CNN-Time Asia, the President said that making peace with the MILF “is not totally popular.”

She said that her government has been doggedly pursuing the peace process in Mindanao. “And I am feeling very gratified that this is now within grasp,” the Presidents said.

Earlier, Malacañang announced that the government and the MILF would soon resume peace negotiations in Kuala Lumpur under the auspices of the Malaysian government.

The President said that she does not want to be distracted by politics and would rather talk about reforms.

“These are the things that occupy my time; they occupy my energies,” the President said.

She also said the peace talks would not prevent the government from hitting any terrorist camp in Mindanao, either of the MILF or of the Jakarta-based Jemaah Islamiah (JI).

“There is nothing in the terms of reference of the proposed peace talks that says that we will not go against terrorism, that we will not enforce the law,” the President said.

According to the President, the MILF has already renounced terrorism and has even pledged to help the government recapture escaped terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi.

Effect of mutiny on economy being assessed

Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin said today the effect of last weekend’s failed mutiny on the economy is now being assessed although she is expecting no major or substantial changes in the macro numbers.

Boncodin made the announcement during her presentation of the proposed 2004 national budget of P864.8 billion to the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) today at the State Dining Room of Malacañang.

Boncodin said the economy posted a steady growth since 1997, with inflation rate on the downtrend. The country’s growth rate, she said, are quite respectable.

“The government’s target is to balance the budget and restore health in the fiscal sector. It also plans to reduce the country’s debt burden in the medium term,” she said.

A major feature of the 2004 budget is the increase in the allocations for new school buildings and teachers.

To address the perennial problem of classroom and teacher shortage, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered an audit of school board funds.

The problem, she said, is not the lack of teachers but their distribution since the prevailing ratio is 34 students to a teacher based on a school-to-school statistics.

The proposed 2004 national budget will be submitted to Congress first week of August. Boncodin has marked Aug. 6 as the date of submission.

The House of Representatives, through Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., has committed to pass on to the Senate the proposed budget by the end of September at the earliest with committee hearings to be conducted even during the break.

Meanwhile, the President has announced during the meeting that US President George W. Bush has expressed his desire to witness the signing of a formal peace agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The President said, however, that this would all depend on the Malaysian government, which is the host of the formal peace talks.

The Malaysian government, she said, has approved the supportive role being played by the US in the talks.

'Time' magazine cites gains of GMA administration its cover story this week

The government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has notched considerable gains in improving the economy, in fighting graft and corruption and in forging a lasting peace in Mindanao, according to *Time*, a respected American newsweekly, in the Aug. 4, 2003 issue of its Asia edition.

In its cover story, entitled "A Time for Prayer," *Time* said that over the past year, the President, who it described as a "hard-nosed technocrat," had "finally risen and some strong results have followed."

Time's cover showed the President in a formal pose although it carried a different teaser, entitled "Crisis Management: Philippine President Gloria Arroyo Stares Down a Mutiny As She Mulls a Second Term."

The cover story was pegged on Sunday's Makati siege by a group of disgruntled young military officers, saying the mutiny posed the "toughest test" of the Macapagal-Arroyo presidency.

But *Time* admitted that the Philippine economy has improved during the past few months.

"On the economy: unemployment and interest rates are declining. So is the budget deficit, which had reached a worrisome level last year," *Time* said.

It said that during the first six months of this year, the deficit was 33 percent lower than during the same period last year, adding that this was mainly due to the "anti-corruption drive at the notoriously lax Bureau of Internal Revenue."

The magazine cited the efforts of BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno for weeding out wrongdoers and for introducing more efficient computer systems in the bureau that decreased opportunities for graft.

The result, according to *Time*, was a 14.7 percent increase in revenue collections in June this year compared to that of last year.

All these have resulted in a 4.4 percent economic growth in the Philippines, *Time* said, although it added that economists have said that the Philippines needs more than 7 percent growth rate to reduce poverty and absorb the impact of high population growth.

Time said the short-lived mutiny over the weekend "is an example of how the government's agenda can be ruthlessly redirected by current events."

That is the reason why the President considers a peace accord with the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as a "defining moment" of her presidency, the newsweekly said.

"It is not only political: the economy can't boom without it," *Time* quoted the President as saying in an interview.

With the economy improving and with the prospects of peace in Mindanao looking brighter, the President's approval rating in one survey last June jumped to 46 percent, from a paltry 34 percent three months earlier, the newsweekly said.

Time said that although the President has said that she is not running in next year's elections, "she is certainly not idling."

The President told *Time* that she could be more effective without worrying about the campaign. "I don't want to be distracted by politics," she said.

GMA presents Sikatuna award to 3 envoys

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded the Order of Sikatuna to three outgoing ambassadors to the Philippines in simple ceremonies held at Malacañang.

The Order of Sikatuna with the rank Datu was presented to Ambassadors Irit Ben Abba of Israel, Theo Arnold of the Netherlands, and Gholamreza Yousefi of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Presidential citations were given to the three foreign dignitaries for their worthy and able representation during their tours of duty in promoting friendly and warm relations in the field of economic, political and cultural cooperation.

Ambassador Irit Ben Abba said she learned a lot and was impressed by the Filipinos during her three-year tour of duty here. She also told the President of the Israeli government's continued support to the Philippines, particularly in promoting economic cooperation between the two countries.

Ambassador Arnold, who has been here for almost five years, said he was pleased with the continuation of the peace process. He said there is a great willingness on the part of the Dutch government to do something helpful about it.

He also informed the President that one of the top corporations in the Netherlands is interested in putting up a \$600 million a year export industry here. He said the corporation could hire around 5,000 workers.

Ambassador Gholamreza Yousefi said there is a great potential for economic cooperation between the Philippines and his country that could become an alternative source of crude oil.

The ambassador, who is almost on his fourth year of duty here, said he would not miss the Philippine bananas as the country is the biggest importer of bananas in Iran.

GMA names 3 more to Makati mutiny probe body

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today named the three other members of the commission to investigate the roots of the Makati rebellion as she swore in retired Supreme Court Justices Florentino Feliciano and Minerva Gonzaga-Reyes as chairman and member of the fact-finding body.

The new members of the commission are Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S. J., retired Commodore Rex C. Robles and Captain Rex Banjo Q. Bumanlag of the Philippine Army.

Fr. Bernas was one-time provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines and dean of the Ateneo de Manila University Law School. A noted theologian and constitutional expert, he is one of the framers of the 1987 Constitution.

Retired Commodore Rex Robles is one of the founders of the Reform the AFP Movement (RAM) which spearheaded the EDSA People Power Revolution, in which he also took part.

The sixth member of the commission is Professor Carolina G. Hernandez.

During their oath-taking, the President Arroyo thanked Justices Feliciano and Gonzaga-Reyes for not hesitating in accepting their new task in the government service.

Justice Feliciano said after their oath-taking at the Malacañang Study Room that the investigation procedure of the commission is basically laid down under Administrative Code of 1987.

Feliciano said the commission will be impartial, independent, just and fair in its evaluation of the case.

Justice Gonzaga-Reyes, who had just arrived yesterday morning from her a vacation in Europe, said she is elated to be part of the commission.

The two retired justices reiterated that they will not impose a deadline for the completion of their investigation, adding that it is too early to set down rules and decide whether a public hearing is necessary.

“We want to do it as quickly as possible but we won’t impose a deadline yet. Administrative Order No. 78 does not specify any deadline,” the justices said.

Under AO 78 issued today by the President, the Commission is granted the power of an investigating body under Sec. 37 of the Administrative Code of 1987, including the power to summon witnesses, administer oaths, take testimony or evidence relevant to the investigation.

The Commission is tasked evaluate all the facts and circumstances surrounding the rebellion, its roots, and the provocations that inspired it, and submit its findings and recommendations to the President.

It is also authorized to deputize the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agency to assist in the performance of its functions.

GMA, not Honasan, peacefully resolved Makati seige, says Palace official

Presidential Deputy Chief of Staff Renato Velasco today said that it was President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who did her best to peacefully resolve the short-lived mutiny by young military officers at Oakwood Hotel in Makati City last Sunday.

In a press briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, Velasco took exceptions to the claim of opposition Sen. Gregorio Honasan during a privilege speech last Tuesday that he was the one who played an important role in the peaceful resolution of the incident.

“But that credit belongs first to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who welcomed, and, in fact, initiated, various moves for a peaceful resolution of the volatile situation before the deadline,” Velasco said.

Velasco said that one of the President’s initiatives at the height of mutiny was sending his close-in security, Capt. Cris Magdangal, who was a classmate of the mutineers at the Philippine Military Academy, to talk to them.

As a result of the initial negotiations, Velasco said Magdangal was able to convince about 40 rebel soldiers to immediately surrender and leave Oakwood while the President contacted some relatives of the mutineers.

Velasco also denied that he called Senator Honasan or initiated a meeting with him as the lawmaker claimed in his speech.

“I did not call Senator Gregorio Honasan nor initiate our meeting. He was the one who called me, notably after the surrender of over 50 rebel soldiers,” Velasco said.

Velasco, however, admitted that he, along with Presidential Chief of Staff Rigoberto Tiglao, Presidential Management Staff Head Silvestre Afable, Jr. and Chairman Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, went to Mandarin Hotel in Makati City to meet with Honasan.

During their meeting with Honasan, Velasco said the senator professed no involvement in the mutiny and offered to talk to the mutineers. Later, he and Secretary Defensor accompanied Honasan to talk to the rebel soldiers inside Oakwood.

Also present during the meeting with the mutineers were Senators Rodolfo Biazon and Vicente Sotto.

“We made it clear to the rebel soldiers as well as to the three senators then that we were not negotiators. We simply went with Senator Honasan to know and write down the demands of the rebels and relay them later to the President,” Velasco recounted.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 30, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20090612082140/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july30.htm>

The President's Day: July 31, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: General Corpus**
- **Statement of the President: Coup Plot**
- **Statement of the President: State of Rebellion**
- **Anti-terrorism act among priority bills of LEDAC**
- **Gov't emerged stronger after failed mutiny, says Golez**
- **GMA inspects Pampanga river desilting project**
- **Had power grab succeeded, 15-man junta would have been set up to rule country — Golez**
- **Give Makati rebellion probers chance to do work first — Malacañang**

Statement of the President: General Corpus

General Corpus is an officer and a gentleman. If all others in uniform had his noble values, this country would be safest in the world.

Statement of the President: Coup Plot

It is true that the plot is far from over, but it is being contained and will soon be completely under control. We are engaged in preemptive measures – administratively, operationally and politically. Junior officers are being engaged in close contact dialogue to obviate the spread of adverse psychological intrusions. Intelligence has its ears on the ground and monitoring suspicious movements. We have the assurances of political leaders, from Congress to the local governments, of unswerving loyalty to the Constitution. We will rapidly consolidate as the mutiny commission begins its work and the military and civilian judicial processes get on track. The Makati crisis was solved in a day, this whole thing won't last long. Our democratic institutions are strong and invincible.

Statement of the President: State of Rebellion

The state of rebellion will continue to be in force but this does not mean that we are in a state of siege. Our people and our international affairs are on the normal course of business, protected by an umbrella of sustained vigilance by the state. I am maintaining the State of Rebellion as a warning and caution that their enemies of the Constitution who are still unaccounted for. There are plotters, operators, financiers and backers, both in and out of government, who are still in the cold. We will expose them and bring them to justice. This is not a stage for Martial Law or its repressive implications. This is a plain pursuit of criminal justice. The mutineers will undergo Court Martial and be meted out proper punishment, without prejudice to other charges that will be filed against them before the courts. I pity them. Some of them are angry, misled young men. We will treat them compassionately, but they will have to face the full consequences of their acts.

Anti-terrorism act among priority bills of LEDAC

An Anti-Terrorism Act that now includes penalties for infidelity in the custody of prisoners is among the 20 priority measures formally approved for adoption by the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) during its 94th meeting Wednesday at the Malacañang State Dining Room.

The addition of penalties was among those sought by Council members in the aftermath of the mysterious escape of Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi and two others while in custody at Camp Crame some two weeks ago.

The Anti-Terrorism Act became more imperative in the light of five United Nations conventions against terrorism such as those for the suppression of terrorist bombings; for the suppression of the financing of terrorism; on the marking of plastic explosives for the purpose of detection; protocol for the suppression of unlawful acts against the

safety of fixed platforms located in the continental shelf; and protocol for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of maritime navigation.

The Anti-Terrorism Act is now on second reading undergoing interpellation in both houses of Congress.

Nine priority legislative measures which were highlighted in President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday and 11 other specific bills that are both doable and high-impact make up the common legislative agenda representing the government's resolve to address priority concerns.

These are:

1. Farmland as loan collateral
2. Compensation to human rights victims
3. Anti-Terrorism Act
4. Transco franchise
5. Reforms in campaign finance
6. Rationalization of automobile tax
7. Rationalization of documentary stamp tax
8. Indexation of sin taxes
9. National Revenue administration
10. Judiciary compensation rationalization
11. Dual Citizenship Act
12. Quarantine program for SARS
13. Optical Media Act
14. Securitization Act
15. Department of Housing and Urban Development
16. Tax incentives on Capital Equipment
17. Debt Cap of 2003
18. Operationalization of GRT on banks and financial institutions
19. Alternative dispute resolution
20. Land Administration Reform Act of 2003

Of these, only the rationalization of the automobile tax has been approved by both chambers of Congress.

The farmland as loan collateral, Transco franchise, rationalization of documentary stamp tax, Optical Media Act, Securitization Act, Department of Housing and Urban Development, tax incentive on capital equipment and alternative dispute resolution were already approved by the House but are still on second reading in the Senate undergoing interpellation.

Twenty-three other significant measures are to be considered by both houses of Congress for inclusion in the remaining 104 session days.

Gov't emerged stronger after failed mutiny, says Golez

National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez today said that the government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has emerged stronger after the July 27 Makati siege but at the same time acknowledged that the threat of another military mutiny is still possible.

In his opening statement the start of a congressional investigation of the incident, Golez said the government remains confident that it will come out stronger from its experience as the formal probe of the grievances aired by the rebellious military officers has started.

Golez admitted that the process of delving deeper into the serious allegations of corruption in the military “would be delicate and even painful.”

Although he said that the Makati siege showed the difficulty of the mutineers to launch a full-scale military revolt or a coup, there is still the possibility that similar mutinies will again be launched by rebellious elements that are still unaccounted for.

“This possibility is increased should the Magdalo rebels get away with their crimes without being duly punished,” Golez said.

The government, Golez said, acknowledged that we are still in a period of crisis. “This case is very much alive and the threat continues,” he said.

Golez said the government is still investigating how the conspiracy was hatched and who are the mutineers’ financial and political supporters.

He credited the firm and decisive moves taken by the President and the solid support given to her by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) for ending the mutiny without bloodshed and within a day.

“Decisive calculated and calibrated decision-making of the President throughout the crisis from intelligence build-up phase up to the actual concept of the crisis, the President showed firmness, arriving at the decision with calculated and calibrated measures,” Golez said.

According to Golez, as early as 9 a.m. on Sunday at the height of the crisis, the President already decided that there was a need for a deadline and at around 1 p.m., the President declared a state of rebellion and ordered the AFP and the PNP to quell the uprising.

“The deadline was considered imperative in order to resolve the crisis within the same day to avoid more serious destructions in national and economic affairs,” Golez said.

Golez said the AFP and the PNP did not waiver, showing their preparedness, to thwart any anticipated eventualities.

He also cited the role of political leaders, including those from the opposition, the civil society, the Church, the business community, the media, and the support of foreign governments as crucial in the speedy resolution of the conflict.

“None of the opposition personalities took the side of the rebels. Opposition leaders called for the peaceful resolution of the incident,” Golez said.

Golez said the mutineers failed to get the support of the masses and the key sectors as well as from high-ranking officers of the AFP.

“Many of our soldiers may identify with the young officers’ gripes and long standing internal problems in the military. However this had not been enough to persuade the rest of the AFP to side with them. In fact, the rest of the AFP condemned the action of the mutineers,” Golez said.

GMA inspects Pampanga river desilting project

MEXICO, Pampanga — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today inspected the San Fernando-Mexico River Desilting Project here aimed at mitigating the perennial flooding problem in eight towns and a city in Pampanga.

Upon arrival at the San Lorenzo Bridge in Barangay San Lorenzo here, the President was immediately briefed by Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Region 3 Director Josefino Rigor.

Rigor said the desilting of the Sapang Bungang Ginto creek here is part of the P90-million Pasac Delta Local Flood Control Project that would stop the flooding problem in the towns of Mexico, Sto. Tomas, Minalin, Macabebe, Masantol, Guagua, Sasmuan, Lubao and the City of San Fernando.

He said the dredging in river channels in the eight towns and city would help drain its waters down to the Manila Bay particularly during heavy rains.

After the briefing, the President inspected the ongoing dredging beside the San Lorenzo bridge.

She was warmly welcomed by the pupils, teachers and barangay officials here led by Barangay Captain Eugenio Bautista Jr. She was accompanied by Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Governor Lito Lapid, and Mayor Ernesto Punzalan.

Mayor Punzalan said they are thanking the President for the help as 20 of his town's 43 barangays are usually hit by flash floods during the months of August and September that last from four days to one week.

Barangay Captain Bautista said the two-kilometer river dredging here commenced 10 days ago and will be finished within two weeks.

Had power grab succeeded, 15-man junta would have been set up to rule country — Golez

The rebellious soldiers, who styled themselves as the “new Filipino heroes,” were planning to set up a 15-man junta to rule the country had they been successful in seizing power, according to National Security Adviser J. Roilo Golez.

In his opening statement this afternoon at the start of the congressional hearing of the Makati siege, Golez said under their action plan, entitled “The Last Revolution Toward A New Philippine Order,” the rebellious young Filipino soldiers would create a 15-man National Recovery Council to govern the country if they succeed in their power grab.

Although the document did not say how the members of the junta would be selected, it says that they will be Filipino men and women of wisdom, integrity, with selfless love of country, and would come from the different sectors of society, Golez said.

Golez said that as early as the second week of July, the intelligence community had already learned about the existence of a anti-government plot of a group of young officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

He said the government was already preparing for any eventuality that could result from reports of some questionable recruitment happening within the AFP.

Quoting from the action plan of the rebellious soldiers, Golez said that Phase 1 of their struggle involved the assumption of power “through all means necessary and must be absolute... the means would not be confined within the ambit of constitutional framework.”

“In other words, this is extra-constitutional. The use of force and violence is very clear from this excerpt,” Golez said

Golez said that intelligence work, relentless intelligence build-up had been largely responsible for gaining advance knowledge of the plot and recognizing the existence of the crisis situation.

“The first thing that the government did was to acknowledge that the crisis already existed and this is necessary in order to ensure that all actions and decisions by concerned government agencies are properly understood, coordinated and synchronized,” Golez said.

Give Makati rebellion probers chance to do work first — Malacañang

Malacañang said today the excellent credentials of the members of the fact-finding body tasked by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to investigate the roots of the Makati rebellion would be enough assurance that there would be no whitewash or cover-up on the case.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said during his regular press briefing that it would be to the best interest of everybody that a commission composed of members who are not working in the government should take care of this inquiry.

“Let us give them the chance to do their work first and let us judge their work after it is accomplished,” Bunye said.

The President has named retired Supreme Court Justice Florentino Feliciano as chairman of the fact-finding panel, with former Justice Minerva Gonzaga-Reyes, University of the Philippines professor Carolina Hernandez, Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, retired Commodore Rex C. Robles and Captain Rex Banjo Q. Bumanlag as members.

The President has issued Administrative Order No. 78, instructing the commission to evaluate all the facts and circumstances surrounding the rebellion, its roots and the provocations that inspired it, and to submit its finding and recommendations to her.

Bunye said the commission assured that it will come out with results as soon as possible.

Bunye also explained that there is nothing wrong about the House of Representatives and Senate initiating separate investigations on the one-day Makati mutiny initiated by the misled and misguided junior officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

“The House and Senate could work independently and pursue separate investigations,” Bunye said.

Bunye also explained that the President did not give definite timeframe on how long the state of rebellion will be in force.

“It is very difficult to put a timeframe because you cannot put a deadline to catch elements who are still out there,” Bunye added.

The President said earlier “it is true the plot is far from over, but it is being contained and will soon be completely under control.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: July 31, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20051228062951/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/july31.htm>

The President's Day: August 1, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Indictment of Coup Participants**
- **Statement of the President: Congressional Investigations**
- **Statement of the President: Military Adventurism**
- **Statement of the President: State of Rebellion**
- **GMA seeks Congress support in ending coup tries**
- **GMA pushes national unity, remains positive on final GRP-MILF peace pact**
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- **Corpus to monitor measures in solving insurgency problem, says GMA**
- **GMA leads ground-breaking rites for CAMANAVA flood-control**
- **GMA to expand fact-finding group on Al-Ghozi escape to tackle PNP reforms**
- **GMA receives Pacquiao in Malacañang**
- **GMA asks media not to make heroes out of failed mutineers, rebels**

Statement of the President: Indictment of Coup Participants

The issue here is plain criminal justice, not political persecution or harassment. All government actions are based on evidence, not speculation or rumor. There will be no indictments made on mere suspicion. This will not be a political circus. It will be a trial on the merits befitting the high standards of our democratic system.

Statement of the President: Congressional Investigations

There has been an overt attempt to overthrow the government by force of arms. I ask the members of the legislature not to legitimize a criminal act that unfolded before our very eyes, or to try to impede government efforts to get to the root of the plot. Once and for all, let us show to our people and the world that we condemn all means to gain political power outside the ballot. This is our solemn duty.

Statement of the President: Military Adventurism

This must be the last time military adventurism is allowed to rear its head in our country. The formidable challenges we are facing do not allow room for these attacks, however weak they may be, upon the heart of our political system. Poverty, terrorism, drugs, ignorance, disease – these are the enemies we must vanquish without having to contend with traitors within the democratic polity itself.

Statement of the President: State of Rebellion

The state of rebellion will continue until we wrap up the residual threats. This must not be a cause for undue alarm, but we do not want our people to develop a false sense of complacency. We will keep the state of rebellion as a mantle of protection for our people as they go on with their day-to-day activities. Normalization has set in and must not be disturbed, but the need for vigilance is there and our eyes and ears should be open round the clock.

GMA seeks Congress support in ending coup tries

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on lawmakers “not to legitimize a criminal act that unfolded before our very eyes,” referring to a failed coup staged by rogue soldiers in Makati last week.

The President also asked members of the Senate and House of Representatives not to “try to impede government efforts to get to the root of the plot.”

In a statement during the groundbreaking rite for the CAMANAVA (Caloocan-Malabon-Navotas-Valenzuela) area flood control and drainage system improvement project, the President reminded lawmakers of the “overt attempt to overthrow the government by force of arms.”

“Once and for all, let us show our people and the world that we condemn all means to gain political power outside the ballot. This is our solemn duty,” she said.

She stressed that the indictment of coup participants involved “plain criminal justice, not political persecution or harassment.”

The President said all government actions were based on evidence and “not speculation or rumor,” noting that “there will be no indictments made on mere suspicion.”

The indictment process “will not be a political circus (and) it will be a trial on the merits befitting the high standards of our democratic system.”

She also called on everyone to put a stop to military adventurism. “This must be the last time military adventurism is allowed to rear its head in our country.”

She said the “formidable challenges we are facing do not allow for these attacks, however weak they may be, upon the heart of our political system.”

She enumerated the social menaces that should be given outright and proper focus.

The “enemies we must vanquish without having to contend with traitors within the democratic polity itself” included poverty, terrorism, drugs, ignorance and disease, she added.

She likewise lauded national and local government officials and the Japanese government, through Ambassador Kojiro Takano, for fast-tracking the implementation of the CAMANAVA project, that would provide a lasting solution to severe flooding and would consequently improve the living conditions of some one million residents in the area.

GMA pushes national unity, remains positive on final GRP-MILF peace pact

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo expressed last night willingness to take the “risks necessary for peace so that our nation can once again be united,” particularly in Mindanao.

She showed elation over the start of the peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as it signals that “peace is within our grasp.”

The President confirmed that the talks would start in a week and “we hope to finish these in a few months.”

In her speech and in an open forum during the Manila Overseas Press Club President’s Night, the Chief Executive said the Philippines would be “honored to have (Malaysian) Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad witness the signing of the (GRP-MILF peace) accord.”

She thanked Malaysia for having stood up as a partner of the Philippines in the peace process, particularly in offering to continue hosting the GRP-MILF peace negotiations in Kuala Lumpur.

The President emphasized that “any matter about how the ceremonies for the signing of the final peace agreement would have to be discussed in tripartite consultations in the spirit of friendship and goodwill.”

“We will also be honored to have (US) President (George W.) Bush witness it – at least on live video,” she said.

She thanked the US for supporting peace and socio-economic development efforts in Mindanao, particularly in the rehabilitation of conflict-affected areas.

But the President stressed that while peace is within grasp, “it will not be achieved at any cost.”

“Terrorism must be wiped out, arms must be laid down, swords must be made into plowshares,” she said.

GMA vows to expose plotters, financiers and bring them to justice

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said last night the continued enforcement of the state of rebellion is not a stage for martial law or its impressive implications but merely a plain pursuit of criminal justice.

Speaking at the President’s Night of the Manila Overseas Press Club, the President said the state of rebellion will continue to be in force but “this does not mean that we are in a state of siege.”

“I am maintaining the state of rebellion as a warning and caution to the enemies of the constitution who are still unaccounted for,” she said.

“There are plotters, operators, financiers and backers both in and out of government who are still in the cold. We will expose them and bring them to justice.”

She assured the citizenry that our international affairs are on the normal course of business, “protected by an umbrella of sustained vigilance by the state.”

She then enumerated several issues that need to be separately addressed.

While she said that she felt compassion for the misguided soldiers and their grievances, she stressed that she will not stand for any mutiny of any kind by soldiers for any reason.

“Democracy in the Philippines will not be held hostage by lawlessness in any form,” she emphasized.

Legitimate grievances of the soldiers who staged that Sunday coup if proven true, according to the President, are unconscionable.

“They are being investigated. A report will be made and actions taken,” she said.

In this connection, she said she had ordered the release of an initial P100 million for the ground needs of the Armed Forces of the Philippines like boots and field equipment. These will be purchased, according to her, following the civilian rules of bidding.

She expressed the hope that no unscrupulous politicians are involved in the failed mutiny, saying such actions are selfish and the antithesis of patriotism.

“In the near term, markets will be jittery because of these political incidents. But I believe and many other credible institutions believe that the long-term effects of my economic reforms will be more lasting than the near-term effects of the rebellion,” she said.

Corpus to monitor measures in solving insurgency problem, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that Brig. Gen. Victor Corpus, former chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP), would be harnessed to monitor the approaches undertaken by the government in solving the root causes of the communist insurgency in the country.

At the open forum during the President's Night of the Manila Overseas Press Club (MOPC) held Thursday evening at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati City, the President said she would like Corpus to monitor the government's holistic approach in solving the insurgency problem.

She explained that in this approach, the military action or law enforcement is considered as the right hand while the measures in addressing the root causes of the insurgency like poverty, injustice and their exclusion from the mainstream of society are part of the left-hand approach.

The President said that although the "war room" in Malacañang is tracking both the right and the left approaches, what is happening is that the group is tracking the right side more often.

"And I want to have somebody who can track the left side much more," the President said, adding that since Corpus was the one who put together the entire framework, he might as well be asked to monitor it.

In the same forum, the President said that Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), is still the most qualified person to find escaped terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi.

"I think he is still the best man who can find Fathur Al-Ghozi, that's why he is still there," the President said.

The President said that Ebdane "is a very very good intelligence investigative person and has a very wide network of intelligence assets."

"And that's they who are going to bring him Fathur Al-Ghozi," the President said.

GMA leads ground-breaking rites for CAMANAVA flood-control

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the ground-breaking ceremony of a vital infrastructure project that would resolve the perennial flooding in three cities and a town in northern Metro Manila and improve the economic conditions of the millions of residents there.

"Sa wakas, sinisimulan na itong ating flood control ng CAMANAVA, kaya congratulations sa lahat ng nagtrabaho para dito (The construction of the CAMANAVA flood control project has finally started. Congratulations to all those who worked for this)," the President said. CAMANAVA refers to Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela, low-lying cities and town adjacent to Manila Bay that are flooded during the rainy season and during high tide.

The President was welcomed at Barangay Dampalit in Malabon for the ground rites by Japanese Ambassador Kojiro Takano, Chief Representative Mitsuru Taruki of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), Metro Manila Development Authority Chairman Bayani Fernando who is also Cabinet Officer for Regional Development for the National Capital Region, and local officials from Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela.

The President led the breaking of the *sake* barrel, the lowering of the time capsule and the shoveling of soil into the cornerstone, signaling the start of construction of the P5-billion flood control project funded under a loan agreement between the government and JBIC.

In her brief remarks, the President lauded the local officials who worked hard for the implementation of flood-control project that would finally address the perennial floods caused by the overflowing of the Malabon-Tullahan river.

The flood-control project, covering 18.48 square kilometers of flood-prone areas in CAMANAVA, will be implemented by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and MMDA.

Under the project, the DPWH and MMDA will construct dikes, pumping stations, flood control gates, navigation lock, improvement of existing drainage channels and drainage system to prevent the overflowing of Malabon-Tullahan river.

The objective of the flood control project is to improve the living conditions and promote economic activities within the CAMANAVA area.

Project Managers Louie Mamitag, Jr. and Carla Bartolo of the DPWH-CAMANAVA flood control project management office said families in the affected areas will be relocated to three resettlement sites in Bulacan where they will be provided complete basic services and livelihood assistance.

The project is expected to be completed by June 2007.

Also present in the ground-breaking ceremony were Secretary Marita Jimenez, Cabinet Officer for Regional Development and Official Development Absorption (CORD-ODA); Rep. Federico Sandoval of Malabon and Navotas; and Mayors Amado S. Vicencio of Malabon City, Tobias Tiangco of Navotas and Reynaldo Malonzo of Caloocan City.

GMA to expand fact-finding group on Al-Ghozi escape to tackle PNP reforms

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would likely give to the commission looking into the Al-Ghozi escape the responsibility of going through reforms in the Philippine National Police (PNP).

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye today said the President was also keen on expanding the membership of the commission by adding two other members from the police itself.

In his regular media briefing, Bunye said the President would be announcing the names of the police members soon.

The fact-finding commission looking into the escape of the Indonesian terrorist and two Abu Sayyaf members is composed of former Justice Secretary Sedfrey Ordoñez, Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong and Miguel Varela, chairman of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Bunye also disclosed that the President was still “scouting for some possible members” to compose the commission that would look into the Davao bombing incidents.

It would be recalled that last week, the President pushed the creation of three independent commissions to investigate the Davao bombings, the reorganization of the PNP and the Makati mutiny.

She said this was imperative to bring back investor confidence in the country.

GMA receives Pacquiao in Malacañang

It was a knockout of an encounter.

But instead of a roped arena, it was the Music Room of Malacañang that served as the venue for the champions who ironically did not hide their admiration for each other.

After all, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the country’s lone reigning world boxing champion Manny Pacquiao were not there to mix it up. They are already winners in their own right.

Fact is, they came to the meeting fresh from victories in their respective outings last Sunday that they ended up congratulating each other: Pacquiao from a devastating third round technical knockout win over erstwhile undefeated Mexican challenger Emmanuel Lucero and the President from a misguided mutiny of young military officers which she crushed in less than 22 hours.

“Congratulations, Manny,” the President told the International Boxing Federation junior featherweight champion as soon as she entered the room. “You represent the Filipinos abroad who can compete anywhere and win.”

Pacquiao for his part, thanked the President for mentioning him and his feat in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday wherein she said “the Filipino will work anywhere because he is not afraid, like Manny Pacquiao. Given the chance to compete, he will take it and win.”

“*Maraming salamat po, mahal na Pangulo, dahil sa pagkakabanggit niyo sa akin sa SONA* (Thank you very much, my dear President, for mentioning me in your SONA),” Pacquiao told the Chief Executive. “*Inihandog ko po ang laban na iyon sa inyo at sa lahat ng Pilipino* (I dedicated that fight to you and to all Filipinos).”

Pacquiao, who came to the Palace with his wife Jinky, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and his handlers, narrated that he did not know that a mutiny was going on in the country until after the fight held at the Grand Olympic Auditorium in downtown Los Angeles.

“*Nabalitaan ko na lang po pagkatapos ng laban. Natutuwa po ako at nagawan naman po kaagad ninyo ng paraan.* (I just knew about it after the fight. I’m glad that you were able to solve it),” the boxing champ told the President.

In the midst of the rebellion staged by some 300 young officers and men, Filipinos took a two-hour break Sunday and enjoyed the action as the Filipino champ demolished his opponent menacingly called “The Butcher” with a devastating left cross at 48 seconds of the third round.

Even before the title fight, President Macapagal-Arroyo indicated her desire to have the young champion in Malacañang upon his return.

Pacquiao in return thanked the President for her support and said in post-fight interviews that he wanted to pay a courtesy call on the President upon his return to the country.

At the end of the courtesy call, Pacquiao exhorted all Filipinos to unite and rally behind the President in her efforts to build a Strong Republic.

“*Sana magkaisa na tayo. Ginagawa ng mahal na Pangulo ang lahat para sa ikabubuti ng bansa natin. Magtulungan tayo. Walang mangyayari kung lahat tayo mag-aaway away. Bansa natin ito mahal natin*(Let us be united. The President is doing all she can for the good of the country. Let us help each other, Nothing will happen if we fight each other. This is our country. Let us not forsake it),” he said.

GMA asks media not to make heroes out of failed mutineers, rebels

Instead of romanticizing and making heroes out of the young military officers who staged a failed mutiny in Makati last Sunday, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo advised media last night to look at things from the holistic approach.

Reacting to a question during the President’s Night of the Manila Overseas Press Club forum last night, the Chief Executive exhorted media representatives to support her in bringing the perpetrators of the rebellion to justice, “no matter how good looking they are,” to stop the culture of military adventurism in the country.

“If you support me and make sure that we bring these criminals to justice no matter how good looking they are, then this will be the last coup,” she said in answer to a question on when the Philippines will be coup-free.

The holistic approach, which she said she's using in solving the country's insurgency problem, dispenses firm justice on the right side and addressing the root causes, the legitimate grievances on the left side.

"Glamorizing them just encourages them to do it some more," she reminded media men during the open forum that followed her speech.

She said she was aware of the soldiers' grievances from Day One and that she's been working on that.

"It's just that they have been instigated apparently by unscrupulous elements. And that's part of the right side too. If you are going to make this a matter of personalities, well, why not also find out, and which, this is what we are trying to do, find them," she said.

The President said this is the reason why she still has to lift the state of rebellion, which she declared in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt.

"It could be the circumstances that will determine the time to lift it," she stressed. "It is when we have already been able to put behind bars... the backers, the plotters, the financiers of the failed coup."

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: August 1, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161335/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/aug01.htm>

The President's Day: August 2, 2003

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- **Statement of Secretary Roilo Golez**
- **President's radio address to the nation**
- **GMA names Makati rebels' PMA classmate as 7th member of fact-finding commission**
- **GMA says nation now back to normal but asks people to continue to safeguard democracy**
- **Fact-finding body member favors end to congressional probe on Makati siege**

Statement of Secretary Roilo Golez

Ambassador Roy Cimatu has submitted a report to the President on the Oakwood incident indicating the following:

1. The Magdalo group would be moved back to barracks, i.e., they would be moved back from Makati to Fort Bonifacio barracks for processing.
2. From Fort Bonifacio, they would be returned to their respective service units under the custody of the major service commanders, i.e., Commanding General of the Philippine Army, Commanding General of the Philippine Air Force and Flag Officer in Command of the Philippine Navy.
3. All are covered by the Articles of War.
4. Core group will face all consequences.
5. The demands of Magdalo will be endorsed to the President and followed up.

President's radio address to the nation

Magandang araw sa inyong lahat.

Noong nakaraang linggo, ginambala tayo ng isang pag-aalsa ng ilang mga sundalo.

Mabuti na lamang at napigil natin kaagad sa mapayapang paraan ang pag-aalsang ito at hindi na naka-apekto sa mga positibong kaganapan sa ating ekonomiya at seguridad.

The state of rebellion will continue until we wrap up the residual threats. This must not be a cause for undue alarm, but we do not want our people to develop a false sense of complacency. We will keep the state of rebellion as a mantle of protection for our people as they go on with their day-to-day activities. Normalization has set in and must not be disturbed, but the need for vigilance continues.

Totoo na ang problemang ito ay hindi pa tapos, pero kontrolado natin ito at resolbahin sa lalong madaling panahon. Ginagawa natin ang lahat – *administratively, operationally and politically* – para hindi matuloy ang anumang hindi magandang balakin kaugnay ng problemang ito.

Intelligence has its ears on the ground and monitoring developments closely. We have the assurances of political leaders, from Congress to the local governments, of the unswerving will to protect and preserve the Constitution. We will rapidly consolidate our gains as the independent fact-finding commission begins its work and the military and civilian judicial processes get on track.

Ang krisis sa Makati ay naresolba sa loob lamang ng isang araw. Ito ay dahil nanatiling matatag ang ating mga demokratikong institution.

Ang moral ng mamamayan ay mataas. Malakas ang kanilang tiwala sa demokrasya. Pinagmamalaki nila ang pagiging Pilipino.

Sa kabila ng pangyayaring ito, ang ating political stability at seguridad ay nananatiling matatag. Naibalik natin kaagad ang normal na takbo ng pamahalaan at negosyo. *Our economic fundamentals, undented, remain sound and stable for the long pull.* Tuloy ngayong linggong ito ang miting ng ASEAN finance chiefs dito sa atin. Ang sabi naman ng pinagpipitagang Asian Development Bank, *the impact of the failed coup will be minimal.*

The Armed Forces is fully united and staying the course of reform and modernization. I admire our soldiers all over the land for their loyalty, professionalism and patriotism. I empathize with their difficulties especially in the field and I have been doing all I can to make life better for their families. Our people are grateful for your sacrifices.

Nananatiling matatag ang aking tiwala sa ating sandatahang lakas, at lubos ang aking paniniwala na kaya nilang resolbahin ang anumang hindi pagkakaunawaan sa kanilang samahan.

Ang mga nag-alsa ay sasailalim sa *court martial* at tatanggap ng karampantang kaparusahan. Ako ay nahahabag sa kanila – sila ay mga batang sundalo na nalinlang ng maling paniniwala, ngunit kailangan nilang harapin ang bunga ng kanilang ginawa.

We'll punish the plotters, but we shall also look deeply into their grievances and charges, and punish those in the higher echelons who are shown to be responsible and accountable. There will be no whitewash or cover-up. I also welcome the respective inquiries of the Senate and the House of Representatives on this incident.

Hindi natin matatapos ang problema kung hindi natin maresolba ang tunay na mga dahilan nito. Kailangang kumprehensibo ang ating approach dito.

Ang sinuman ay may karapatang maglahad ng kanilang paniniwala at saloobin, bastat ang pamamaraan ay naa-ayon sa ating Saligang Batas.

Tapos na ang coup kaya, muli nating harapin ang ating mga prayoridad — ang ating laban kontra kahirapan, korupsiyon, terorismo at ilegal na droga – at sa pagsasakatuparan ng ating mga inisyatibo sa larangan ng paglikha ng mga trabaho, pagkain, tahanan, edukasyon, at seguridad.

Hindi aksidente lamang ang ating mga napagtagumpayan sa iba't-ibang larangan. Ito ay dahil sa sipag at tiyaga ng mamamayan at ng ating pamahalaan. At hindi tayo titigil – kahit sa harap ng mga pagbabanta sa ating pambansang katatagan.

Ang korupsiyon na nilikha ng ilegal na droga ay malalim, apektado maging ang ating justice system at law enforcement. At ang tunay na nagdurusa ay ang ating taong bayan, kaya nga hindi tayo titigil hanggat hindi nabubura ang perhuwesiyong ito sa ating paligid. At sa takbo ng ating pangyayari, mapagtatagumpayan natin ito.

Katunayan sa loob lamang ng limang linggo ay nakakumpiska tayo ng may mahigit walong bilyong pisong halaga ng ilegal na droga. Noong lamang Lunes ay may nakumpiska tayong 358 kilos ng ilegal na gamot sa isang shabu laboratory sa Parañaque. Bago ito ay may nadiskubre tayong dalawang shabu laboratories sa mga bayan ng Silang at Tanza sa Cavite. Tatlong suspected drug lords ang mga nahuli dito.

Ang pag-aalsa noong linggo ay nakagambala sa atin, pero panandalian lamang. At tulad ng mga nakaraang mga pagsubok sa ating pambansang katatagan nakaukit sa ating kasaysayan, muli tayong mangingibabaw at patuloy na haharapin ang ano mang hamon na darating pa sa atin.

We must put a final stop to military adventurism, or our nation will be forever mired in the quicksand of instability and stagnation. We must close ranks behind the Constitution and the law. I need you in the valiant fight for justice and democracy.

Maraming salamat.

GMA names Makati rebels' PMA classmate as 7th member of fact-finding commission

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today named a classmate of the Makati renegades as the seventh member of the fact-finding commission tasked to look into the roots of the Sunday rebellion and the provocations that inspired it.

In a ceremony this morning at the Study Room, the President swore in Capt. Roland Narciso, a member of the Philippine Military Academy "Marilag" Class of 1995, as the seventh member of the commission chaired by retired Supreme Court Justice Florentino Feliciano.

Among the members of the Marilag Class who participated in the Sunday rebellion were Navy Lt. Senior Grade (equivalent of captain in the other armed services) Antonio Trillanes IV who was reputed to be the leader of the Makati renegades; Navy Lt. Senior Grade James Layug; and Army Captains Gerardo Gambala, Laurence Louis Somera, Milo Maestrecampo and Albert Baloloy.

Captain Narciso, 30, quit the Philippine Air Force three years ago to join Philippine Airlines as a commercial pilot. He is married to Maria Carilla who witnessed the oath taking. Carrots, as the wife is fondly called, is four months pregnant with their second child. Their first child, a girl, is now 4 years old.

President Arroyo thanked Captain Narciso for readily accepting his designation as a member of the fact-finding commission.

After the oath-taking rites, which was also witnessed by First Gentleman Atty. Jose Migue Arroyo and Press Secretary Milton Alingod, the President invited Narciso and his wife to join her for the First Saturday Mass at the Malacañang Chapel and then breakfast.

Narciso was in San Francisco, California after a flight from Manila when he learned of the Makati rebellion from his wife who telephoned him to inform him of developments at home.

Narciso flies the Manila-San Francisco-Los Angeles routes of PAL.

The President earlier named the other six members of the fact-finding panel which includes retired Justices Feliciano and Minerva Gonzaga-Reyes, University of the Philippines professor Carolina Hernandez, Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S. J., retired Commodore Rex C. Robles and Captain Rex Banjo Q. Bumanlag as members.

GMA says nation now back to normal but asks people to continue to safeguard democracy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today asked the people to close ranks behind the Constitution and the country's laws to prevent a repetition of the July 27 siege in Makati City even as she assured that the nation is now back to normal.

"I need you in the valiant fight for justice and democracy," the President said in her weekly radio message this morning.

The President said that we must put a "final stop" to military adventurism, "or our nation will forever be mired in the quicksand of instability and stagnation."

She said that the plotters of the failed mutiny will have to face court-martial and be meted the necessary punishment that they deserve.

According to the President, she pitied the young officers who were driven by wrong perceptions but they have to face the consequences of their wrongdoings.

The President said that her administration will punish not only the plotters but those in the higher echelons of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) who are found to be accountable for the grievances aired by the young mutineers.

“There will be no whitewash or cover-up,” the President said, adding that she welcomed the inquiries being undertaken by both houses of Congress on the incident.

She said that the problem would not be solved unless their roots are uprooted and this would need a comprehensive approach.

Now that the coup is over, the President said, it is time to confront the priorities that her administration has set to accomplish, like the fight against poverty, against corruption, against terrorism and illegal drugs, and the realization of her objectives of providing jobs, food, shelter, education and security, to the Filipino people.

The President also said that despite short-lived military adventurism, the political and economic situation, has remained stable.

“Our economic fundamentals, undented, remain sound and stable for the long pull,” the President said, adding that the scheduled meeting next week in Manila of the finance ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will push through.

The President quoted the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as saying that “the impact of the failed coup will be minimal.”

Fact-finding body member favors end to congressional probe on Makati siege

A member of the presidential fact-finding commission tasked to look into the circumstances behind the July 27 mutiny, including the grievances aired by the young military officers, today said that she is in favor of the suggestion by some sectors that the congressional inquiries on the incident be stopped.

In a radio interview, Professor Carolina Hernandez of the University of the Philippines said that the Congress should instead support the investigation to be conducted by the commission headed by former Supreme Court Justice Florentino Feliciano.

Hernandez, who was also a member of the Davide Commission that looked into the series of failed coups during the administration of President Corazon Aquino, said it is also unfair for some people to say that the Feliciano commission might be influenced by the investigations in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Those who are saying this, Hernandez said, should first look at the integrity and the qualifications of the members of the fact-finding commission before making any statements.

“*May integridad naman kami. Hindi kami maiimpluwensiyahan ng iba* (We have integrity. We cannot be influenced by others),” Hernandez said.

Hernandez, who was interviewed while on a trip to Australia, said that in all her professional life, she has always been guided by principles, adding that she would not hesitate to do what is right no matter who gets hurt.

She also said that from her experience in the Davide Commission, they have found that there are legitimate grievances in the military service, including graft and corruption.

These cannot be denied but the manner in which these grievances should be addressed must be within constitutional and legal means, Hernandez said.

Also this morning, the President swore in Captain Roland Narciso, now a Philippine Airlines pilot, as the seventh member of the Feliciano Commission.

Narciso, a member of the Philippine Military Academy “Marilag Class” of 1995, is a classmate of renegade Navy Lt. Senior Grade Antonio Trillanes IV, reportedly the leader of the Makati mutineers.

The other members of the Feliciano Commission are retired Justice Minerva Gonzaga-Reyes, Fr. Joaquin Bernas, retired Commodore Rex C. Robles and Captain Rex Banjo Bumanlag.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: August 2, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161348/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/aug02.htm>

The President's Day: August 3, 2003

03 AUGUST 2003

- **Bunye says suspension of Senate inquiry on Oakwood rebellion good for all**

Bunye says suspension of Senate inquiry on Oakwood rebellion good for all

Malacañang today said the request of six senators to suspend the Senate inquiry on the Oakwood mutiny would definitely help an independent fact-finding commission get into the root of the incident.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the suspension of the inquiry would also give authorities enough time to do their job of going after those behind the mutiny.

In a radio interview, Bunye said the Palace concurred with last Friday's call of Senators Francis Pangilinan, Noli de Castro, Manuel Villar, Jr., Joker Arroyo, Ralph Rector and Robert Barbers.

The six sought a suspension of the inquiry "until the plotters are tracked down and arrested and corresponding charges are filed against them."

The senators said an inquiry "may impede government efforts to address the rebellion" and asked the Senate leadership to "give our law enforcement authorities a free hand in conducting their own investigation."

Bunye said it was clear in the senators' resolution that the inquiry could be conducted "at a later time."

"*Makabubuti 'yan, makakatulong para sa lahat* (It would be good and would be of great help for everyone)," he said.

Earlier, fact-finding commission member Dr. Carolina Hernandez said the group would not let itself be influenced by any legislative inquiry on the Oakwood mutiny.

Hernandez also asked members of Congress to refrain from making any "political statements" as "it is not going to be constructive."

She lauded the six senators for seeking the suspension of the Senate inquiry because they support the work of the fact-finding commission.

She also upheld the integrity of the commission and the people composing it.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: August 3, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161359/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/aug03.htm>

The President's Day: August 4, 2003

04 AUGUST 2003

- **Statement of the President: Coup Investigation**
- **Statement of the President: State of Rebellion**
- **Statement of the President: Coup Leaders**
- **Statement of the President: MILF**
- **Statement of the President: Appeal for Sobriety**
- **Statement of the President: Anti-Terrorism**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA says she may lift State of Rebellion sooner than expected**
- **GMA dares Makati mutiny prime suspects to stop hiding, face the law**
- **Chiefs of police call on people to unite behind GMA, Charter**
- **GMA hails Calbayog City, other LGU officials for pushing best practices**
- **Canada's SNC-Lavalin to invest \$1-B in LRT project**

Statement of the President: Coup Investigation

Impartial justice, due process and good governance are taking their course. There is no reason for anybody to cry out persecution or witch hunting.

Those who have nothing to hide should not play hide and seek with the authorities.

The investigation is now in an advanced stage and will soon account for all those involved. The evidence is mounting and is substantial and solid.

The normalization process will speed up as the wheels of criminals justice turn.

There will be no holy cows in this investigation. The axe will fall heaviest upon those who use the pedestal of legitimate political power to destroy the very democratic system that installed them in office.

Statement of the President: State of Rebellion

I expect that we can lift the State of Rebellion earlier than expected as we mop up the fringes of the conspiracy.

Statement of the President: Coup Leaders

The prime suspects are being kept in safe quarters with full access to lawyers and legislative inquiries in their place of detention.

Statement of the President: MILF

A de facto ceasefire is in place on the ground and the peace panels on both sides are now setting up the mechanism to seal it. This is being done and we expect formal talks to be launched as scheduled.

Statement of the President: Appeal for Sobriety

Once and for all, let us stop the wanton exploitation of the open space offered by our democracy to destroy it. Let us uphold the ascendancy of the Republic and the people over dictatorship.

Statement of the President: Anti-Terrorism

Our standing alerts against terrorism have not been affected and are reinforced by uninterrupted coordination with our allies. Terrorists may tend to exploit this moment of public distraction to attack. I call on our people to be vigilant at all times.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

I challenge Senator Honasan to denounce in unequivocal and in the strongest terms the use of arms, deployment of explosives, use of threats and intimidation, including the forced evacuation of hotel guests, as a means of presenting grievances.

GMA says she may lift State of Rebellion sooner than expected

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she may lift the State of Rebellion earlier than expected as the ongoing investigation on the Makati mutiny last week progresses on its advance stage.

“I expect that we can lift the State of Rebellion earlier than expected... as soon as we mop up the fringes of the conspiracy,” she said during the 42nd General Assembly and 2nd Best Practices awarding rites of the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP) at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Pasay City.

The President’s announcement drew applause from the more than 100 city mayors present at the Harana function room of the hotel. The League of Cities is composed of 115 mayors from cities all over the country and promotes effectiveness and innovation in local governance.

She said the investigation of the Sunday (July 27) rebellion is now on an advanced stage and all those involved would soon be accounted for.

“The evidence is mounting, and is substantial and solid,” she said.

The League of Cities, through Calapan City (Oriental Mindoro) Mayor Arnan Panaligan and San Fernando City (La Union) Mayor Mary Jane Ortega, presented to the President a plaque of appreciation for the quick resolution of the rebellion staged by several junior officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines last week.

“I’d like to take this opportunity to recognize your support and appreciation, and to let you and your constituents know that impartial justice, due process and good governance, as you have shown, are taking their course,” she said.

She said the normalization process would speed up as the wheels of the criminal justice turn.

“We will not relent in the pursuit of vital reforms in the Armed Forces even as we now turn our sights on the essential task of nation building,” she said.

The President said the essential tasks of nation building would be easier “because we have local governments and cities that do these best practices.”

The President also awarded a plaque to the top 10 cities with the Best Practices.

Assisting her were Tagaytay City Mayor Francis Tolentino, LCP president; Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña, and Iligan City Mayor Franklin Quijano.

GMA dares Makati mutiny prime suspects to stop hiding, face the law

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today challenged persons suspected for involvement in the failed Oakwood mutiny to come out in the open and face the proper forum.

“Those who have nothing to hide should not play hide and seek with the authorities,” the President said.

She stressed there was no reason for any one to cry out persecution or witch hunting.

The investigation on the failed mutiny — staged by junior officers of the Armed Forces in Makati City last week — is in its advanced stage and any judicial action will be based on substantial and solid evidences.

“The evidence is mounting, and is substantial and solid,” the President said in a speech before the 42nd General Assembly of the League of Cities of the Philippines at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Pasay City.

She said those who have no involvement in the failed mutiny staged by the junior officers of the Armed Forces should come out in the open and face the authorities.

She announced that the mutiny’s prime suspects are being safely detained with full access to lawyers and legislative inquiries.

“The normalization process will speed up as the wheels of the criminal justice turn,” she said.

She added that her administration would pursue vital reforms in the Armed Forces “even as we now turn our sights on the essential tasks of nation building.”

The President has created an independent seven-man fact-finding committee to conduct an impartial investigation on the Makati incident.

She has named retired Supreme Court Justice Florentino Feliciano as chairman of the fact-finding panel with former Justice Minerva Gonzaga-Reyes, University of the Philippines (UP) professor Carolina Hernandez, Fr. Joaquin Bernas, retired Commodore Rex Robles, Captain Rex Banjo Bumanlag and retired Capt. Roland Narciso as members.

Chiefs of police call on people to unite behind GMA, Charter

The Association of Chiefs of Police of the Philippines, Inc. (ACPPI) has called on the Filipino people to unite behind the Constitution and the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The call, made by ACPPI Chairman Guillermo Domondon, came on the heels of the failed mutiny staged by junior officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, mostly from PMA Class 1995.

“The end, even when hatched in heaven, cannot justify any method brokered in hell,” Damondon said in a press statement, referring to the grievances aired by the rebellious officers.

Domondon said that he was “relieved” to learn that no PNP officer had joined the mutiny.

He said that the military organization, especially during this “distressing” time of our history, should go all out for stability, continuity and regularity under its chain of command.

The ACPPI head also said that grievances that are not being adequately met do not mean the end of the world and should not be used as an excuse to break the chain of command.

The members of the association are all the nation's chiefs of police from the regional and station level. It has 18 fully organized chapters from Region 1 to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The ACPPI was founded in 1999 by now Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza and now PNP chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr.

Aside from Domondon, the members of the Board of Trustees of the ACPPI are Ricardo de Leon, Arturo Lomibao, Prospero Noble, Pol Bataoil, Van Luspo, Nicanor Bartolome, Ma Or Aplasca, Noe Wong, Arturo Invento, Virgilio Fabros, Lusito Palmera, Oscar Valenzuela, Nong Leuterio, Dionaid Baraguer, and Erick Javier.

GMA hails Calbayog City, other LGU officials for pushing best practices

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today awarded to Calbayog City the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP) Top Best Practices Award for effectively delineating its coastal and marine resource area for commercial and marginal fishermen.

The President handed the plaque of recognition to Mayor Mel Senen Sarmiento for the city's Coastal Zoning: Delineating Coastal Waters for Commercial and Marginal Fishermen during the last day of the 42nd General Assembly of the LCP at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Pasay City.

"Let me say that the essential tasks of nation building are made easier because we have local governments and cities that do these best practices," she said.

Calbayog City's program effectively divided its coastal fishing area into several clustered zones the fishing activities of the commercial and marginal fishermen in each cluster area are guarded and monitored.

The city also pledged to shoulder half the cost of the handheld radios for the different clusters, with the other half financed by barangay funds.

Second place was Urdaneta City's Tulungan sa Purok, Tangub City's Christmas Village (3rd place), Marikina City's Citizens First Privilege Card (4th), and Tuguegarao City's Agricultural and Fisheries Modernization Program.

Rounding up the sixth to tenth Best Practices awardees were the OSCA Geriacare Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Center (Butuan City), Barangay Integrated Services Delivery Program (Sorsogon City), Bangus Festival (Dagupan City), Coastal and Water Zone Planning (Island Garden City of Samal), and the 5-Minute Response Services of Balanga City.

The Top Ten Best Practices each received a plaque of recognition and a police motorcycle immediately available outside the hotel.

The mayors of the top five Best Practices were also entitled to a free trip to Kuala Lumpur for an exchange study on Malaysia's System of Higher Education on August 27-30 this year.

Five members of the Ateneo School of Government and the LCP Best Practices field validating teams judged the entries based on efficiency, transparency, effectiveness of the program, safety and security, transferability and sustainability, ability to significantly reduce poverty, and innovativeness.

A total of 85 best city programs from 38 cities nationwide participated in this year's Best Practices tilt.

The 115 city mayors intended to continue the already institutionalized program award to recognize exemplary and innovative local government initiatives that complement the national government's initiatives to uplift the general welfare of their constituencies.

Canada's SNC-Lavalin to invest \$1-B in LRT project

Canadian-based SNC-Lavalin will invest more than \$1 billion in the Philippines to help the government finance the expansion of the Light Railway Transit (LRT) system in Metro Manila.

This was revealed today by Filipino-born Canadian Secretary of State Dr. Rey Pagtakhan during a press briefing in Malacañang following his courtesy call on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Pagtakhan said that the project, which was approved in principle by the President a year ago, would give a strong signal to the world that the Philippines is a safe country to invest.

"We are pursuing this project because it will send a clear message to the world that when a highly regarded Canadian company is able to have its business in the Philippines, then I am sure other investors in the world would also like to see that for themselves," Pagtakhan said.

He said that Canada has a highly sophisticated knowledge-based economy and is on the world's top four in aerospace industry, automobile export industry and in transport industry.

"So, we would like to offer this expertise to the Philippines, in partnership with the Filipino businessmen and the Philippine government as the situation dictates," Pagtakhan said.

SNC-Lavalin has been in discussion with the government for several years about the LRT Line 1 Expansion Project.

Canadian Ambassador to Manila Robert Colet, who accompanied Pagtakhan during the courtesy call, said that discussions on the project are going on well, and that they are hoping that a final decision would be reached soon.

"SNC-Lavalin will be able to invest over \$1 billion for the LRT Line 1 expansion project. This is not a new project. This is a project that we've been in discussion with the Philippine government for some time now," Colet said.

He said that his government is hoping that discussions will be conclusive soon so that the last elements that are to be resolved are resolved and the project can be implemented.

The LRT Line 1 Capacity Expansion Project Phase 2 has already started and is targeted for completion in December 2005.

This project seeks to increase LRT Line 1 ridership by acquiring 12 new air-conditioned 4-car trains, and installing air conditioning units in the old 63-car fleet. This will effectively increase line capacity from 27,000 passengers per hour per direction to 40,000.

The project costs P11 billion and is 85 percent financed by the Japan Bank of International Cooperation.

The government is also planning to expand the LRT Line 1 southward to the cities of Parañaque and Las Piñas, and to Bacoor in Cavite, raising ridership to 40,000 persons per day. The southward expansion of the LRT Line 1 will cost around US\$842 million.

The government pledged to build new mass transit lines and finish at least three by June 2004 to benefit millions of passengers.

Born in the Philippines, Pagtakhan finished his medicine from the University of the Philippines and holds the degree of Master in Science in Peri-Natal Physiology from the University of Manitoba.

Pagtakhan was granted Canadian citizenship in 1974 and was first elected to the House of Commons in 1988. He was reelected for a fourth term in 2002.

He was appointed Minister of Veterans Affairs on Jan. 15, 2002 and as Secretary of State for Science, Research and Development on May 26, 2002.

Pagtakhan previously served as Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific and as Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: August 4, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20081107210445/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/aug04.htm>

The President's Day: August 5, 2003

05 AUGUST 2003

- **Statement of the President: Oakwood Inquiry**
- **Statement of the President: Honasan Charges**
- **Statement of the President: State of Rebellion**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **GMA administers oath to last 3 members of mutiny probe body, respects Senate decision on inquiry**
- **GMA says Honasan may prove Oakwood mutiny innocence in legislative, judicial for a**
- **S. firm to give priority to Filipino workers in Iraq projects, GMA assured**
- **Slower July inflation stabilizes prices**
- **Stop unnecessary talks on coup, Gordon urges people**
- **Salamat's death won't affect resumption of MILF-gov't peace gab in Kuala Lumpur — Palace**
- **AFP officers, men getting pay increase long before Makati mutiny, Cabinet told**
- **Statement of the President: Jakarta Bombing**

Statement of the President: Oakwood Inquiry

I would have preferred to have the independent fact-finding commission undertake the sole inquiry for purposes of public focus, but I respect the decision of the Senate to proceed with its own. Two parallel inquiries could coexist in this case, one focusing on prospective legislation and the other on policy matters. It will also allow Senator Honasan two fora in which to air his side, the forum of his peers and the forum of the bench. I am for giving the people the full, unadulterated and unabridged story about this notorious misadventure and I welcome all responsible efforts towards this end. The truth will prevail. Democracy will prevail.

Statement of the President: Honasan Charges

Senator Honasan should welcome the charges against him as an opportunity to prove his claimed innocence. There should be no more reason for making this case a media spectacle. The battle is now between evidence and conjecture, between fact and fiction. Due process shall be faithfully observed. Our only aim is to help in bringing forth the truth in clear light. I call on all Filipinos to stand in respect of the courts of law and allow the course of justice to move forward. Let us uphold the Constitution. Let us uphold democracy.

Statement of the President: State of Rebellion

The investigation on the failed mutiny on July 27 is now in an advanced stage and will soon account for all those involved. As the conspiracy is completely exposed and the judicial processes take their course, the state of rebellion would no longer be necessary and will soon be lifted. We will base our decision on a comprehensive view of the national security horizon, not upon complaints of the business community or petitions raised before the courts.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

Death of Salamat

It is unfortunate for the peace process since Salamat is supposed to lead the MILF panel in the GRP-MILF peace negotiations. Nevertheless, this does not affect the basic policy of the Government to pursue a just, comprehensive and durable solution to the conflict in Mindanao. We are prepared for the opening of the talks as scheduled.

Olivarez Libel Case

This is a libel case filed on the basis of specific allegations. All the editor has to do is to present her side in court. Malacañang is not involved in harassment. This is simply the rule of law in action.

GMA administers oath to last 3 members of mutiny probe body, respects Senate decision on inquiry

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today administered the oath to the last three members of the independent fact-finding commission on the Makati rebellion, saying the six-member body can now start its separate and thorough investigation into the root cause of the July 27 coup attempt and the provocations that inspired it.

The President said “I would have preferred to have the independent fact-finding commission undertake the sole inquiry for purposes of public focus, but I respect the decision of the Senate to proceed with its own.”

Sworn in by the President in ceremonies held at the Study Room of Malacañang this morning were Jesuit Fr. Joaquin Bernas, university professor Carolina Hernandez and retired Commodore Rex Robles.

Earlier, she swore in retired Supreme Court Associate Justice Florentino Feliciano as the commission’s chairman and retired Justice Minerva Gonzaga-Reyes and retired Air Force Capt. Roland Narciso as members of the commission.

Narciso, a classmate of the rebellion leaders at the Philippine Military Academy class of 1995, replaced Capt. Rex Banjo Q. Bumanlag, who is still undergoing schooling and is thus still under the military payroll.

In a statement issued after the oath-taking, the President said parallel inquiries could exist in the Makati rebellion case focusing on prospective legislation and on policy matters.

The President also said the investigation will allow Sen. Gregorio Honasan two fora to air his side, “the forum of his peers and the forum of the bench.”

“I am for giving the people the full, unadulterated and unabridged story about this misadventure and I welcome all responsible efforts towards this end. The truth will prevail. Democracy will prevail,” the President said.

Fr. Bernas was one-time provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines and is the dean of the Ateneo de Manila University Law School. He is a noted theologian and constitutional expert, and one of the framers of the 1987 constitution. He teaches constitutional and international law at Ateneo.

Hernandez is a professor of political science at the University of the Philippines and is the holder of its Carlos P. Romulo Professorial Chair in International Relations.

She is founder and president of the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies, an independent, non-profit think-tank on foreign policy, domestic politics, and security concerns and development issues.

In 1989-1990, she served as a member of the Commission that investigated the failed coup of 1989, a body appointed by former President Corazon Aquino that produced the Final Report that is seen as a critically important document in the country’s march to re-democratization.

Dr. Hernandez is widely published in international, regional and Philippine academic journals in the fields of regional security and foreign relations, military politics, democracy and development, and Philippine domestic politics and foreign policy.

She holds a B.S. in Foreign Service, cum laude from UP, and M.A. in International Relations from the University of Karachi where she finished in her first class.

Dr. Hernandez also holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the State University of New York at Buffalo where she wrote a pioneering study on Philippine civil-military relations.

Commodore Rex Robles is one of the founders of the Reform the AFP Movement that spearheaded the EDSA People Power Revolution, in which he also took part. He is a member of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1965 and earned his M.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the US Naval Postgraduate School in 1974. He also graduated at the top of his class at the Command and General Staff College in 1984 and was a United Nations Fellow (Geneva, Stockholm and New York, 1980-1981) on International Security and Disarmament.

He is a security consultant, serving as Senior Adviser to MAA Consultants (Manila) and Consultant to the Quantum Capital and Consultants (Hong Kong). He is also president of RCR Consultancy, Security Risk Management and of RCR Security and Investigative Services. He was Senior Vice President for Security and Safety of PASAR from June 1999 to December 2001 and Security Consultant and Project Manager for PHILNICO from January 1999 to May 2002.

Robles was Senior Military Adviser to the Minister of National Defense in 1985-1986; Chairman of Special Study Group of the Ministry of National Defense from 1982-1985; and Chief of the Domestic Section, Production Branch, J2, of the Armed Forces of the Philippines from 1969 to 1972.

Also, Commodore Robles was Deputy Commander of the Western Command of the AFP from 1994 to 1997 and later became Commander of the Naval Reserve Command of the Philippine Navy from 1997 to 1999.

GMA says Honasan may prove Oakwood mutiny innocence in legislative, judicial fora

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today hinted that the democratic processes are at work, particularly in the investigation on the involvement of Senator Gregorio “Gringo” Honasan in the failed Oakwood mutiny in Makati City last week.

In a statement read during oath taking rites of three other members of the six-man fact-finding commission on the mutiny, the President said “three parallel inquiries could co-exist in this case, one focused on prospective legislation and the other on policy matters.”

She referred to the separate inquiries being conducted by the House of Representatives and the Senate and the investigation of the independent commission.

She said this would “allow Senator Honasan two fora in which to air his side, the forum of his peers and the forum of the bench.”

The President said Honasan should “welcome the charges against him as an opportunity to prove his claimed innocence.”

She lauded “all responsible efforts” to get to the roots of the Oakwood mutiny.

“I am for giving the people the full, unadulterated and unabridged story about this notorious misadventure,” she said.

She enjoined everyone to stop making the case “a media spectacle,” as the “battle is now between evidence and conjecture, between fact and fiction.”

She assured that due process would be “faithfully observed.”

U.S. firm to give priority to Filipino workers in Iraq projects, GMA assured

An American firm that won a US Agency for International Development (USAID) contract for developments in post-war Iraq today assured President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that it would give priority to Filipino workers in their projects.

The assurance was given by Asif M. Shaikh, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of IRG, during a courtesy call in Malacañang.

IRG is a US company that won a USAID contract to provide personnel support for Iraqi reconstruction and humanitarian efforts.

Shaikh informed the President that in his meeting with the Public-Private Sector Task Force on the Reconstruction of Iraq chaired by Roberto Romulo, he reiterated the participation of Philippine companies and experts in the implementation of IRG's contracts.

The Public-Private Sector Task force was created by the President to coordinate Philippine participation in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of post-war Iraq.

Under its contract with the US government, the IRG is tasked to provide support to the USAID in the overall planning, monitoring, coordination, management and reporting on reconstruction and rehabilitation activities across a variety of sectors including education, health, agriculture, civil society strengthening, and infrastructure.

The contract base period covers 90 days with two additional one-year option periods.

The IRG has been involved in various World Bank and USAID funded projects in the Philippines that include work on environmental income accounting, national forestry action plan, rural electrification and urban pollution control.

Romulo said that sub-contracts are beginning to come in, adding that IRG's contract falls squarely within our capability to help execute since the Philippines has a number of world-class experts on various fields.

After her brief meeting with Shaikh, the President warmly welcomed at the Ceremonial Hall some 240 Lakbay-Aral participants from Sasmuan, Pampanga led by Mayor Catalina Bagasina.

The President shook hands with her *cabalens* and even posed for a souvenir photograph with them.

The participants were composed of barangay captains, kagawads and personnel from the fourteen barangays of Sasmuan who were on a one-day Lakbay-Aral trip to Manila.

The group initially visited the Fort Santigao and the Senate and was slated to go to the Rizal Park from Malacañang.

Slower July inflation stabilizes prices

Consumers in the National Capital Region (NCR) should be glad that prices in the area have remained either stable or are generally going down.

This is the good news from the National Statistics Office (NSO), which today said that inflation in the region dipped by 0.5 percent in July from 1.3 percent in June.

Year-on-year inflation in the NCR also slowed down by 0.5 percentage point to 4.0 percent in July from 4.5 percent in June.

Inflation is any sustained or continuous increase in the prices of goods.

NSO Administrator Carmelita Ericta attributed the lower month-on-month inflation rate in July to the 1.6-percent reduction in the prices of food, beverages and tobacco items, from a 1.6-percent increase in June.

Ericta said all other commodity groups registered either slower rates or zero growth.

Prices of clothing eased 0.4 percent from 1.0 percent; service items, 0.3 percent from 2.5 percent; miscellaneous items, 0.1 percent from 0.7 percent; and fuel, light and water, zero growth from 1.2 percent, she said.

But housing and repairs costs slightly grew to 0.2 percent from 0.1 percent, she added.

Ericta noted that vegetables were abundantly supplied to markets in the NCR, enough to meet consumer demand in July. Fruits also teemed and commanded lower prices.

The same supply situation was noted in areas outside the NCR despite heavy rains and floods spawned by Typhoon Harurot that hit the country later in the month. The national index fell to -1.7 percent in July from 5.5 percent in June.

There was also abundant supply of fish nationwide. The volume of rice traded in the NCR was sufficient, although it was noted that the price of rice slightly rose in at least eight regions.

While slight increases were noted in the prices of selected school supplies, medicines, medical and health goods, this was slower than their corresponding June rates.

Ericta said higher rental rates in many regions pushed up the country's housing and repairs index by 0.7 percent.

Add-ons in the prices of selected construction materials such as cement, lumber, sand and nails also contributed to the uptrend, she said.

Stop unnecessary talks on coup, Gordon urges people

Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon appealed to the public yesterday to stop engaging in unnecessary talk or rumors about coups, saying this could only hurt the country in the long run.

Gordon made the appeal in a press briefing that followed a Cabinet meeting in Malacañang wherein he discussed the impact of the failed mutiny on the country's tourism industry.

Instead of engaging in unfounded talk, Gordon encouraged the people to go on with the following facts in mind: "We are a safe country, we had a bloodless mutiny which was resolved Philippine style. The problems are being addressed but there will be justice for the mutiny's officers and that is a fact they will have to face."

"Even if they seem to have legitimate grievances which have already been addressed by the President, we want to send a message to the whole world that justice will be meted out firmly and fairly," he said.

The Tourism Secretary expressed elation over the favorable feedback he got from tourists who were in the country during the aborted mutiny in Makati. He said they were impressed with the way President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo handled the crisis and the whole thing didn't make a difference with them.

He reported that the World Tourism Organization has extended the Visit Philippines 2003 to June 2004 largely because of the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) scare that hit the country some months back and brought tourism down.

Gordon stressed that the country cannot afford to have more "bad news" as it may really hurt this time.

“The more bad news we generate, the more the Philippines will have to spend valuable resources on advertising and we cannot afford that,” he said. “We cannot match Singapore which is spending about \$180 million in terms of promotional effort to recover or Hong Kong which is spending an equal amount.”

He added that the country cannot get tourism back into radical jumps especially in an atmosphere “where things are popping up all over the place.”

“Hopefully, it should not hurt us.”

Gordon revealed that the Tourism Department is now in the process of preparing commercials with Hollywood stars Lou Diamond Phillips and Tia Carrere in connection with its WOW Philippines campaign.

Phillips and Carrere have Filipino lineages.

Phillips, he said, arrived this morning while Carrere is in Palawan “enjoying herself.”

The commercials, Gordon said will be aired soon over CNN and BBC.

Salamat’s death won’t affect resumption of MILF-gov’t peace gab in Kuala Lumpur — Palace

Malacañang today said the death of Chairman Hashim Salamat of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) would not affect the scheduled resumption of the peace talks between the government and the MILF being brokered by the Malaysian government.

In a briefing in Malacañang this afternoon, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita said that since 2001 Al Haj Murad, who has succeeded Salamat as MILF chairman, has always headed the MILF panel to the talks.

“So the negotiations will resume with Al Haj Murad as chairman because, in the first place, he was designated chairman from the beginning in year 2001 and continues to be the chairman of the panel up to the present,” Ermita said.

Earlier in a formal statement, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said Salamat’s death would not affect the basic policy of the government to pursue a just, comprehensive and durable solution to the conflict in Mindanao.

“We are prepared for the opening of the talks in Kuala Lumpur as scheduled,” Bunye said.

Ermita explained that before his death, Salamat signified his intention to be present at the opening of the formal talks in Kuala Lumpur.

Murad, formerly MILF vice chairman for military affairs, was chosen by the MILF central committee to take over as MILF chairman after Salamat’s death last July 13.

When asked when the formal talks between the two sides would resume, Ermita said that this would depend on the advice coming from the Malaysian government.

He said that the formal talks would be preceded by a preparatory meeting to be arranged by Malaysia and attended by a small group from each panel.

After the preparatory meeting, Ermita said the formal reopening of the stalled peace negotiations, would hopefully be held “on or about August 10.”

“But all these are dependent on the disposition of the Malaysian authorities. I repeat that we are only guests of the Malaysian government which is hosting these talks,” Ermita said.

Ermita said he is also hopeful that in the next few days, Malaysia would be able to organize a third-party observer team that would be deployed to the Philippines to oversee the implementation of the agreement on cessation of hostilities that the MILF and the government have signed.

AFP officers, men getting pay increase long before Makati mutiny, Cabinet told

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has approved the increase in salaries of the officers and enlisted men of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) long before the Makati mutiny happened last July 27.

In his report presented to the President during the Cabinet meeting today, Admiral Matt Mayuga, AFP deputy chief of staff for personnel, said the government has been implementing the three-phase increase of the soldier’s salaries under Republic Act 9166 which was signed into law by the President last June 7, 2002, or more than a year before the Makati incident.

R. A. 9166 rectified the disparity in the salary of soldiers by increasing the rate of their base pay to make it at par with their counterparts in the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other benefits.

The law provides a salary grade of 30 to the AFP Chief-of-Staff while a private is given a salary grade of 10, comparable to that of an Officer I in the second level in the Civil Service.

The new pay scale for soldiers was carried out on a staggered basis but not to exceed two years.

Mayuga said its implementation began in October 2002 by increasing the soldiers’ salaries by 20 percent. Another 30 percent was provided in January this year. He said the other half, or 50 percent, is scheduled for release January next year.

In her speech during the Manila Overseas Press Club (MOPC) President’s Night last July 31 in Makati City, the President said the soldiers were lucky to have their increase implemented in just two years.

“In fact, the policemen tell me the soldiers are lucky because the policemen’s pay to make it equal to the teachers was legislated way back in 1992. It took me in 2002 to implement it fully,” she said.

R. A. 9166 also provides a merit system for deserving soldiers in the form of various incentives.

Statement of the President: Jakarta Bombing

The Philippines condemns in the strongest possible terms the bomb attack today in Jakarta. The Philippines deplores this attack against innocent civilians. Whatever cause is espoused by the terrorists who planned and committed this dastardly act is not helped by their resort to senseless violence.

We condole with the government of Indonesia and with the families and friends of the victims. We pray for the safe recovery of those injured.

This attack does not and cannot alter the resolve of the international community to fight terror.

We stand by the brave people of Indonesia at this moment of sorrow and indignation.

I have written to H. E. President Megawati Soekarnoputri and conveyed to her our deepest sympathies and our condemnation of this bomb attack.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: August 5, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514161422/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/aug05.htm>

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Statement of the President: NAIA official's slaying

Speculations will just muddle the investigation. The PNP has already been ordered to get cracking and let us allow authorities to do their job to unravel the motive and suspects behind this heinous crime.

Statement of the President: Pink eye disease

I am instructing the Department of Health to put the necessary government agencies on standby preparedness and to immediately inform the public of the causes and transmission modes of the reported "pink eye" disease. This may not be as deadly as the SARS but we must rely on the same response mechanisms we used against SARS to contain the spread of the disease if it ever reaches the Philippines. We call on the public to be calm and listen attentively to the bulletins or announcements of the health department.

Statement of the President: SARS speculation

Global health authorities have declared that the newly reported SARS incident in Singapore is isolated, and it does not portend an epidemic wave. However, it will not hurt to take proper measures of safeguarding our health and being prepared for any eventuality.

GMA commends, presents trophies to outstanding rural electric cooperatives

For providing better life to Filipinos and triggering economic development in the countryside, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today commended 72 rural electric cooperatives for their substantial compliance with the government's rural electrification program.

The President expressed satisfaction and acknowledged the 72 electric cooperatives who complied with her demands for better services, bold reforms and a permanent commitment to integrity and transparency spelled out in Executive Order No. 119 in return for the condonation of their electrification loans amounting to some P18 billion.

She also presented trophies to the most outstanding of these electric cooperatives and their officials in ceremonies held this morning at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall

The President rewarded the 72 electric cooperatives with greater autonomy and empowerment which means there will be less government regulations, conducting and full support for access to private sector funds and assistance.

She also congratulated 23 other electric cooperatives that have partially complied with the list of her required reforms. She said a second assessment will be conducted to determine whether or not additional assistance is necessary in order to improve their efficiency and reliability.

However, the President expressed dismay for the continued dismal performance of some 21 electric cooperatives. It will be the height of injustice for them to continue subjecting their member's to difficulty or distress, she said.

"Now is the time to allow other players imbued with responsiveness and capability to step in and implement the needed reforms – bold and unprecedented – no matter how unpleasant some of them maybe," she stressed.

The President also told the awardees that she had directed the National Electrification Administration (NEA) Board of Administrators to take the most viable of the options or alternatives in accordance with the regulatory framework and within the bounds of laws, rules and regulations.

"They must pursue viable solutions such as, but not limited to, merger or consolidation, joint ventures, investment management contracts or management takeovers," the President said.

She also instructed the NEA to organize and promote "watchdog committees" composed of influential sectors in the local communities and to institutionalize its program.

During the awarding rites, the President also witnessed the signing of the merger agreement among the Cebu I, II, III Electric Cooperatives which is the first such options that would strengthen the capital base of the surviving cooperative and broaden the membership base and encourage greater participation in the affairs of the cooperative.

For the past 15 years, the NEA Board of Administrators has annually recognized excellent performance of electric cooperatives.

The Most Outstanding Electric Cooperatives in the Philippines awardees are Iloilo I, Peninsula, Tarlac II, Zamboanga Sur I, Cotabato, La Union and Agusan Norte Electric Cooperatives.

The Turn-Around Electric Cooperatives are Aklan, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur IV, Central Pangasinan, Masbate, Bohol II and Misamis Occidental II.

The Most Outstanding General Managers awardees are Wilfred Billena (Iloilo I), Carlos Itable (Bohol I & II), Edecio Satina (Cebu I & II), Ramon Posadas (La Union), Horacio Santos (Agusan Norte), Edgardo Savellano, (Daneco) and Loreto Marcelino (Peninsula).

Given the Outstanding Board of Directors awards were those of Iloilo I, La Union, Peninsula, Bohol I, Cebu I, II, and III Electric Cooperatives.

Palace: Vice President's fears of a worse scenario not shared by many Filipinos

Malacañang today said that the fears expressed by Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. on the country's stability are not shared by many Filipinos, although he is entitled to his private opinion.

"This is an expression of a private opinion of the Vice President, which at least to us, appears not to be shared by many," Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in his press briefing this afternoon.

Bunye was reacting to the statement attributed to the Vice President that the situation in the country is "fluid" and could lead to a scenario that would be worse than the July 27 Oakwood incident.

Earlier, Bunye said that the fact that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is going to fulfill her commitments abroad later this month is an indication that the situation in the country is stable.

He said that the President "is confident on the state of the nation, in the direction of the economy and the prospects for peace."

Starting on September 25, the President is scheduled to visit New York to address the 58th General Assembly of the United Nations, meet with Pope Paul II in Rome, and then speak before the 32nd General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris.

GMA pledges more logistics support for AFP's fight vs. insurgency and terrorism

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said more logistics would be poured into the frontlines to further strengthen the armed forces' campaign against insurgency and terrorism.

The President made the remarks during a luncheon with 137 field commanders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) at the Social Hall in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Accompanying the President were AFP Chief Gen. Narciso Abaya, AFP Operations (J3) Chief Maj. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, and Defense Undersecretary Feliciano Gacis.

The President, who is concurrently the Secretary of National Defense, said more logistics would be put into the frontlines "for better fighting capability" of the soldiers.

During the luncheon, the President also thanked the field commanders – ranked between 2nd Lieutenant to Captain – for their continued loyalty to the government.

"Thank you for your loyalty to the Republic and may you continue to be the good protectors of the Filipino people," Mrs. Arroyo said.

After lunch, the President proceeded to the AFP LogCom Mortuary and paid a visit to the wake of retired Philippine Constabulary Col. Narciso Ojeda, who served during the term of President Diosdado Macapagal.

GMA assures Tondo slum dwellers of relocation to housing site

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the relocation of more than 2,000 slum dwellers in the government's permanent housing site at the Smokey Mountain Development and Reclamation Area in Tondo, Manila.

During the President's visit at the Smokey Mountain, Secretary Michael Defensor, chairman of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), said 840 families would move into the seven five-story buildings in the permanent housing site as early as December 16 this year.

He said an additional 1,560 squatter families would fully occupy the housing site by March next year.

Much to the delight of the residents, the President tasked Defensor to lower the P350 monthly amortization for each of the 4 x 10 meters housing units in the area.

The President also ordered the removal of the some 100,000 cubic meters of thrash mound beside the housing site.

The residents have been waiting since eight years ago to move into the government's housing facility.

Other amenities awaiting the lucky residents were the establishment of park, roads, sewer treatment plant, a computer school and livelihood projects.

Jaime de Guzman, one of the 119 families affected by a fire in Tondo in September 2001 who were among the first to relocate into one of the buildings, said their only problem now is the excessive P40 per cubic meter of water being charge by the Smokey Mountain Community Association, Inc. (SMCAI).

The President later visited the BASECO Compound also in Tondo where she witnessed the turnover of 10,000 bags of cement by the Cement Manufacturers' Association of the Philippines (CMAP) for the more than 2,000 families in the area affected by a fire in March 30, 2002 and March 6, this year.

Among those who witnessed the turnover were Defensor, Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza, and Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) General Manager Al Cusi.

Gordon denies resignation yarn, asks 'mischievous' pols to wait for 2004

Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon categorically denied today that he has resigned from the Cabinet, saying he has no reason to and is happy serving President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo because of her work ethics and integrity.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Gordon branded those responsible for the malicious talks as mischievous politicians "who can't wait until 2004 to destabilize the country and take over."

"I warn them that this is going nowhere," Gordon said. "They have no support from the people."

He expressed disappointment that these people he described as "purveyors of pernicious poison" would resort to such acts, saying that what they are doing is a great disservice to the nation and to all Filipinos.

"There is no intention on my part to resign," he stressed. "There is no reason on my part. I am happy serving this President. She has the work ethic, she has the integrity."

Despite his disappointment, Gordon said his faith in the Filipino remains.

"If only we could concentrate on our jobs, on what we are supposed to do, if we cooperate with each other, rally around the flag, we will be making good examples of ourselves and letting the whole world realize that the Philippines can be and will always be the Comeback Kid in this part of the world," he said.

The Tourism Secretary said that despite all the controversies, the Cabinet remains strong and cooperating with each other.

"I'm very pleased with what we are doing. I'm proud of our country. All these things are just part of the rough and tumble of democracy. This is the democracy that we chose, we must make sure it succeeds," Gordon stressed.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: September 11, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162206/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept11.htm>

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- **GMA gets police report on successes in anti-drug campaign**
- **Bush visit short but expected gains undiminished — GMA**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye**
- **Don't be swayed by power grabbers, GMA tells urban poor**
- **COMELEC modernization program ready for 2004 polls, GMA assured**
- **GMA seeks the Lord's help in addressing nation's problems in prayer-rally at the Luneta**

Statement of the President: On President Bush visit

The time may be short but the expected gains are undiminished. The Filipino people anticipate the Bush visit with anticipation and gladness. This event will be both highly symbolic and substantive. It will symbolize the conjoined strategic objectives of the Philippines and the United States for global peace, security and development; and continuing US engagement in Southeast Asia. It will further seal our pact against terrorism and poverty as the US gears for a broader post-conflict and rehabilitative role in Mindanao. It will substantiate the RP-US economic partnership as the US remains to be our No. 1 trading partner and source of investment. The bonds of friendship and mutuality will be deepened and tightened.

Statement of the President: On Bishop Villegas' Homily

The roots of the crisis are ambition, hatred and greed. We shall overcome these by unity, peace and democracy. I have submerged my leadership in the profound yearnings of our people – for food on the table, a roof over their heads and peace in their homes. The few that are impatient for power must wait for the Constitutional opportunities to vie for it. We shall not give them an inch of the people's sovereignty that they intend to usurp by force. I shall continue to spend my day in the uplift of the poor and underprivileged, and in caring for the dispossessed. I have no time for pleasing despots.

Statement of the President: On NAIA exec slaying

I have already instructed the PNP to do their job. Let us allow authorities to do their part in unraveling the motives and suspects behind this heinous crime.

Statement of the President: On peacekeeping and humanitarian mission

The reported threats aired by Osama Bin Laden will not break our will and determination to help in the reconstruction of that country. The members of our peacekeeping and humanitarian mission in Iraq are taking the necessary precautions for their safety and security. I have directed the DFA to see to it that they are not placed under unnecessary risk. In line with our standing commitments and subject to security considerations, we will continue sending humanitarian teams there under the purview of the UN. We must keep our obligations as a member of the international community committed to global peace and stability.

GMA calls on ambitious politicians to wait for 2004 if they want power

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on ambitious politicians to wait for the proper Constitutional opportunities if they want power as she stressed that she will never acquiesce the people's sovereignty to those who would like to get it by force.

In a formal statement, the President said that the few who are impatient for power should wait for the Constitutional opportunities to vie for it, referring to the presidential elections in 2004.

"We shall not give them an inch of the people's sovereignty that they intend to usurp by force," the President said.

In referring to the recent homily of Manila Auxiliary Bishop Socrates "Soc" Villegas, the President said that the roots of today's crisis are ambition, hatred and greed.

But she assured the bishop and the Roman Catholic Church that the Filipino people will overcome this crisis by unity, peace and democracy.

"I have submerged my leadership in the profound yearnings of our people—for food on the table, a roof over their heads, and peace in their homes," the President said.

In his homily at a mass Thursday, Villegas said that the country is going through a leadership crisis as he accused the leaders, who he likened to shepherds, of abandoning their flock and "fattening" themselves.

The President said that she will continue to use all her energies in uplifting the poor and the underprivileged, and in caring for the dispossessed. "I have no time for pleasing despots," she said.

For two consecutive days now, the President has distributed certificates of lot occupancy to informal settlers in Manila and Tondo.

On Thursday, the President visited the depressed areas in Parola and Baseco Compound in Tondo, where she assured some 2,000 squatter families that they would soon be relocated to a permanent housing site developed by the government housing agencies under the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC),

This morning, in ceremonies held at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay City, the President also awarded certificates of lot occupancy (CLOs) to some 500 squatter families in different depressed areas in Pasay City.

GMA gets police report on successes in anti-drug campaign

The Macapagal-Arroyo administration has exceeded the targets set for its intensive nationwide campaign to protect the Filipino people, particularly the youth, from the drug menace.

In a report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task (AID-SOT) Force said that, in a three-month period starting June 16, 2003, AID-SOT Force had cleared 1,709 drug-affected barangays, arrested 10,269 drug pushers and users, and neutralized 94 drug groups, including three transnational syndicates responsible for the manufacture and trafficking of dangerous drugs.

The anti-drugs task force dismantled four clandestine shabu laboratories of the transnational syndicates, three of which were located in Cavite – one each in Silang, Tanza and Carmona. The other shabu laboratory was found in Fairview, Quezon City.

In addition to disabling the large-scale shabu labs, AID-SOT operatives also raided six warehouses used for storing shabu finished products and chemicals needed in the manufacture of illegal drugs. They seized several kilos of shabu, large quantities of ephedrine and other chemicals, and state-of-the-art shabu lab equipment.

The AID-SOT dragnet netted three leaders of the neutralized transnational drug syndicates. They were identified in the report as Jackson Dy, Benito Sy and Zhang Shang Ming, who are now facing criminal charges.

The AID-SOT, with select membership from different units of the Philippine National Police (PNP), set out with these targets in the first quarter of its operation: clearing 500 drug affected barangays, arresting 6,000 pushers and users, and neutralizing 60 local and 4 transnational drug groups.

In its report, the AID-SOT attributed its successful barangay clearing operations to the “full support” extended the Anti-Illegal Drugs Task Force by concerned government agencies and the community.

“We can attain the target of clearing one third of all the drug-affected barangays nationwide,” the AID-SOT report said.

The police regional offices scored an overall 72.76 percent barangays drug clearing efficiency. The National Capital Region, with 1,659 drug-affected barangays, had the most number of barangays cleared of drugs at 593, followed by Region VI, 182; Region III, 151; and Region XI, 133.

The police in Region 5 scored the highest efficiency rating, clearing 117 of the 181 drug-affected barangays in their area of operation.

Bush visit short but expected gains undiminished — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that although the visit here of US President George W. Bush next month is short, it will have a substantial impact on Philippine-American relations and in the two countries partnership in such areas as global peace, security and development.

In a formal statement, the President said that the visit of President Bush may be short “but the expected gains are undiminished.”

She said that the Filipino people are waiting for the Bush visit with anticipation and gladness. “This event will be both highly symbolic and substantive,” the President said.

Earlier, Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople said that President Bush would be spending more time in Manila than in other Asian capitals.

He said Bush will be here on October 18 for an eight-hour visit, while he will be spending only three hours each in Indonesia, Australia and Thailand.

“The visit will be significant not necessarily because it is long or short but how much the relationship and the bonds of friendship are strengthened,” Ople said.

The President said that the visit will symbolize the conjoined strategic objectives of the Philippines and the United States for global peace, security and development as well as the continuing US engagement in Southeast Asia.

She said the visit “will further seal our pact against terrorism and poverty as the US gears for a broader post-conflict and rehabilitative role in Mindanao.”

The visit, the President said, will also substantiate the RP-US economic partnership as the US remains to be the country’s No. 1 trading partner and source of investment.

“The bonds of friendship and mutuality will be deepened and tightened,” the President said.

In a radio interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the advance party of President Bush is already in town, coordinating with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in the preparation of his schedule and other details.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

Re Alleged Resignation of Secretary Mar Roxas

I just talked by phone to Secretary Mar Roxas, who is now attending the WTO conference in Cancun, Mexico.

Secretary Roxas expressed surprise about the rumor circulating that he has resigned.

“I was not aware of such gossip until somebody from your office called me just now. As you can see, we are discharging our duty here and we will continue to do so,” Roxas told me.

“We have put forward the position of our country and we have aligned ourselves with a group of 21 countries, which include India, China, Brazil and Egypt,” Secretary Roxas told me.

The Philippines has been battling for elimination of agricultural subsidies by the developed countries and the lowering of other barriers to trade such as quotas, health and sanitary regulations and other technicalities.

Don't be swayed by power grabbers, GMA tells urban poor

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today asked Metro Manila's urban poor not to allow themselves to be used by ambitious politicians and other groups who want to grab power through extra Constitutional means.

In her remarks during the distribution of certificates of lot occupancy to more than 500 informal settlers in Pasay City held this morning at the Cuneta Astrodome, the President told them that henceforth, they are no longer squatters in their own country.

She also called on them to continue to have faith in the government, which, according to her, has been working very hard to provide them with their basic needs, including housing.

“Huwag na huwag kayong pumayag na magamit ng mga sobrang ambisyoso sa kanilang hangarin na umagaw ng kapangyarihan (Don't allow yourselves to be used by the ambitious who would want to grab power,” the President said.

The President said that her primary concern is to uplift the poor, the underprivileged, and the dispossessed.

“Ito ang aking inaasikaso at hindi ang pamumulitika (This is what I am focusing on and not politics),” she said.

According to the President, during the two and a half years of her administration, more than 600,000 squatter families have already been given housing security and that some 300,000 have already been awarded with certificates of lot occupancy.

“This is a record high in the history of our country,” she said.

The President then lauded local officials and cited in particular Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao “Peewee” Trinidad and Rep. Consuelo Dy as well as airport officials like General Manager Edgar Manda and the recently ambushed MIAA executive Lilia Diaz for their support and for doing the paper work on the project.

Asking those present to pray for justice for Diaz, the President said she had already instructed the Philippine National Police (PNP) to speed up the investigation of the case.

The more than 500 recipients of the certificates of lot occupancy have been occupying lands owned by the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) in Balabag Area, Don Carlos Village, Baryo Pilipino Putol and Maricaban, all in Pasay City.

The areas where the home lots of the beneficiaries are located are covered by Presidential Proclamation No. 144, as amended by Presidential Proclamation No. 391, which transferred the administration of the proclaimed sites from the MIAA to the National Housing Authority (NHA).

The President said that in the past few days she had been visiting depressed areas in Metro Manila to interact with the informal settlers and to assure them that the government is working hard to provide them with housing security.

On Thursday, the President assured residents of Parola and Baseco Compound in Tondo, Manila that they would be relocated to some 2,500 units in a housing project at the Smokey Mountain, also in Tondo.

COMELEC modernization program ready for 2004 polls, GMA assured

In line with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's unrelenting commitment to electoral reform, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) today announced that except for the delivery of hardware, its comprehensive modernization program is nearly 100 percent complete.

COMELEC Chairman Benjamin Abalos said in a press briefing in Malacañang that the COMELEC is currently implementing Phase 1 of the program, also known as the Voters' Validation Project for the eventual cleansing and updating of all voters' lists in the country in time for the national and local elections set May 10 next year.

Towards this end, he said, the COMELEC is implementing the system of continuing education and validation of voters' registration records.

"Except for the delivery of the machines by end of November, the modernization program is almost 100 percent complete," Abalos said.

The automated counting machines, numbering about 1,900, were purchased from South Korea at a cost of P1.3 billion. Abalos made a demonstration of the machines during the briefing.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has reiterated the great importance of holding honest, orderly and peaceful elections next year. It has been the primary goal of her administration from the start.

Her very first State of the Nation Address (SONA) in 2001 pledged the computerization of the 2004 elections and the realization of the absentee voting law.

In her historic Rizal Day speech last year, the President singled out the coming polls as one of three key objectives in the last 18 months of her administration.

The COMELEC bid out poll computerization projects early this year after the President issued Executive Orders 172 and 175 to release P3 billion in funding. She certified and signed into law the Absentee Voting and Dual Citizenship measures and the mechanics for their implementation are now being put in place.

The President also signed R. A. 9006 which allowed election advertising subject to limitations, and R. A. 9165 synchronizing barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan polls.

Also in her electoral reform agenda is the Campaign Finance Bill, one of 15 priority legislations certified by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Deputy Presidential Spokesman and Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo said in the briefing that the government's unrelenting commitment to electoral reform shall lay the foundation for national stability, political maturity and good governance in the months and years ahead.

GMA seeks the Lord's help in addressing nation's problems in prayer-rally at the Luneta

A day after America recalled the day it stood united in the face of tragedy they now call 9-11, Filipinos, weary of excessive politicking and challenges to democracy, gathered this afternoon at the Quirino Grandstand to pray for peace, unity and democracy.

An estimated half a million people from the 17 cities and municipalities that comprise Metro Manila attended the prayer rally graced by no less than President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. and other government officials, including all Metro Manila mayors, who took turns in rendering their own prayers for the sake of the country.

During her turn, the President asked for Divine intervention in addressing the roots of the crisis that rocked the country lately such as the threats of terrorism, insurgency, political destabilization, military mutiny and allegations of corruption in high places.

"Nakakabahala na Panginoon ang mga kaganapan nitong mga nakaraang buwan na nagbabanta ng kaguluhan sa aming pamumuhay, pagkawasak ng aming demokratikong lipunan at pagbagsak ng aming ekonomiya (Lord, the events of the last few months have become worrisome, threatening our lives, our democratic institutions and our economy)," the President intoned in her prayer.

"Panginoon, alam ninyo (Lord, you know) the roots of the crisis are ambition, hatred and greed. Panginoon, sa tulong niyo (Lord, with your help), we shall overcome these by unity, peace and democracy."

The President said she has submerged her leadership "in the profound yearnings of our people – for food on the table, a roof over their heads, and peace in their homes."

She said that with God's grace, she has no time for pleasing despots and that she will continue to use all her energies in uplifting the poor and the underprivileged as well as in caring for the dispossessed.

The President prayed for the enlightenment of ambitious politicians for them to wait for proper Constitutional opportunities if they want power, adding that she will never acquiesce the people's sovereignty to those who would want to get it by force.

"Sa pamamagitan ng aming mataimtim na panalangin, sana ay palakasin mo ang aming loob upang maharap namin ang maraming hamon sa aming pambansang katatagan (Through our sincere prayers, we hope that You will strengthen our resolve to face the many challenges in our national stability)," she added.

"Tulongan mo kaming maipakita na kami ay may kakayahang lampasan ang mga pagsubok na aming hinaharap at magtulong tulong para sa pambansang kapakanan (Help us, Lord, so that we will be able to surmount all our difficulties and be united in pushing for the national welfare)," the President said.

Guingona and Speaker de Venecia also delivered their respective prayers in the ceremonies that lasted nearly two hours amidst continuous threat of rain.

Singer Kuh Ledesma's rendition of "*Ako ay Pilipino*" set the tone of the prayer rally hosted by Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

Early in the rites, Atienza read a manifesto of officials of Metro Manila's cities and municipalities belonging to different political persuasions calling for the setting aside of partisan political agenda and "to unite for the good of our country and our people."

Aside from Atienza, the other mayors who signed the manifesto, were Vergel Aguilar of Las Piñas, Rosendo Capco of Pateros; Tobias Tiangco of Navotas, Jose Emmanuel Carlos of Valenzuela City, Jaime Fresnide of Muntinlupa City, Wenceslao Trinidad of Pasay City, Sigfrido Tinga of Taguig, Ma. Lourdes Fernando of Marikina City, Feliciano Belmonte of Quezon City, Reynaldo Malonzo of Caloocan City, Amado Vicencio of Malabon City, Soledad Eusebio of Pasig City, Jejomar Binay of Makati City and Joey Marquez of Parañaque City.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: September 12, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162219/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept12.htm>

The President's Day: September 13, 2003

13 SEPTEMBER 2003

- **Palace won't interfere with Senate probe on the Pidal case**
- **President's radio address to the nation**
- **Palace appeals for peaceful rally during Bush visit**
- **Think about people's welfare, GMA appeals anew to politicians**
- **GMA urges military to win the hearts of the community**

Palace won't interfere with Senate probe on the Pidal case

Malacañang today said that it did not, and will not, interfere in the ongoing Senate inquiry on the allegations aired by opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson against First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo.

In a statement, Secretary Gabriel Claudio of the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office (PLLO) took exceptions to the claim of Sen. Sergio Osmeña that the Palace is pressuring the Senate to stop its investigation of what is now known as the Jose Pidal case.

“Senator Sergio Osmeña must be fair and forthright. If he claims officials from Malacañang called him to seek the termination of the Senate hearings on the Pidal case, he should name them,” Claudio said.

Claudio said that being the President's legislative adviser and official liaison with Congress, he should be the logical person to get in touch with the senators on matters related to legislations and other official activities.

“But the fact is, I never called him,” Claudio stressed.

In his claim, Osmeña said that he and other senators have received phone calls from Palace officials asking them to terminate their investigation and leave the Pidal issue to the courts.

According to Claudio, the last time he spoke with Senator Osmeña was in the afternoon after Ignacio “Iggy” Arroyo testified in the Senate blue ribbon committee hearing.

He said it was Osmeña who called him over the phone to remind him to facilitate the constitution of the House bicameral panel for the farmland-as-collateral bill.

“That was all we talked about and the conversation was very brief,” Claudio said. “So, who are the Palace officials he is referring to?”

Claudio said that the position of Malacañang on the Pidal case remains: that it does not and will not interfere.

In a separate interview over the radio, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo respects the Senate as an independent body and would not interfere in its proceedings.

Bunye said that Malacañang is leaving to the three Senate investigating committees to decide among themselves on the proper thing to do with its fact-finding probe.

Bunye, however, added that before the Senate investigation is completed, it would only be appropriate that Senator Lacson should substantiate his charges with “real hard and strong” evidence and not just Xerox copies of his so-called documentary evidence.

President's radio address to the nation

Magandang araw sa inyong lahat.

Nakakalungkot isipin, pero dahil sa sobra at napakaagang pamumulitika ng ilan nating mga kababayan, maraming positibong mga kaganapan ay hindi nabibigyang pansin ng ating mga mamamayan.

Kahapon, nagdaos ang napakaraming kababayan natin ng isang malaking panalangin para sa kapayapaan, pagkakaisa at demokrasya.

Kahapon din ay namahagi tayo ng mga sertipikadong nagbibigay ng katiyakan ng lupang tinitirikan sa may limang daang pamilyang naninirahan sa lupang pag-aari ng NAIA sa lungsod ng Pasay pagkatapos ng ilang dekadang paghihintay nila, gaya ng ginawa ko nung nakaraang linggo sa Parola sa Tondo.

Sa loob ng nakaraang dalawang taon, halos tatlong daang libong pamilyang maralitang taga-lungsod ang nabigyan na ng katiyakan sa lupang tinitirikan – pinakamarami sa kasaysayan ng Pilipinas.

Nung Huwebes naman binisita ko ang Smokey Mountain kung saan mahigit 2,500 condominium units ang tapos na at hinihintay na lamang matapos ang septic tank bago maokupahan ng mga pamilyang maralitang taga-lungsod.

Dinaluhan ko rin nang araw na yon sa Baseco, sa Tondo, ang turn-over ng semento galing sa asosasyon ng cement manufacturers.

Sila'y nagbigay ng 10,000 sako ng semento para sa konstruksyon ng drainage systems at septic tanks sa mga maralitang lugar.

Nung nakaraang Huwebes, napag-alaman ko na dahil sa suportang ibinigay ng gobyerno sa mga electric cooperatives ay nadagdagan ang mahigit isang libo't kalahating barangay na mayroong kuryente nitong nakaraang taon.

Tungkol sa pagtaas sa presyo ng gasolina, ang pangyayaring higit apatnapung gasolinahan ang nagbibigay ng diskwento sa krudo sa mga pampaseherong jeepney ay isa sa mga pangunahing dahilan kung bakit isinasantabi ng mga bus at jeepney ang kanilang balak na humiling ng pagtaas na pasahe.

Patunay rin ang pagtatagumpay ang kampanya laban sa iligal na droga.

Sa nakaraang tatlong buwan, nahuli natin ang may 6,000 drug pushers at drug possessors, nabuwag natin ang 60 lokal na sindikato ng droga at apat sa transnational syndicates.

Tungkol naman sa economic performance ng pamahalaan, tumaas nung nakaraang buwan ang koleksyon ng buwis, naisaayos ang budget deficit at nagkaroon ng makabuluhang pagtaas ang produksyon ng ating bansa.

Fixed rating has assured our government that it would retain stable outlook on our country.

Ang sobrang maagang pamumulitika ang nagpapahirap sa mga mamamayan.

Ang labis na pamumulitika ay nagtataboy sa mga namumuhunan at humihikayat ng kasamaan at kriminalidad at nakakaantala sa serbisyo publiko.

Ang mga ordinaryong Pilipino ang nais mabigyan ng pagkalinga kaya wala akong balak na makihalo sa mga siraang ginagawa ng ilan sa ating mga pulitikong binubulag ng makasariling ambisyon.

Ang mga sigalot na ito'y nangyayari kung kailan kailangang magkaisa ang mga namumuno sa bansa upang makamit natin ang tunay na kapayapaan at kaunlaran.

Pagtuunan na lamang natin ang pansin ang mga bagay-bagay na pakikinabangan ng mga sambayanan.

Matigil na sana ang mga banta sa katiwasayan ng ating pamumuhay upang maibuhos na natin ang ating oras at atensyon sa mga problemang hinaharap ng sambayanan tulad ng kahirapan, krimen at terorismo.

Palace appeals for peaceful rally during Bush visit

Malacañang today appealed to various groups to conduct peaceful demonstration and avoid violence when US President George W. Bush makes a brief visit here on October 18.

On his way to attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Bangkok, Bush will make an eight-hour visit to meet President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and other officials.

While Bush will stay in Manila for eight hours, he will spend only three hours each in Indonesia, Australia and Thailand.

Despite the short time, Bush's visit will have substantial impact on the friendly relations between Manila and Washington, particularly in such areas as global peace, security and development.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said the Philippine National Police (PNP) would impose strict security measures to prevent possible trouble as a result of violent anti-US rallies.

"First of all, protest action must be peaceful. We respect their rights to demonstrate but it would be more appropriate if they can conduct it in a peaceful and orderly manner," Bunye said.

Bunye said there is nothing wrong about waving red banners or flags. "They are not restricted to do it. What is not allowed is the use of violence and create chaos, which I hope will not happen."

He reiterated the appeal that while the government respects their rights of expression, "let us do it that would not cause trouble, injury or destruction to property."

Think about people's welfare, GMA appeals anew to politicians

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today renewed her appeal to politicians, particularly those in the opposition, to think about the welfare of the Filipino people and the country by not engaging in too much politicking.

In her radio message this morning, the President said that too much politicking drives away prospective investors, spawns more crimes, and hinders the delivery of basic services to the people.

"Ang sobrang maagang pamumulitika ang nagpapahirap sa mga mamamayan (Too much and too early politicking adds to the misery of our people)," the President said.

The President said that the ordinary Filipino deserves her full and undivided attention as she bewailed the destructive manner in which some politicians have resorted to because of their selfish desire to grab power.

Earlier, the President advised her political detractors to wait for next year's elections, as provided for in the Constitution, if they want to vie for power and not resort to force.

She said that all these unwholesome developments are happening at a time when all the leaders of the country must unite in order to achieve true peace and progress.

“Pagtuunan na lamang natin ng pansin ang mga bagay-bagay na pakikinabangan ng mga sambayanan(We should instead put our attention on things that would benefit our people),” the President said.

“All these threats of destabilization should be stopped so that we can all work together in pursuing our objectives in the fight against poverty, crime and terrorism,” the President said.

GMA urges military to win the hearts of the community

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today visited three Luzon provinces to personally find out the problems and extend support to the various programs in the military and in the local government.

Motoring to Camp Servillano Aquino in Tarlac City after hearing mass at the Immaculate Conception Church in Rosales, Pangasinan, the President told the soldiers that the success in the fight against insurgency depends not only in military might but more importantly through winning the hearts and minds of the community.

“This is a good opportunity to come and visit a very important Command in the center of our fight against insurgency,” the President told the officers and men of the Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM), led by Lt. Gen. Romeo Dominguez, during lunch at the Camp Aquino clubhouse.

The President will also visit Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija on Monday to observe the training program for soldiers on the military’s various approaches on putting an end to insurgency.

Gen. Dominguez said they were deeply honored with the President’s unscheduled visit to the camp.

“This is not an opportunity to hear our little concerns. We see it as an expression of confidence in us and that she knows that we support her as our Commander-in-chief,” Dominguez said.

The President said the officers and field workers of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) would be involved in organizing livelihood programs in the hinterlands and countryside to help the soldiers win the hearts and minds of the community.

On the other hand, the President said the recent grant of four OV-10 aircraft by Thailand would strengthen the fighting capability of the Armed Forces.

She told them that she increased the flow of logistics to the field where it is most needed by the soldiers.

This include the increase in the amount on single purchases that could be authorized by the AFP Chief-of-Staff from P1.8 million to P5 million and those by the major service commanders from P1.3 million to P3 million.

The President said she already instructed the release of P100 million for the acquisition of combat boots, first aid kits, and other field necessities.

As monetary incentives were only given to the recipients of the Medal of Valor, she ordered that recipients of other military medals should be granted school and housing benefits.

Gen. Dominguez presented the President the first two books of the trilogy, “Trinity of War,” that has been adopted by the AFP’s various commands since last year.

Gen. Dominguez said the two books featured a study on the military’s experience on how to win the battle against insurgency. He said a special committee is now coming up with the third book of the trilogy.

From Camp Aquino, the President proceeded to the nearby Capas town public market and inspected the prices of basic commodities. She found out that the prices of rice, vegetables, dry goods, meat, fish and poultry remain stable.

She also visited the Jose B. Lingad Memorial Regional Hospital and inspected the ongoing renovation and improvement of the old and dilapidated regional hospital. She directed the hospital officials to expedite the repairs and further improve their medical and other health services for the indigent patients.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: September 13, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162231/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept13.htm>

The President's Day: September 14, 2003

14 SEPTEMBER 2003

- **GMA upholds press freedom at Gridiron Night**

GMA upholds press freedom at Gridiron Night

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said Saturday night that although media is not kind to her administration, she upholds freedom of the press, "which is important to us as a democratic country."

Speaking at the Gridiron Night of the National Press Club at the Manila Hotel, the President noted that the Philippine press enjoys so much freedom that it can write anything under the sun. However, good news is seldom published, while bad news gets prominent treatment because it is what sells the paper, she said.

"The media always makes it appear that our country is in deep trouble," she said, adding that "the truth is that we are progressing economically and compared with other Asian countries, except may be China and Malaysia, we're doing comparatively well".

The family that Gridirons together, stays together could as well be the message of the President to the newsmen's gathering. She brought the entire First Family, including First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, to the annual Gridiron show.

Showing that all is well within the First Family in the wake of a spate of controversies, the President requested Atty. Arroyo, children Mikey, Dato and Luli and two daughters-in-law to stand up from their seats and the audience, mostly media men, gave them a resounding applause.

This marked the first time that the President and the First Gentleman were seen publicly together after Sen. Ping Lacson made that controversial Jose Pidal expose and the ensuing political intramurals made everybody else uneasy.

The anemic show presented by newsmen paled in comparison with the wit and humor surprisingly pulled out by the President that sent the sparse crowd at the Fiesta Pavilion on the edge of their seats.

Saying that she would uphold the right of the journalists for as long as "you report the good news," the President said that "kung bad kayo sa akin ipapa-lifestyle check ko kayo... alam ko kung sino ang naughty at alam ko kung sino ang nice sa akin."

In another joke, she recalled when the journalists felt too harsh with her in dealing with GMA reporter Tina Panganiban Perez, her media adviser suggested that she give a bunch of roses to the TV newshen.

"Actually, pangatlo na iyong delivery. The first order went astray because first, when Milt Alingod gave his assistant the message to send flowers, it was delivered to (Energy Secretary) Vince Perez. He blushed when I met him in a meeting. The next was delivered again to a wrong Perez. They sent the flowers to (former Justice Secretary) Nani Perez. Ako tuloy ang nag-blush," she said. The audience roared.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: September 14, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162243/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept14.htm>

The President's Day: September 15, 2003

15 SEPTEMBER 2003

- **Statement of the President: Significance of President Bush visit**
- **Statement of the President: Security preparations**
- **Statement of the President: Nightspot robbery**
- **Gov't to ensure maximum security for Bush visit — GMA**
- **Gov't has long been addressing soldiers' concerns — Palace**
- **GMA orders PNP to step up fight against criminality**
- **GMA won't be sidetracked by political sideshows — Palace**
- **Remain strong and united in safeguarding democracy, GMA tells nation**
- **S. senior executives laud GMA for economic reforms**
- **GMA orders standard rehab program for drug inmates in Muntinlupa**

Statement of the President: Significance of President Bush visit

The visit of President Bush is about relationship between the Philippines and the United States in the Asia-Pacific. It is about a partnership against terrorism and poverty. It is about peace and development in Mindanao and in ASEAN. It is about the shared pride of Filipinos and Americans in democracy and freedom. It is about making the new millennium safer, more prosperous and more peaceful for the people in our country, the region and the world.

Statement of the President: Security preparations

Maximum security measures are set for President Bush's visit. This is being handled jointly by Philippine and US authorities. We are taking proactive steps and beefing up intelligence gathering and surveillance. We will leave no stone unturned to ensure that his stay in our country will be safe, fruitful and rewarding.

Statement of the President: Nightspot robbery

It is already bad for the police image that a high profile nightspot is robbed, and it is worse that this place is being tagged as a hangout of police officials. The PNP must not only get to the bottom of this crime, but discipline its ranks with regard to nightlife. Police officers frequenting nightspots smack of protection and corruption. Police officers must serve as models not only for others in the organization but also for the community they serve.

Gov't to ensure maximum security for Bush visit — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that maximum security measures are being worked out jointly by American and Philippine authorities to ensure the safety of US President George W. Bush when he visits Manila next month.

In her remarks this morning at the flag-raising ceremony of the Philippine National Police (PNP) at its headquarters in Camp Crame in Quezon City, the President said that the government is taking up proactive steps and beefing up its intelligence gathering and surveillance before and during the visit.

"We will leave no stone unturned to ensure that his stay in our country will be safe, fruitful and rewarding," the President said.

In a radio interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that when President Bush comes on October 18, his visit is to reciprocate the goodwill of a friend and should not be tainted with political color.

Bunye said the visit is part of international diplomatic practice by heads of states to friendly nations, like the Philippines, “*at hindi siguro dapat bigyan ito ng political na kahulugan* (and this should not be given any political color)”.

Bunye also denied reports that Washington has demanded for the recapture of Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi, who escaped from the Camp Crame jail last July 14, as a condition for the visit to push through.

“As far as we know, there is no condition attached to the visit of President Bush,” Bunye said.

Bunye said that PNP, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AP) and the other intelligence agencies are coordinating in the preparation of security measures during the eight-hour visit of Bush, who will be on his way to Bangkok for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting.

He also confirmed an offer by the United States for economic assistance to Mindanao but only after the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) could reach a peace agreement.

“The US will provide all out support to the various projects in Mindanao, particularly in the MILF areas, as soon as a peace pact is signed,” Bunye said.

Gov’t has long been addressing soldiers’ concerns — Palace

Malacañang today said that the administration has long been addressing soldiers’ concerns over pay, housing and corruption in the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

In a statement, Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo, who oversees Cabinet meetings and the implementation of presidential directives, said that the President and the Cabinet have taken up the concerns of the military since day one of her administration.

Saludo issued the statement in response to a news item quoting the post-mutiny report of Ambassador Roy Cimatu. The former AFP chief of staff, who negotiated the return to barracks of the Oakwood mutineers, reportedly warned of another coup attempt “if soldiers’ grievances are ignored.”

He cited the President’s certification of legislation raising AFP pay to the level of teacher and police compensation.

In 2001, Saludo said, then Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes successfully pushed for the passage of R. A. 9166, which is being implemented in phases. One-fifth of the increase was paid in 2001, another 30% last year, and the remaining 50% increment starting this January.

Saludo also cited land proclamations made since 2001 covering areas sufficient for 75,000 housing units, adding that this week the President will meet with officials of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) and the AFP to fast-track construction of several thousand homes for military personnel by January.

He cited other longstanding benefits extended to AFP personnel like free health care for soldiers and their families as well as scholarships and livelihood loans.

In addition, the President has instructed the Department of National Defense (DND) and the AFP to make combat duty a key consideration in deciding who gets priority in soldiers’ benefits, Saludo said.

Saludo said that to lay the groundwork for fighting corruption and ensuring the delivery of equipment and supplies to the field, the President has issued a strong command guidance and directly taken up the national defense portfolio for at least six weeks.

She has also appointed a new defense undersecretary for procurement, her former appointments secretary Constancia de Guzman, who holds a master's degree from the National Defense College of the Philippines and another undersecretary-level task force will look into corruption itself, Saludo said.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya and other top commanders have been explaining these reforms and programs to officers and enlisted personnel all over the country, to demonstrate the President's resolve in addressing their concerns and to strengthen their loyalty to the government and the Constitution, Saludo said.

GMA orders PNP to step up fight against criminality

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the Philippine National Police (PNP) to step up the fight against criminality and all threats to peace and security to realize her vision of a strong Republic.

"The police is very important in the building of a strong Republic," the President said in her speech at the flag-raising ceremony of the PNP held this morning at its headquarters in Camp Crame, Quezon City.

The President said that one can say that a strong Republic has been realized and maintained only if the people feel that they are safe in their homes and in the streets.

"We have so many crimes to deal with, crimes in the streets, crimes in the highways, and high-profile crimes that are bannered daily in the newspapers," the President said.

The President also thanked the officers and men of the PNP for their total support for her administration, which they have expressed in a manifesto read by PNP chief, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane.

She also congratulated the PNP for the success of its anti-drug campaign which has already netted leaders of international drug syndicates, thousands of pushers, and P8 billion worth of drugs seized after spending only about P30 million.

The President ordered the PNP to duplicate its success against drugs in other crimes like hijacking and bank holdups.

"We must now train our sights on linkages between the underworld and those holding political power. The people must be aware of this threat and our people must not glorify rogue leaders masquerading as paragons of reform or good performance," the President said.

The PNP is now doing its best to pin down the mastermind of recent crimes to see if there are any political and underworld linkages at work and gather evidence to avoid any witch hunting, the President said.

The President also directed the PNP chief to see to it that police officers do not frequent nightclubs and other entertainment sites as this smacks of protection and corruption, referring to the robbery in a Quezon City KTV that reportedly involved some police officers.

"The PNP must not only get to the bottom of this crime but discipline its ranks with regard to night life," she said.

GMA won't be sidetracked by political sideshows — Palace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo wants to heal the deep division in the country, by pursuing peace and order and economic reform programs, rather than think about the 2004 presidential elections.

“The President wants to concentrate on pressing issues and not be sidetracked by political sideshows,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said in a radio interview after several opposition senators called for the President’s categorical declaration about her plans in the 2004 elections.

Bunye said that healing the deep divisions in Philippine society, strengthening the country’s economy and working for clean and honest elections in 2004 are the President’s top priorities at this time. The declaration, whether she will seek another term, or not, should be left to her discretion, he added.

“The President believes that she should concentrate on uplifting the lives of the poor by strengthening the economy and ensuring a favorable peace and order situation that will transform this country into a strong Republic,” Bunye said.

What is important now is that ambitious politicians and other groups who want to grab power from her through extra-constitutional means should not use the people, Bunye said, adding that politicians who are impatient for power must wait for the constitutional opportunities to vie for it.

The President earlier appealed to politicians, particularly those in the opposition to think first about the welfare of the Filipino people and the country by not engaging in too much politicking.

A moratorium on politicking will greatly boost the government’s program for more jobs, more houses and education for the greatest number of people. This is aside from the President’s ultimate goal of transforming the country into a strong republic – an economy that will continue to grow at a pace acceptable to the high standards of the international community and a lasting solution to the country’s perennial peace and order problem.

Remain strong and united in safeguarding democracy, GMA tells nation

MALOLOS CITY, Bulacan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the Filipino people to remain strong and united in the face of threats to the country’s democratic way of life brought about by politicking, particularly from groups who want to take over power by force.

“The present time dictates that we show true nationalism, that we stand for peace, unity and democracy,” the President said in her remarks in ceremonies capping the “*Linggo ng Bulacan*,” which coincided with the 105th anniversary of the Malolos Congress held this morning at the historic Barasoain Church here.

The delegates of the Malolos Congress, who framed the first Philippine Constitution and established the first democracy in Asia, did this “and we owe it to them to carry on what they started,” the President said.

The President said that while her administration is focused on the grave problems confronting the nation, particularly in fighting poverty, crime and terrorism, it also has to deal with misguided and unprincipled politicians out to destabilize the government.

“On this hallowed and holy ground, let us stand invigorated and inspired to build a strong Republic that links our glorious struggle of the past with the hopes for the future,” the President said.

The President lauded the province of Bulacan for its contributions and continuing commitment to the Philippine Republic.

“Bulacan is rich in history, in enterprise, in patriotism. The Congress of Malolos played an important role in the realization of our dream for independence,” the President said.

She said her administration is doing its best to protect the Republic founded by Emilio Aguinaldo, Andres Bonifacio and other great men who crafted the Constitution that was promulgated at the Malolos Congress on Sept. 15, 1898, barely three months after the declaration of Philippine Independence in Kawit, Cavite on June 12, 1898.

In her speech, the President also announced that she has ordered the Philippine National Police (PNP) to build up evidence and avoid a witch-hunt in the reported involvement of politicians in the series of bank heists and robberies in the past month.

Concerned over premature disclosure of names, which could again degenerate into another circus, the President told the PNP to get to the bottom of the cases and conduct a thorough probe.

“Nais kong tukuyin ninyo at isipin ang utak ng mga krimeng nagaganap upang makita kung mayroon ngang koneksiyon and mga politiko at mga pulis (I want you to pinpoint the mastermind so we’ll know if there’s a connivance between the politicians and the police),” the President said.

“Kailangan magbuo tayo ng ebidensiya para rito at kailangan iwasan natin ang witch-hunting (Let us build up evidence and avoid witch hunting),” she said.

Later in his press briefing in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) is now concentrating on building airtight cases against the suspected politicians.

The series of bank heists, according to intelligence reports, is being done not only to destabilize the government but also to build up the campaign war chests of several politicians.

From Barasoain, the President visited Fort Magsaysay in Laur, Nueva Ecija as part of her continuing interaction with the different sectors of society, including those in the military.

“It is part of her duties as concurrent Secretary of National Defense,” said Bunye. “As a hands-on President, she just wants to personally link up with the soldiers in the field.”

Bunye reiterated that the soldiers’ grievances that led to the Oakwood mutiny have been addressed by the administration even before the July 27 rebellion.

U.S. senior executives laud GMA for economic reforms

The members of the US Senior Executives Mission to the Philippines, who called on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang this afternoon, congratulated her and her government for instituting economic reforms.

“We want to work with you to see your agenda accomplished. We want to work with you to see the Philippines continue to be an important location for our investments and a place where we can be competitive in Asia on a global basis,” Robert Driscoll, senior vice president for the Asia Pacific Region of the mission, said.

The President replied that she wants too see their investments come in as a result of how well she is prioritizing the policy reforms of her administration.

The US senior executives discussed with the President and some members of her Cabinet such subjects as intellectual property rights, telecommunications, the energy sector, English proficiency, cargo open skies, trade and investments, and tourism.

On tourism, the President informed the members of the mission that her administration is concentrating on infrastructure in eight identified tourism areas in the country.

“We are putting our infrastructure with the help of McKinsey and the Department of Tourism in Metro Manila, Cebu-Bohol, Northern Palawan, Boracay, the rice terraces in Banawe, Laoag, Clark-Subic and Davao,” the President said.

The President said that an airport is being put up in Coron, Northern Palawan with the Malampaya money, an international airport is also being built in Boracay, another airport in Panglao, Cebu, and facilities in Clark where international planes can land are being upgraded.

The President also said her government has identified roads that need to be unclogged so that it would be easier for tourists to go there.

“But basically it is really making sure that there is an airport that you can fly to and then just go to the beach in less than an hour, or 20 minutes. So there’s where we put a lot of the money,” the President said.

GMA orders standard rehab program for drug inmates in Muntinlupa

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the implementation of a standard rehabilitation program for the drug offenders confined at the National Penitentiary in Muntinlupa, Metro Manila.

The President, who commended law enforcement agencies for their successful anti-drug drive, said it is imperative to establish a standard and extensive rehabilitation program for inmates to prevent them from committing other crimes.

She told the sectoral representatives in the 11th National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) meeting held this afternoon at the Malacañang Heroes Hall that “one of the things undone” is the setting up of a rehabilitation program for inmates found to be using illegal drugs.

During the meeting, the President also emphasized the importance of the inclusion of universal coverage of the poor under the Philippine Health Insurance Program, or Philhealth, as part of the health program for a strong Republic.

She directed the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office to allocate funds for this.

Various topics were tackled during the NAPC meeting presided by the President to improve the plight and standard of living of the poor Filipino families.

These included the re-orientation of the objectives of the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) to focus on the regulation and supervision of cooperatives.

October was declared Cooperative Month to encourage wider participation of all sectors of society in nation building through cooperativism.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: September 15, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162300/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept15.htm>

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Statement of the President: Cardinal Sin

Cardinal Sin is a champion of Philippine democracy. He brought the church squarely behind the fight for human freedom and strengthened its role in the transformation of government, nation and people. He will be missed very much but we will always turn to him for his wise and endearing counsel on doing what is right and just. He may have retired but his leadership and guidance will live on. I join our people in welcoming His Eminence Gaudencio Rosales as the new Archbishop of Manila, whom I am confident will carry the torch of the faith, as a catalyst for positive change and as an instrument of good governance, just as ably and valiantly as his predecessor.

Statement of the President: WTO

We must now ride the fresh tide of trade politics that is just and fair to the developing nations and takes into account the welfare of the great majority of the world's peoples. The emergence of a new alliance of more than 20 developing countries can be considered a positive outcome of the Cancun summit. We shall continue to work with this alliance in order to defend and preserve the welfare and livelihood of our farmers, fisher folk and all those who struggle in the margins of our economy. We cannot have political security, both in the national and global sense, if we cannot ensure economic security at the grassroots. The developing countries must stick together to uphold this principle.

Statement of the President: President Bush Visit

Maximum-security measures are set for President Bush's visit. This is being handled jointly by Philippine and US authorities. But this visit goes beyond mere concerns over terrorism. It is about the mutuality of Philippine and US interests in peace, security and development—regionally and globally. President Bush and I will reaffirm our commitments to key programs that will push forward political and economic security in this part of the world. The Filipino people continue to benefit immensely—in terms of jobs, livelihood opportunities and public safety—from our strategic relationship with the United States.

GMA bids farewell to Cardinal Sin. Welcomes Bishop Rosales

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded Jaime Cardinal Sin on his retirement as Archbishop of Manila and welcomed his successor, Bishop Gaudencio Rosales of the Diocese of Lipa City (Batangas).

In a statement on the change of leadership in the local Catholic Church hierarchy, the President hailed Cardinal Sin as a "champion of Philippine democracy."

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said Cardinal Sin, who reached the retirement age of 75 years on August 31, "brought the church squarely behind the fight for human freedom and strengthened its role in the transformation of government, nation and people."

“He may have retired but his leadership and guidance will live on,” she said, adding that she will always turn to him for “his wise and endearing counsel on doing what is right and just.”

In welcoming 71-year-old Bishop Rosales, President Macapagal-Arroyo expressed confidence that he “will carry the torch of the faith, as a catalyst for positive change and as an instrument of good governance, just as ably and valiantly as his predecessor.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said, in an interview with *Radio ng Bayan*, that Cardinal Sin acted like “a true shepherd” of the flock and a “true leader” of the people” at the critical juncture of the nation’s history.

Bunye said that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration’s policy has always been to respect the church as an institution. “*Palagay ko ay papatuloy naman na magiging maganda ang ugnayan ng simbahan at ng pamahalaan* (I believe that good relations between the church and the government will continue),” he added.

GMA seeks implementation of universal health insurance

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the Department of Health (DoH) to implement a universal health insurance for some 30 million indigents throughout the country.

At the Malacañang meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit discussed the Philippine Health Sector Reform Agenda (HSRA).

Dayrit said that implementing such a plan under the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) “means health insurance coverage for about 30 million indigents.”

The President, who chairs the NEDA board, also called for improvement of the quality and accessibility of health care for the poor, particularly in the provision of public preventive facilities and rural health units (RHUs).

At the same time, the Chief Executive instructed the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), along with the DoH, to make cheap medicines available to more hospitals nationwide and to reduce the cost of hospitalization for indigent patients.

As one means of upgrading the quality of service in government hospitals, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo suggested giving them financial autonomy.

She said that the Philippine health system should be made more pro-poor, financially stable and less prone to partisan politics.

In her state of the nation address at the 3rd Regular Session of the 12th Congress, the President said she wanted to be forceful in the field of health services, like the implementation of effective measures to fight the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

Investor confidence remains strong — Camacho

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said today that the confidence of foreign investors in the Philippines remains strong despite distracting political events.

“Foreign investors continue to be focused in our economic fundamentals,” Camacho said, adding “they see the Philippines as the next round of opportunity when it comes to investing”.

Camacho, who recently visited Paris, London and Singapore expressed optimism that the Philippines’ investment climate will continue to improve in the coming months.

“They (investors) continue to hold a positive view of the Philippines and expressed satisfaction over our economic numbers and ongoing fiscal and reform programs,” Camacho said in a news briefing in Malacañang.

Foreign investors are very particular with the Philippines economic and business policies and are concerned on their continuity. “They want good governance, especially on policy reforms, under the present leadership, to continue,” Camacho explained.

He said that the financial market has normalized and continued to recover lost ground after the July 27 Oakwood incident. This is evidenced by the improving price of global bonds, he added.

“We have noticed that the spreads of our bonds in the financial markets have begun to tighten, tighter than before the Oakwood incident,” Camacho said.

Camacho said that the continued weakness of the peso would probably persist because of pessimistic domestic sentiment brought about by too much politics. It can also be attributed to the dominance of local players in the currency markets, such as overseas Filipino workers, exporters and importers who were affected by the unfavorable political events.

The upcoming state visit here of US President George W. Bush is expected to benefit the local financial market, he said.

“President Bush’s state visit here in October would help boost investor confidence in our financial markets. Bush’s visit marks the turning point in RP-US relationship since the Americans pulled out and closed their military bases here in the country,” Camacho said.

Camacho said that investors believe the visit of President Bush and possibly the economic and military packages that he would be bringing with him will further spark business activities in the country.

Bush visit goes beyond concerns on terrorism — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the visit next month of US President George W. Bush to Manila goes beyond the mere concerns over terrorism.

In a statement, the President said that the visit “is about the mutuality of Philippine and US interests in peace, security and development – regionally and globally.”

The President said that during the eight-hour visit here of President Bush she would reaffirm with him their commitments to key programs that will push forward political and economic security in this part of the world.

She said the Philippines continues to immensely benefit from the strategic partnership with the US in terms of jobs, livelihood opportunities and public safety.

Hours after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in the US, the President was one of the first leaders in the Asia-Pacific region who condemned the incident and sympathized with the American people.

A day later, she expressed the Philippines full and unqualified support for the US in spearheading an international coalition against global terrorism.

During her state visit in Washington last May, the US government pledged to give the Philippines a minimum of \$356 million in defense and security assistance.

Later in his press briefing in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the country should give importance to the Bush visit, the US being a strategic partner and ally of the Philippines.

“He is a very important ally. We have very strategic partnership and a lot of Filipinos benefit from this strategic alliance with the United States. So we have to give the importance that this visit deserves,” Bunye said.

Aside from this, the US government has been continuously providing various forms of assistance, particularly grants from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Bunye said that Ambassador Victoriano Licaros, former spokesman of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), would be the principal spokesperson during the state visit.

GMA, Okinawa Governor Inamine discuss more direct Manila-Okinawa flights

Plans to increase the number of commercial flights from Okinawa to Manila and vice versa were among the salient points discussed in today’s meeting between President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and visiting Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine.

Saying Okinawa is much closer to Manila than Tokyo, Inamine said the route will take only two hours as compared to the five hours travel time from Tokyo to Manila.

Part of Inamine’s working visit is the strengthening of the bilateral relations between Okinawa and Manila.

While here, he intends to visit some of the 1,500 descendants from Okinawa who have been living in the Philippines since the 1940s.

He is also scheduled to visit the Subic Bay Freeport tomorrow with Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon where he will be briefed on Subic’s conversion from a former military base of the United States into an economic zone.

“I would like to see Subic and use this place as a significant reference for Okinawa’s future development and conversion,” Inamine said.

The Okinawa governor expressed gratitude to the International Container Transport Services, Inc (ICTSI) for its interest in participating in a public bidding for the establishment of a container terminal in Okinawa, Japan.

He denied making any discussion with the President on the possible relocation of the United States military training to the Philippines.

Present during the meeting, aside from Gordon, were Speaker Jose De Venecia, Jr., Presidential Legislative Liaison Office (PLLO) chief Gabriel Claudio and ICTSI chairman Enrique T. Razon. Inamine was accompanied by Choel Yogi, Satoshi Sho and Lourdes Wakamiya.

Inamine told the President how grateful he was for the very warm reception she extended to him. He also expressed appreciation for the strong relations between the Philippines and Japan.

For her part, the President extended her admiration for the Governor of Okinawa and the Japanese government.

“We are very happy to have you here and really appreciate your presence in our country,” she told Inamine.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: September 16, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162315/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept16.htm>

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- **AFP unequivocally behind GMA, says Gen. Abaya**
- **Bush visit won't influence local politics, says Palace**

Statement of the President: Bush visit

Our strategic partnership with the United States in fighting terrorism and poverty has the overwhelming support of the majority of our people. The surveys reflect this unequivocally. President Bush is highly respected and appreciated by Filipinos in our country and in the United States. We have forged a genuinely mutual relationship that transcends the colonial ties of the past. President Bush has gone out of his way to help our veterans get more benefits, and in facilitating Filipinos' remittances to the Philippines. He is very sensitive to our national interest and Constitutional prerogatives in the conduct of joint military training exercises. I look forward to a warm, rousing welcome of President Bush by the Filipino people.

Statement of the President: Employment

I am confident that more jobs have been restored in the agricultural sector as the El Niño has abated. We are also determined to strike up more investments in the industrial and services sectors as economic activities pick up towards yearend. More jobs are a result of sound economic fundamentals as much as political security and confidence. We have to shake off the syndrome of destabilization and excessive politicking to get investments on track. The incessant atmosphere of controversy and putting-each-other-down must give way to focus and a sense of national purpose to rev up the economy and drive down crime and terrorism. We are consolidating the nation but we must do so at a faster pace.

Statement of the President: Conduct of public servants

I encourage all departments and agencies to undertake an awareness campaign on the need for upright conduct among public servants in and out of office. Working on a good image for the government does not stop after office hours. People judge the government through work performance as much as the habits of its workers. The symptoms of corruption and profligacy are seen mostly outside of the office than in it – in the lifestyle and personal conduct of officials and employee.

First half budget deficit is P24-B below target ceiling

The January to July budget deficit is P24 billion below the programmed ceiling for the period, allowing the government to boost August spending to spur economic growth, particularly in rural areas.

In a statement, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said the budget gap for the first seven months of the year hit P95.4 billion, against a ceiling of P110 billion.

With revenue collections expected to remain on track, the government felt it could use up part of the deficit cushion built up till July and still come in comfortably within the programmed ceiling of P202 billion for all of 2003.

“We are making use of some of that P24 billion headroom to pay obligations, including construction work in the countryside. This will spur growth, especially in agricultural areas hit by El Niño,” Camacho said.

Camacho said that the August deficit is actually good news. This shows that the government is spending for growth while maintaining solid fiscal management.

He said that government tax collection in August was stronger than anticipated, offsetting an unexpected shortfall in the collection of the Bureau of Customs (BoC).

The Bureau of Treasury (BTr) also surpassed its revenue goal for the period.

The Finance and Budget departments are still computing revenue collection and expenditures, but Camacho expects the August shortfall to exceed the P8.1 billion target ceiling. However, the January to August deficit will still be well below the P127.1 billion limits for the period.

Camacho said that the government opted to pay some P11 billion worth of accounts payable that accumulated during the first half of the year to its suppliers and service providers.

“We could afford to be cautious and calibrated in our spending because of the headroom we have created in the first seven months,” Camacho said.

He said that the government is capable of reining in the budget deficit and achieve its growth target for this year, especially since interest and inflation rates remain low.

“Our economy is resilient enough to survive the global economic slowdown, with efforts being focused on sustainable growth through domestic demand,” Camacho explained.

He expressed confidence that the government will meet its 2003 budget deficit target of P202 billion, or about 4.7 percent of the country’s projected gross domestic product (GDP).

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

Re Desire to Go Abroad

If one out of four wants to go abroad, it is still positive sign because three out of four want to stay in the country. And that’s an overwhelming majority.

Our laws guarantee freedom of locomotion and this contributes to the desire of some to try their fortunes elsewhere.

Those in the countryside want to go to the city. Those in the city want to go abroad. And those abroad want to come home.

Re Senator Pimentel’s Suggestion to Crack Down on Spoofs

That was a welcome gesture from Senator Pimentel coming as it does from a respected member of the opposition.

But still the President would not consider any move that could possibly be interpreted as a suppression of the freedom of expression.

GMA receives Kalinga-Apayao twins separated in Taiwan

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked the Lord for the successful surgery separating the Kalinga-Apayao Siamese twins Lea and Rachel Awel in a Taiwan hospital last June.

“Praise God,” the President said when the twins’ parents, Andy and Marietta, accompanied by the Tzu Chi Foundation volunteers, called on her this afternoon in Malacañang.

The parents also thanked the President for providing them support before they left for Taiwan for the operation. The President gave the parents \$1,000 in financial assistance.

The President instructed Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to make sure that the needs of the Awel twins, aside from the support being given by the Tzu Chi Foundation, will be provided for by the DSWD.

According to Soliman, the Tzu Chi Foundation-Philippines expressed interest to help the Awel twins after they saw the Awel twins and their parents at the Philippine Children Medical Center seeking medical help.

After tests at the Chinese General Hospital showed the twins could be operated on, they were brought to Taiwan.

On June 28, 2003, the Siamese twins were separated successfully.

Soliman said that the Tzu Chi Foundation continues to help the Awel family to make sure that the twins stay healthy and get the proper medication and therapy.

“We will also be working with them to make sure that the twins will have a bright future,” Soliman said. “At least, the twins will have to stay in Manila for six months,” she added.

Tzu Chi Foundation, Philippines was established in 1994. The foundation has already conducted a total of 42 medical, dental, eye and surgical mission from the northernmost Aparri to the southern tip of General Santos City in Mindanao.

Shake off excessive politicking, GMA tells people anew

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the nation to shake off the syndrome of destabilization and excessive politicking to get investments on track and create more jobs for the people.

In a press statement, the President said the “incessant atmosphere of controversy and putting-each-other-down” must give way to focus and a sense of national purpose to rev up the economy and drive down crime and terrorism.

“I am confident that more jobs have been restored in the agricultural sector as the El Niño has abated,” the President said. “We are also determined to strike up more investments in the industrial and service sectors as economic activities pick up towards yearend.”

She noted that more jobs are a result of sound economic fundamentals as much as political security and confidence.

“We are consolidating the nation but we must do so at a faster pace,” she stressed.

Presidential Deputy Spokesman and Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo clarified in a press briefing that the excessive politicking attributed to by the President refers to the period after July.

“Any improvements in the employment picture for the rest of the year according to the President may be retarded by excessive politics and may as well affect business confidence and the economy,” Saludo said.

He expressed the hope that the employment picture will indeed improve and that the political atmosphere gets more focused on the elections “rather than on other ways of conducting politics.”

Saludo said that the private sector would continue to be the main engine of growth, adding that the additional spending of government is meant to offset or exceed the stimulus coming from the private sector.

“We would like to think that a lot of the government spending in the rural sector would be used to pay off liabilities to construction companies and private sector company that will themselves be providing employment to the rural sector, not the government,” he explained.

AFP unequivocally behind GMA, says Gen. Abaya

The entire Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is unequivocally behind the government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as AFP chief, Gen. Narciso Abaya today denied media reports claiming that he was collaborating with some retired AFP generals in a supposed plan to pressure the President to resign.

“I deny that, whatever is written there. That is not true. I don’t know who wrote that. I wish whoever wrote that would give some proof,” Abaya said when asked to comment on a report that he was supporting the alleged call of the 647-strong Association of Generals and Flag Officers (AGFO) for the President to step down.

Abaya gave the reaction to newsmen after the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Department of National Defense (DND) held this morning in Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

The President, in her capacity as acting DND secretary, presided over the meeting.

Abaya said that so as not to confuse the people, the media should first verify their story before having them published. “I appeal to the media to please do not write something that is not verified,” he said.

Retired Brig. Gen. Ernesto Gidaya, AGFO president, also strongly denied that their group is pressuring the President to resign. “In fact, we are behind the President,” he said.

On the issue of graft and corruption, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye, in his regular press briefing in Malacañang, said that this problem has been the focus of the President’s attention since day one of her administration.

Bunye said that programs are already being put in place “with regards to procurement, disbursements and the authorities for payments” to avoid questionable transactions in the government.

Abaya also described as “rumor mongering” the report that he had obtained a visa for his whole family before the July 27 Oakwood mutiny in Makati City.

He said he obtained a visa only for himself and Mrs. Abaya because they were invited to go to the United States.

“I was supposed to go to the States on July 31 because I was invited by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, as his visitor and I should have a whole day with him at the Pentagon on August 7,” Abaya said.

Although Mrs. Abaya was also invited as guest of Mrs. Myers, he said he decided to postpone the trip to a later date because of the Oakwood incident.

Abaya also said that the military is hot on the trail of confessed international terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi who is believed to be in hiding in the Zamboanga area.

“The AFP is pressing the search and arrest and neutralization of Al-Ghozi,” Abaya said.

In a joint command conference with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the AFP last week, the President directed the AFP to help the PNP in solving high-profile crimes, including the arrest of Al-Ghozi who escaped from Camp Crame last July.

Abaya said intelligence reports indicate that Al-Ghozi could be hiding in the Tungawan area between the boundaries of Zamboanga City and Sibugay province.

Although the pinpointed area is thickly forested, Abaya is optimistic that government authorities would be able to recapture Al-Ghozi even before the state visit of US President George W. Bush next month.

Bush visit won't influence local politics, says Palace

Malacañang today said that local political events are not influenced by the visit of any foreign head of state.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye emphasized this in a press briefing today as he debunked claims by certain quarters that the visit of US President George W. Bush on October 18 will have a bearing on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's decision whether to run in next year's presidential polls or not.

“We conduct our politics independently of any other government or any other outside group,” said Bunye to quash speculations that the Bush visit has something to do with the meeting of the ruling Lakas-NUCD party on October 7.

“These two events are unrelated,” Bunye explained. “The Lakas will be conducting its own procedures so let's just wait to find out what will happen after said meeting.”

Bunye clarified that the holding of the meeting is something that is left to the directorate of the ruling party and has nothing to do with the fact that it will fall on the day the President will be in the ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia.

He also set aside claims that the Lakas is set to choose between the President and Ambassador Eduardo “Danding” Cojuangco for the party's standard-bearer, saying this is something that will have to be discussed in the actual meeting.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: September 17, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162328/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept17.htm>

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Statement of the President: Meeting with retired generals

I have always respected the leadership of the retired generals. Informally, they continue to be part of the chain of command and are valued for their experience and counsel. They show the way of sacrifice and service to the younger officers and a long line of loyalty to the flag and the Constitution. We must continually bridge the generations in the officers' corps. The Armed Forces must learn to live in the longevity of ideals, not quick fix solutions founded on fleeting adventurism. Our retired generals provide the example of daring in war and constructive unification in peace. They are indispensable allies in the reform, transformation and modernization of the Armed Forces.

Statement of the President: Safety nets

The safety nets provided the agricultural sector over the recent years go far beyond P 35 billion and can be found the wide array of physical resources and capacity building programs that have been infused into the countryside. Agriculture has consistently led and fueled our economic growth and there is no doubt that the farmers have been the focus of the broadest range of technical assistance, resource inputs and rural infrastructure facilities. On top of these, we have fought side by side with the developing nations for all forms of relief and fair treatment for the agricultural sector, in all levels of the WTO. The welfare of our farmers and fisher folk shall always live in the center of our development programs and diplomatic initiatives.

Statement of the President: Employment

Jobs are the product of enterprise and investment. Enterprise derives from confidence, confidence is the result of a stable, peaceful and unified nation. We as a people have a job to do and the first thing is to ward off the incessant negativism and politicking that is poisoning the air and derailing the national course. We are consolidating the nation but we must do so at a faster pace. We need greater unity to provide the impetus for reform and growth.

Statement of the President: PAGCOR

The financial state of PAGCOR is open to the public. I wish to dispel any impressions that this institution is a so-called cash cow that is unaccountable to the people and can be milked at will by those in power. PAGCOR is the

source of social amelioration and relief for millions of poor Filipinos. This is nothing furtive about its finances and these are bound by the rules of transparency and accountability.

Statement of the President: Al-Ghozi

Al-Ghozi is an isolated tactical target and his capture has nothing to do with Bush visit. The government is hot on the heels of al-Ghozi and we will get him in due time.

Majority of Filipinos want Bush to come — Palace

Malacañang today said the overwhelming majority of Filipinos are in favor of the visit of US President George W. Bush and in pursuing our strategic relationship with the United States.

In a radio interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the few who have been airing protests against the Bush visit comes from a very small minority.

Bunye's comment this morning came as a reiteration of a statement issued by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday.

"Our strategic partnership with the United States in fighting terrorism and poverty has the overwhelming support of our people," the President said.

"President Bush is highly respected by Filipinos in our country and in the United States. We have forged a genuinely mutual relationship that transcends the colonial ties of the past," she said.

Bunye said many will benefit from this strategic relationship, the cooperation of the two countries in the fight against terrorism, the pursuit of security and the creation of economic opportunities in the country.

"It's more of a long term strategic and mutually beneficial relationship for the attainment of peace, security and development not only in our country but also in the region," Bunye said.

Bush will arrive in the country on October 18 for an eight-hour visit.

Bush has expressed his desire to help in the development of Mindanao once the government has worked out a final peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The US President initially wanted the US to participate in the RP-MILF negotiations brokered by Malaysia but later opted just to take a "post conflict" role after a peace agreement is secured.

President Bush has gone out of his way to help out Filipino World War II veterans get more benefits, and in facilitating Filipinos' remittances to the Philippines, the President also said.

Press Statement of Deputy Presidential Spokesman and Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo: AFP procurement reforms under way

Reforms to ensure the speedy and adequate delivery of logistics to the battlefield are under way in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Among measures for implementation are higher contract approval levels for the AFP chief of staff and service commanders, the creation of a single Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) for the entire military, and proposed provisions in the national budget tailored to the AFP's needs and operations.

“The President wants these reforms urgently done to keep our fighting men and women well-equipped and provisioned,” says Constanca de Guzman, recently appointed undersecretary for procurement at the Department of National Defense (DND) and head of the presidential task force to reform the AFP procurement process.

De Guzman submitted her task force report to the President yesterday, and will hold a three-day workshop starting tomorrow to jumpstart reforms and devise further measures. The DND procurement chief is a graduate of the National Defense College of the Philippines, she did her doctoral dissertation at the Lyceum of the Philippines on government spending controls.

Under the DND Order 165 issued by the President in her capacity as concurrent defense secretary, the maximum amount allowed for contract approvals by AFP officers were raised from their outdated 1996 levels. The Chief of Staff limit was raised to P5 million (from P1.8 million previously), and those for the Army, Navy and Air Force heads to P3 million (formerly P1.4 million. Approval ceilings for other officers were doubled.

These measures are expected to reduce the practice of splitting contracts and so-called ‘conversion’ to make urgently needed purchases. In addition, the plan to set up one bids and awards committee for the entire AFP will further cut the procurement process, which can take as long as 250 days to two years. There are now 119 BACs in the military; 27 at General Headquarters; 26 at the Army, 28 at the Navy and 38 at the Air Force.

In a related development, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin says her department will soon bid out P100 million in contracts for boots, ponchos and battle wear, as instructed by the President. Based on a revised list of items given by the AFP on Sept. 9, the inter-agency BAC, which includes the Budget Department and AFP officials, will finalize bidding terms this afternoon. Secretary Boncodin expects contracts to be awarded by Oct. 28. If all goes well, she says, the soldiers should begin getting their new gear in early November.

GMA wants to raise level of awareness of state personnel on acceptable standard of behavior

Malacañang today stressed the need for raising the level of awareness among government officials and employees on what should be the acceptable standard of behavior for them.

In a radio interview with *Radyo ng Bayan*, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye was asked to comment on the Macapagal-Arroyo administration’s broadening campaign on morality in government, with state personnel, particularly policemen, being discouraged from patronizing night clubs and bars.

Bunye said, “*Ang nais ng ating Pangulo ay bawat ahensiya ay itaas iyong level of awareness ng mga naglilingkod sa pamahalaan, kung ano ang acceptable and what is not acceptable behavior (It is the President’s desire to raise the level of awareness of government personnel on what is acceptable or unacceptable standard of behavior).*”

While there is a code of conduct for government employees, Bunye said, it is only appropriate that each agency of the government undertakes its own morality awareness drive.

He said that the department or agency heads should explain to their employees, for example, the proper procedures for dealing with complaints on acts of immorality.

Complaints against appointees of the President, he said, should be brought before the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC), while those involving personnel not directly appointed by the President should be filed with the Ombudsman or the Civil Service Commission.

Active, retired generals express anew their unqualified support for GMA

In what could be the biggest show of support by any group in the wake of recent destabilization attempts against the government, retired and active generals came in full force to Malacañang this morning to express their confidence in

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and their unwavering stand for constitutional authority and the Armed Forces chain of command.

The meeting, long scheduled before a spate of controversies rocked the government in recent weeks, was termed providential by no less than the President for finally pushing through at a time when “rumors and headlines somehow imply a rift between retired generals and the government.”

“Despite the intrigues in the media I never believed that any retired general worth his salt would ever support an extra-constitutional bid for power,” the President said in response amidst published reports that several former generals of the military are plotting to install a new government.

Among the groups that expressed their continued support for the President were The Last Watering Hole Association (TLWHA) led by Ret. Col. Florentino Buenaventura Jr.; Association of Generals and Flag Officers (AGFO) headed by Ret. Brig. Gen. Ernesto Gidaya; Association of Brigadier Generals/Chief Superintendents/Commodore Pensioners of the Philippines (ABCOPOP) headed by Ret. Superintendent Juan Gallardo Abuan Jr.; and Federation of Retired Commissioned and Enlisted Officers (FORCES) led by Ret. Brig. Gen. Angel Okol.

In their respective manifestos, the various groups pledged their respect for authority and vowed to maintain the chain of command which they said should always be respected.

In her response, the President praised the leadership of the retired generals, saying they show the way of sacrifice and service to the younger officers and a long line of loyalty to the flag and the Constitution.

“The Armed Forces must learn to live in the longevity of ideals, not quick fix solutions founded on fleeting adventurism,” she said. “Our retired generals provide the example of daring in war and constructive unification in peace. You are indispensable allies in the reform, transformation and modernization of the Armed Forces.”

She said destabilization plots are now consigned to the rumor mill, fueled by partisan quarters that either wish to usurp Constitutional power or escape the rule of law and justice.

“It is now time to realign our sights upon the crucial tasks of pushing our country forward – creating more jobs, getting investments on track, fighting crime and terrorism, and consolidating all our efforts along the vision of one nation and one people,” the President said.

She said that even before the Oakwood mutiny, her administration has long been instituting reforms and increasing premium for military service.

“Today, we are moving more logistics, funds and financial autonomy to the field, and enforcing policy control, sound management of resources and untrammelled command efficiency,” the President said.

She then asked the retired generals to help her address the most vital concerns of the Armed Forces, saying their experience is indispensable in the service of “our flag and people.”

“I ask you to join us and help us in bringing forth a bandwagon of renewed optimism and enterprise,” she said. “It is time to shake off lethargy and division and look to a new day.”

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

Re Lacson allegations

This shows his penchant for making wild, unsubstantiated charges as part of his smokescreen to take away the attention of the people from the accusations he himself is facing.

Take note that he has yet to submit a single solid, admissible evidence in connection with the Senate probe.

The people will surely see thru this ploy.

Media release by the Office of Presidential Spokesman and Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo: Making farmers and workers competitive

The administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has undertaken programs and projects to make farmers, workers and enterprises more competitive as the country opens up to global competition. Rather than just safety nets to help people displaced by foreign competition, the President has pushed programs to enable Filipinos to keep their jobs and business, find new work, set up new enterprises, and hold their own against the world.

Foremost among these programs for competitiveness is the implementation of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act. The AFMA languished for years until the President, one of its authors when she was a senator, allocated at least P20 billion a year for its implementation starting 2001. In the past two years, over P48 billion has been spent on various AFMA programs, with another P33 billion allocated this year.

Among the initiatives it has funded to make farmers more competitive are new or rehabilitated irrigation covering close to half a million hectares; nearly P40 billion in credit to more than 1 million farmers and fisherfolk; and the hybrid rice program generating income of as much P90,000 a hectare. The Department of Agriculture also has programs to boost production and investment in corn, sugar, coffee and tilapia.

The Strong Republic Nautical Highway, popularly known as the RO-RO system, is reducing the cost of shipping products, especially agricultural goods, from Mindanao to Luzon and the Visayas. This is helping make Mindanao produce more competitive against imports in Metro Manila. Thanks to RO-RO, transport cost is down by one-fourth to one-third for cargo, and travel time is slashed by between 17% and 44%, depending on the route.

Early in her administration, President Macapagal-Arroyo launched a food assistance program for coconut farmers hit by collapsed copra prices. Over 3,100 stores were set up, subsidized with P440 million and serving some 230,000 families of coconut farmers. In April, the government raised vegetable duties to 20%-25% (from 7%) and cracked down on vegetable smuggling to assist farmers. In addition, they were given P5,000-P10,000 direct assistance, plus cold storage and transport facilities for Cordillera farmers.

Credit for micro, small and medium enterprises is another major competitiveness program of the President. The SULONG initiative (for SME Unified Lending Opportunities for National Growth) administered by the Department of Trade and Industry aims to provide funds at a low standard 9% interest for entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and grow from micro to small or from small to medium scale.

Over P12 billion has been lent out from January to July this year alone, with another P10 billion expected to be lent out till December. (Over P600 million was advanced the President's Social Fund to LGUs). In addition, the microcredit program has lent some P2 billion to nearly a quarter of a million women borrowers since the President announced the program in her July 2001 State of the Nation Address.

In her statement, the President said: "The safety nets provided the agricultural sector over recent years go far beyond P35 billion and can be found in the wide array of physical resources and capacity building programs infused into the countryside." The accomplishments enumerated here, along with others too many to list, attest to the Macapagal-Arroyo administration's determination to make the Filipino farmer, worker, and enterprise world-class and wealthy winners.

From supposed plotters to ardent supporters of GMA

The supposed plotters to install a new government turned into supporters of the duly constituted authority as they opted to express their admiration and loyalty to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and their unwavering support for the chain of command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

In this latest game of the generals, the battle-scarred retired generals tried to outdo each other in crafting the best manifesto in support of the present administration.

And President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was just too glad to hear this outpouring of support.

The Association of Retired Generals and Flag Officers (AGFO), composed of 603 members, reiterated the support that they extended to the President when she assumed office more than two years ago.

In the wake of recent destabilization attempts against the government, AGFO, headed by Ret. Brig. Gen. Ernesto Gidaya, vowed adherence to the Constitution and urged the people to “support the President in the inexorable and daunting task ahead of rebuilding our devastated country.”

“We urge those who dared defy the powers that be and all the people to likewise harness once again their love of country they had so admirably displayed in the unfolding days of the great saga of EDSA People Power II,” the AGFO manifesto said.

The Association of Brigadier Generals/Chief Superintendents/Commodore Pensioners of the Philippines (ABCOPOP), boasting of 46 members, volunteered to be the defender and preserver of the chain of command, citing the recent coup attempt and the disrespect shown by the leader of the group to the President.

“It is imperative for all AFP and PNP officers, cadets and personnel to respect the authority, maintain the integrity, loyalty and strengthen the time-honored tradition of the chain of command which is headed by no less Commander in Chief of the AFP and the PNP,” said the ABCOPOP manifesto read by its chairman and president, Ret. Supt. Juan Gallardo Abuan Jr.

The Last Watering Hole Association composed of more than 700 officers headed by Col. Florentino Buenaventura meanwhile assured President Macapagal-Arroyo of their loyalty, support and esteem.

“We categorically reiterate the unending loyalty and support of the members of the association for her continuing efforts to build a strong Republic,” the LWHA said.

The Federation of Retired, Commissioned and Enlisted Officers (FORCES), the umbrella organization of all military retirees’ organizations, for their part, pledged allegiance to the present administration individually and collectively.

“We shall do our utmost best to help the Arroyo administration attain a sustainable political, socio-economic and military stability,” said its vice president, Brig. Gen. Angel Okol.

“Rest assured that the forces shall go hand in hand with the Arroyo administration in its endeavors to bring prosperity, unity and lasting peace to the nation.”

GMA presents awards to 10 outstanding students

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led in the annual recognition of what the Filipino youth can do and achieve in the fields of leadership, social responsibility and academic and professional excellence.

In simple ceremonies at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang, the President awarded trophies and P20,000 cash prizes each to the Ten Outstanding Students of the Philippines (TOSP), describing them as the admirable young achievers of 2003.

The TOSP awardees this year, chosen from 30 finalists selected from the ten fields of specialization, are the following:

1. Stephanie Sunshine Sy, BS Accountancy and Applied Economics graduate from De La Salle University;
2. Ma. Concepcion Hernandez, BS Computer Science from De La Salle University, Lipa;
3. Julius Cesar Laban, BS Biology, major in Genetics, UP-Los Baños;
4. Mark Anthony Sandoval, Doctor of Medicine, University of the Philippines;
5. Carlo Angelo Licuanan, BS Accountancy and Applied Economics; De La Salle University;
6. Corrine Alphen Cordero, BA Economics, University of San Carlos-Cebu;
7. Ivan Bandal, Bachelor of Mass Communication, Siliman University-Dumaguete;
8. Joel Panugayan, BS Electronics and Communications Engineer, De La Salle University;
9. Marc Louie Del Rosario, Doctor of Medicine, University of the Philippines-Manila; and
10. Genesis Tan, BS Electrical Engineering, University of Santo Tomas.

The TOSP awards date back to 1961 when businessman Jose Concepcion, Jr., then the publisher of *Student Life Magazine*, envisioned an annual recognition of the country's outstanding students.

The TOSP was launched on June 19, 1961 on the 100th birthday of Dr. Jose Rizal. It was held annually until martial law was declared in 1972.

The TOSP is a project of RFM Foundation, the Commission on Higher Education, and RFM Corporation, in cooperation with National Bookstore and the Rotary Club of Makati Central.

This year's board of judges include Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, former Agriculture Secretary Senen Bacani, Transportation and Communications Undersecretary Jose Cortes, Higher Education Commissioner Dr. Manuel Punzal and RFM Corporation Director Eluterio Coronel.

GMA cites PAGCOR as source of funds for pro-poor programs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) is not a "cash cow" but rather a source of amelioration and relief funds that have benefited millions of poor Filipinos.

"The financial state of PAGCOR is open to the public. I wish to dispel any impressions that this institution is a so-called cash cow that is unaccountable to the people and can be milked at will by those in power," the President said.

"PAGCOR is the source of social amelioration and relief for millions of poor Filipinos. There is nothing furtive about its finances and these are bound by the rules of transparency and accountability," the President added.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the financial records of PAGCOR can be opened to the public. The President wanted PAGCOR and other government agencies to be transparent in their operations, he said.

"But the President wishes to point out that PAGCOR has been the source of amelioration for quite a number of our countrymen and at this stage the President believes the agency is not the cash cow that it is portrayed to be but it is a source of genuine social amelioration," Bunye said.

Bunye said PAGCOR has come up with significant revenues including the record-breaking P1.3 billion in gross revenues in February 2001, a month after the President assumed office.

Fifty percent of PAGCOR revenues is remitted to the National Treasury. The balance is used to pay the five percent franchise tax to the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the rest is allotted to the social amelioration program of the Office of the President and other government agencies.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: September 18, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162346/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept18.htm>

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- **Lantin and Bautista sworn in as DOTC assistant secretary and LTFRB chief, respectively**
- **Hunt for Al-Ghozi part of overall security concerns of gov't, says GMA**
- **GMA pushes job-creation program in rural areas**
- **GMA takes exception to report on graft, says reforms now in place**
- **GMA orders CIAC President Yap to jumpstart development of Clark International Airport**
- **GMA cites requirement to achieve culture of peace and security**
- **GMA's transparency program results in gov't savings**
- **GMA forms fact-finding commish to look into alleged military role in Davao bombings**
- **GMA confers 2 gov't highest awards to 15 state workers**

Statement of the President: Transparency International

The story is old hat but we are not being defensive about it. The item at issue is Transparency International's 2002 report on perceptions of corruptions among the business sector, risk analysts and academics that was published in the web a long time ago. We won't argue with the perceptions of others but the report is somewhat unfair in that it fails to take into account the deep reform measures we have undertaken to stem endemic corruption. These reforms lie mainly in procedural and policy initiatives that have plugged revenue leaks and cut down kickbacks from business deals. We are also backed up by a new procurement law passed by Congress. These advances in good governance have not been very obvious to the media but they have nevertheless blunted the edge of corruption. Procedural reforms and strict enforcement of ethical standards are making a big difference, but it will take sometime for perceptions to change. Corruption in the Philippines did not grow overnight and will not be defeated in a day.

Statement of the President: Al-Ghozi

We are not pegging a date for the capture of Al-Ghozi but the hunt will be focused, intense and relentless. The dragnet is closing in on him and we are severely limiting his chances of getting through it. But I am paying a short visit to Mindanao not only to check on this matter but to check on the entire run of peace and development activities that have a bearing on our fight against terrorism and poverty. Al-Ghozi's capture is a key event but it is not the whole pie of security. Many other pieces have to be put in place.

Statement of the President: Anti-kidnapping

The PNP has taken down a good number of the big syndicates in its original list but I am informed that there have been new groups that have sprouted. I have directed the PNP chief to make a quick reassessment and a new order of battle – followed by renewed crackdown. The war against kidnapping is of crucial importance to business confidence and I do not want an extended slack in vigilance. This is a job of the police, the victims' families and the communities where kidnap groups are embedded. We must consolidate our efforts and get this threat out of the way like we did several months ago.

Statement of the President: Coup rumors

We will have to deal with an intermittent spate of rumors and speculations, but the truth is that we have already consolidated the Armed Forces from top to bottom – from the most junior officers to the retired generals. They have given unequivocal support to the chain of command and I believed them. The whispers of a coup are residual put-

me-downs and will die down in time as reforms and justice take root. I have ordered the AFP leadership to drive down the message of reforms to the uniformed ranks so that each and every soldier will steel his or her faith in the future of the organization. Oakwood is through and let's forget about it.

Statement of the President: PAGCOR

I expect PAGCOR to take the lead in transparency along the standards of good corporate governance. The board must see through the slew of apparent internal bickering that is causing adverse media reports, determine the truth and undertake reforms if necessary.

Lantin and Bautista sworn in as DOTC assistant secretary and LTFRB chief, respectively

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today swore into office Dante Lantin as assistant secretary of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) and Maria Elena Bautista as chairman of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB).

Bautista, who was formerly an assistant secretary in the Presidential Management Staff, succeeded Lantin as LTFRB chief.

Lantin and Bautista subsequently appeared at a news briefing at Malacañang, and both denied that politics was involved in the reshuffle.

Lantin said that he would not have shown up at the press briefing if he did not accept his transfer to another office, adding that he even told various transport groups to support Bautista in her new duties.

DOTC Secretary Leandro Mendoza, who was present at the oath-taking ceremony and the press briefing, said that Lantin's responsibility will be enlarged as he will take charge of the department's land transportation sector.

Bautista said that having no vested interest in land transportation, she will be able to look at problems and propose solutions objectively. But, she asked for a briefing to familiarize herself with the land transportation industry.

DOTC Assistant Secretary Adelberto F. Yap, who headed the Air Transport Office, was named president of the President Diosdado Macapagal International Airport Corp. at Clark Airbase in Pampanga.

At the press briefing, Yap said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo wants the new corporate leadership to accelerate development of Central Luzon, with the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport as its centerpiece.

Hunt for Al-Ghozi part of overall security concerns of gov't, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that the ongoing manhunt for escaped terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi is part of the overall security concerns of the government.

In a statement, the President said that when she goes to Mindanao next week, she will not only check on the intensified hunt for Al-Ghozi but also look into "the entire run of peace and development activities that have a bearing on our fight against terrorism and poverty."

The President said that the authorities are not pegging a date for the capture of Al-Ghozi but the hunt, she said, "will be focused, intense and relentless."

"The dragnet is closing in on him and we are severely limiting his chances of getting through it," the President said.

The military reported earlier this week that Al-Ghozi, an Indonesian bomber who escaped from Philippine National Police jail in Camp Crame along with two Abu Sayyaf terrorists, is somewhere near the town of Tungawan in the Zamboanga area.

Malacañang has denied reports that Washington has made the capture of Al-Ghozi a condition for the eight-hour visit of US President George W. Bush on Oct. 18.

“Al-Ghozi’s capture is a key event but it is not the whole pie of security. Many other pieces have to be put in place,” the President said.

The President flies to Jolo in Sulu on Monday then to Tungawan from where she then proceeds to visit and check the socio-economic projects being pursued in Mindanao.

The projects referred to are funded not only by the national and local governments but also by several multinational agencies through their official development assistance (ODA).

“The President wants to make sure that these are being properly implemented,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio said in a radio interview.

Some of the projects the President will check on are under Mindanao Natin or Mindanao National Initiative. “It’s a wide range of socio-economic development projects,” Bunye said.

GMA pushes job-creation program in rural areas

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today pushed for creation of some 200,000 jobs in the rural areas by accelerating releases within a month of P1 billion in credits for farmers, fishermen and entrepreneurs in the countryside.

Secretary Rigoberto Tiglao, Presidential Chief of Staff, told a press briefing in Malacañang that the President, in a meeting this morning with Secretary of Trade and Industry Manuel Roxas II, Secretary of Agriculture Luis Lorenzo, Jr., and Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, observed that credits and financial assistance trickle only to the countryside.

Tiglao said that they agreed to work for quicker releases of credits for various projects sought by farmers, fishermen and rural entrepreneurs. They expected that liquidity will stimulate transactions in the rural areas.

Although the application papers on these projects have already been processed or approved, Lorenzo said at the news briefing, the funds have been pending release.

Lorenzo said that if all the projects would push through, some 200,000 jobs could be created in the rural areas, with most of them not too dependent on the weather factor.

The unemployment rate went down in July 2003 as a result of the loss of many jobs in the agricultural sector due to fluctuation in the weather with an unlikely combination of dry spell and typhoons hitting the different regions of the country.

“This is the modern equivalent of emergency employment program,” Tiglao said, adding that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration maintains its program priorities of providing jobs, food and shelter to the Filipino families.

Roxas said that 295,000 jobs have been created in the industrial sector and 254,000 more in the service sector. These jobs were the offshoot of some P10.8 billion loans released in the first half of the year. Another P10 billion will be plowed into both industrial and service sectors in the next six months.

Lorenzo said that the credits will fund projects that the farmers can carry out in between planting and harvesting seasons.

“The P1 billion funds to be made available for rural financing is part of the administration’s priority on jobs, food and housing,” he said.

GMA takes exception to report on graft, says reforms now in place

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo today took exceptions to Transparency International’s report on perception of corruption in the Philippines, saying that the report, aside from being “old hat,” is unfair because it failed to mention some of the reforms undertaken by her government during the past two years.

“We won’t argue with the perception of others but the report is somewhat unfair in that it fails to take into account the deep reforms we have undertaken to stem endemic corruption,” the President said in a statement.

The President said that the item at issue is based on the 2002 report of Transparency International on perceptions of corruption among business executives, risk analysts and academics that was published in the web a long time ago.

A more recent report, carried by *The Economist* in its August 16, 2003 issue, showed that the Philippines is among the top 10 developing countries with the most stable emerging economy based on a survey conducted by the prestigious Lehman Brothers and Eurasia Group.

The survey, which was conducted to measure a country’s ability to withstand crises and to avoid generating them, showed that the Philippines got 60 points out of a maximum stability score of 100.

Among the countries in Asia, only the People’s Republic of China and Thailand surpassed the Philippines’ stability index.

According to the President, the reforms that her government has instituted lie mainly in procedural and policy initiatives that have plugged revenue leaks and cut down kickbacks from business deals.

“We are also backed up by a new procurement law passed by Congress. These advances in good governance have not been very obvious to the media but they have nevertheless blunted the edge of corruption,” the President said.

She said that procedural reforms and strict enforcement of ethical standards are making a big difference, but added that it will take some time for perceptions to change.

“Corruption in the Philippines did not grow overnight and will not be defeated in a day,” the President said.

In a radio interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye cited administrative reforms being carried out within agencies, particularly the electronic procurement system, lifestyle check, and the investigation and actual filing of criminal charges against employees found to have been involved in anomalies.

“The problem of corruption remains a strong challenge for us and we must work together to lessen this,” Bunye added.

Bunye said that good governance has been one of the primary concerns of the President from the very start of her administration, and part of that is the elimination or minimization of opportunities for graft and corruption.

The report in *The Economist* also cited the 4.5 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth of the Philippines for the first quarter, which was higher than Malaysia’s 4.0 percent, Indonesia’s 3.4 percent, South Korea’s 3.7 percent, and Taiwan’s 3.2 percent.

The country's GDP, however, decelerated to 3.2 percent for the second quarter of this year. Nonetheless, the Philippines performed better than its neighbors, with South Korea showing only a 1.9 percent growth while the GDP of Singapore contracted by -4.2 percent and that of Taiwan by -0.1 percent.

In her keynote address at the closing session of the 15th general meeting of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, held September 3 in Brunei Darussalam, the President said that her administration has been aggressively putting in place economic reforms to sustain growth and significantly improve the long-term prospects for the Philippines.

"We spent the first two years of my administration strengthening our macroeconomic fundamentals and it has paid off with consistent economic growth and low inflation," the President pointed out.

In the Lehman Brothers survey, Hungary emerged as the country with the most stable emerging economy, with a political-stability index of 73 points.

Following closely behind were Poland, with a score of 72, and Mexico at 69.

GMA orders CIAC President Yap to jumpstart development of Clark International Airport

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed newly installed Clark International Airport Corporation (CIAC) President Adelberto Yap to jumpstart the development of the airport now named after her father, former President Diosdado Macapagal, and make it eventually the country's premier gateway and centerpiece of the development of Central Luzon.

Yap, formerly an Assistant Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) and chief of the Air Transportation Office, bared this today as she echoed the President's desire to make it initially a complimentary gateway to the overcrowded Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

The President, according to Yap, has instructed him to likewise reorganize the CIAC to make it responsive in the event that the airport will have to take over as the country's premier gateway.

"We are all aware that NAIA has only one runway compared to Clark which has 3.6 km. of runway," Yap said. "I think it would be ideal to allow a lot of incoming traffic to Clark because ultimately it will be the premier airport."

Yap said convenience of passengers would not be sacrificed in the event that the airport becomes fully operational since there are plans for the creation of the North Rail from Clark to Manila that will eventually stretch to Laoag City in Ilocos Norte.

He said the President has yet to give him a target deadline to make the airport fully operational but hastened to add that presently United Parcel Service (UPS) and other airlines are already using the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA). "FedEx is also transferring," he said.

At present, Yap explained, the airport can only accommodate three plane roads of passengers, making it necessary for the building of a new passenger terminal.

Yap dismissed insinuations that the DMIA will be competing with NAIA, saying that the two international airports will compliment each other.

GMA cites requirement to achieve culture of peace and security

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said a culture of peace and security could be achieved if the root causes of conflict are properly addressed.

“Even in a time of strife, a culture of peace shall prosper as long as we remain steadfast in addressing not only the immediate causes of conflict, but by boldly striking at its roots — inequity, injustice, economic exclusion,” the President told participants of the Global Cooperation Society (GCS) 2003 International Convention and Peace Conference which opened this morning at the Century Park Hotel in Manila.

The President was welcomed at the hotel by Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza, 5th District Rep. Joey Hizon, Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Commissioner Dr. Manuel Punzal, and Dr. Young Seek Choue, the founder and president of GCS International.

The President said the government’s efforts in addressing the root causes of conflict in Mindanao have brought in valiant allies.

These include Malaysia, which has agreed to host the resumption of the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the United States, which has committed to play a key role in post-conflict rehabilitation, and the member states of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), which provide a broad backdrop of support and assistance.

She said the Philippines has also initiated with Indonesia and Malaysia an agreement committed to practical measures against terrorism, an accord other countries in Southeast Asia have since acceded to in the name of regional peace.

“Peace is something that no nation can achieve alone,” she said.

The President said the hope for world peace brought by the declaration of the United Nations of Year 2000 as the International Year of Culture and Peace was shattered on September 11, 2001 “by a senseless and shameless act of terrorism.”

From then on, she said the world was put on danger alert “that we cannot forever be held hostage to terror.”

“We must hunt down terrorists, hold down the threat and never capitulate even as we strive to win the peace at all cost by dint of our durable unity and resolve,” she said.

She said the presence of the 250 Koreans and 100 other foreign delegates in the conference here proves that no amount of senseless and shameless violence could shatter the world’s quest for peace.

“Peace is ours to hold and we shall not let go as long as there are men and women who promote a culture of peace,” she told the participants.

Here in the Philippines, she said the hunt for Indonesian international terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi, who is believed to be hiding in the jungles of Mindanao, would be focused, intense and relentless.

She said she would visit Mindanao next week not only to check on the hunt for Al-Ghozi but also on the government’s peace and development initiatives to address terrorism and poverty.

She also lauded Dr. Young Seek Choue whom she and her father President Diosdado Macapagal consider as “one of the great prophets of peace in our contemporary history.”

The GCS International, which has chapters in 40 countries, was founded by Choue and co-founded by 77 distinguished scholars and international leaders including the President’s father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal.

GMA’s transparency program results in gov’t savings

In line with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's transparency program, a government electronic procurement system has been instituted with startling results in terms of savings and decline in operating expenditures.

According to an accomplishment report, issued recently by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the G-EPS serves as the central portal for government procurement opportunities and all procurement information.

Executive Order No. 40, which took effect on April 4, 2002, contains the implementing rules and regulations on the new system of procurement, and requires all government agencies to use the G-EPS. So far, 1,052 out of the total 3,104 agencies, including the government-owned and -controlled corporations, in the bureaucracy have registered with the G-EPS.

As of August 4, 2003 a total of 23,218 new bid notices had been posted on the G-EPS, including that of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Suppliers, numbering 3,705, have also registered with G-EPS.

In her message to Congress for the 2004 General Appropriations Act, President Macapagal-Arroyo said the data indicate a broadening of the government's pool of potential suppliers and promoting greater confidence in government's ability to do business.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also noted that "over the medium term, we expect to generate savings of P8.1 billion or a decline by 9 percent in government's maintenance and other operation expenditures as the entire procurement process becomes more transparent and efficient."

"Procurement cost is correspondingly reduced," she added.

By institutionalizing the electronic procurement system, the President said that more government resources will be spent for programs and projects as leakage in government spending is plugged and opportunities for graft and corruption eliminated.

Meanwhile, the President said major reforms in the Armed Forces are being undertaken during her stint as concurrent Secretary of National Defense. The reforms aim to ensure the speedy and adequate delivery of logistics to soldiers in the battlefield, she said.

Defense Undersecretary Constancia de Guzman disclosed a plan to set up one bids and awards committee for the entire Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

De Guzman, a graduate of the National Defense College of the Philippines, said that under DND Order 165, the maximum amounts allowed for contract approvals by military officers have been raised from the outdated 1996 levels. "There will be no need to split contracts and engage in so-called 'conversion' to make urgently needed purchases," she explained.

GMA forms fact-finding commish to look into alleged military role in Davao bombings

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has constituted an independent fact-finding commission that will look into allegations of military involvement in the March 4, April 2 and April 3, 2003 bombings in Davao City.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye enumerated the members of the Commission as follows: Fr. Pedro B. Maniwang, chairman, and Anita Alfelor Alagaban, Joji Ilagan Bian, Naguib G. Sinarimbo, and a representative from the Department of Justice as members.

In Administrative Order No. 84, the President gave the Commission 30 days from the date of constitution within which to conduct its investigation and submit recommendations to the President.

The Commission shall have these powers and functions:

- possess all the powers of an investigative body, including the power to summon witnesses, administer oath, take testimony or evidence relevant to the investigation and to issue compulsory processes to produce documents, books and records;
- call upon any agency of the government for assistance as it may require in the discharge of its functions; and
- perform any and all acts as may be necessary and appropriate to this AO subject to the approval of the President.

According to Bunye, Fr. Maniwang is presently parochial vicar of the Sta. Ana Shrine Parish in Davao City. Alagaban is a retired judge, last assigned to a regional trial court of Davao City. Sinarimbo is a legal officer of the Office of Muslim Affairs and a partner in a law office, while Ilagan Bian is current chair of the Mindanao Business Council.

GMA confers 2 gov't highest awards to 15 state workers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today conferred the two highest government service awards to 15 extraordinary state workers for their exemplary ethical behavior and outstanding public service.

Among 120 nominees nationwide, nine government employees received the Lingkod Bayan Award for their outstanding individual performances of national impact. Six others were given the Dangal ng Bayan Award.

Highlighting the month-long celebration of the 103rd anniversary of the Philippine Civil Service, the conferment of the awards was the result of a rigid, painstaking nationwide search for top government workers made by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) under its Honor Awards Program.

In a simple ceremony held at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall, the President handed over a gold-gilded medallion and a plaque to each of the Lingkod ng Bayan awardees. The Dangal ng Bayan awardees received trophies designed by National Artist Napoleon Abueva.

The Lingkod ng Bayan awardees were Helen S. Bagasao, Cabanatuan City Social Welfare and Development Officer; Fortunato B. Bulao, assistant provincial manager of the National Food Authority in Lingayen, Pangasinan; Cleofas R. Cervancia, Professor III at the Institute of Biological Sciences of the University of the Philippines in Los Banos, Laguna; Leoncio P. Deriada, Professor IV of the University of the Philippines in the Visayas in Maig-ao, Iloilo; Paul A. Evangelista, chief of the Culion Sanitarium and General Hospital in Culion, Palawan; Senior Inspector Wilberto Rico Neil A. Kwan Tiu, City Fire Marshal of the Bureau of Fire Protection; Flordeliza R. Mayari, assistant schools division superintendent of the Department of Education in the Division of Marikina City; Federico L. Ocampo, community environment and natural resources officer of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Gumaca, Quezon; and Ester B. Ogena, director, Science Education Institute of the Department of Science and Technology in Taguig, Metro Manila.

The Dangal ng Bayan awardees were Cheryll J. Apalisoc, State auditor II of the Commission on Audit; Abdurasad Z. Daung, utility worker of Philippine Coconut Authority in Zamboanga City; Susan G. Dignadice, Midwife III at Municipal government of Ajuy, Iloilo; Herminia A. Ibarra, a utility worker from Antipolo City; Bernardo DG. Navarette, driver III of the Philippine Postal Corporation in Manila; and Mila T. Segovia, social welfare officer III of the Department of Social Welfare and Development in Davao City.

CSC Chair Karina Constantino-David and Commissioner Jose Erestain, Jr. assisted the President in distributing the plaque and trophies to the awardees.

Each of the 15 awardees also received a P100,000 cash bonus and will get automatic promotions to the next higher position in their respective agencies and a salary increase equivalent to the next higher position.

The awardees were also granted scholarships from the University of Philippines System, Philippines Normal University and Technological University of the Philippines; one-year personal accident insurance coverage courtesy of the Insular Life Assurance Company Ltd.; Suki cards from Mercury Drug Corporation; and financial assistance from the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation.

During the ceremony, David also presented to the President the four individual Pagasa Awards recipients namely: Antonia P. Dagala, MPA, administrative officer IV of the provincial government of Davao Del Norte; Felisa U. Etemadi, professor at University of the Philippines – Cebu College; Juan A. Nagtalon, president of the Misamis Oriental State College of Agriculture and Technology; and Medy F. Tabangay, agricultural technologist from the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist of Palawan.

David also presented to the President the Pag-asa Awardees in the group category namely: Philippine General Hospital-Child Protection Unit; Natural Products Division-Operations Group of the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions of the Department of Trade; National Maritime Polytechnic; and the audit team of MERALCO.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: September 19, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20050630075450/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept19.htm>

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Gov't has released P10.9 B as loans for SMEs for first semester this year

A total of P10.88 billion worth of loans has already been released for the first six months of the year under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's SULONG (SME Unified Lending Opportunities for National Growth) initiative administered by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

DTI Secretary Manuel Roxas II said in a press briefing that the program, now in full blast, aims to provide funds at a low standard nine percent interest for entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and grow from micro to small or from small to medium scale.

The average loan amount, Roxas said, is about P1.2 million going to about 14,000 accounts.

He revealed that there is a second P10 billion that is being mobilized for the second half of the year, adding that the government is on track in mobilizing this amount.

"Perhaps the positive numbers on the employment rate pertaining to services and industry stem or flow from wise investments that have been made," he said.

"These are not doleouts," Roxas said, explaining that these are actual viable loan transactions that the Landbank of the Philippines, Development Bank of the Philippines and Small Business Guarantee Finance Corporation lent out to small and medium enterprises.

He stressed that in the industry sector, about 259,000 jobs were created or increased while in the service sector, another 254,000 jobs or thereabouts were created.

"So there are about half a million jobs in these two sectors which should have been beneficiaries of this SME Sulong program," Roxas said.

SULONG is the brand name for the financing initiatives under the National Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Development Plan, a priority strategy for developing the SME sector that comprises 99.6 percent of the total Philippine enterprises.

This is a government initiative for the SME sector in order to provide a strong domestic supply base for globally competitive industries.

Under SULONG, government financial institutions (GFIs) have allocated P10 billion to lend out in the next six months. This will be achieved through standardized unified lending program by GFIs for SMEs and standardized accreditation program by GFIs for rural and thrift banks.

GMA, De Sotto discuss means on how to empower poor Filipinos

In seeking to make life easier for millions of poor Filipinos, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo met Friday with one of the world's renowned development economists, Peruvian Hernando de Soto, to discuss measures needed to empower the poor.

The program has always been an important part of the President's vision to empower the poor in the Philippines so as to leverage their extra-legal real estate and business holdings.

The President said De Soto's work as outlined in his best seller, "The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else," provides important inputs for her vision and programs to fight poverty and increase economic growth.

De Soto, author of the best-selling *The Other Path* (1989) and founder/director of Peru's Institute for Liberty and Democracy, is a champion of market economics and property rights in a part of the world that historically has shown little interest in such ideas.

His promotion of the idea that minimizing regulation can unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of the poor has made him a popular figure in right-wing and libertarian circles.

Until 1992, he was personal representative and principal adviser of former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, whose authoritarian rule collapsed in a corruption scandal in 2000.

De Soto's idea is to give the poor certain rights to property they make use of frequently but don't own—like a dwelling in the slum. This way, they can raise capital by selling those rights or use them as collateral in the formal financial system.

The De Soto principle is being used as the basis for the government's move to allow farmers, particularly the beneficiaries of the land reform program, to use their farmlands as collaterals for loans.

Since the 80s and 90s, De Soto has argued that the poor sit on huge sums of "dead capital."

Primarily, this is in the form of dwellings—an estimate in 2000, he said, putting the implied value of this at around \$100 billion in the Philippines.

De Soto said that the poor run businesses as well but they do so in the underground sector where they get no legal protection and no rights.

The house, the food stall, the market stand—all these, De Soto said in his best-selling book, have no tangible value that can be converted into new forms of production.

"They don't represent financial leverage," he said.

Gov't giving Honasan all the chances to defend self in rebellion case filed against him

The government is tightening its rebellion case against opposition Sen. Gregorio Honasan for his involvement in the July 27 military adventurism but at the same time giving him all the opportunities to defend himself.

Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. has announced that Senator Honasan has been given until September 23 to file his counter affidavit before the Department of Justice (DoJ) on the complaint filed against him.

Earlier, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said that Honasan, like any other Filipino, will be accorded due process. "No citizen, high or low, should be above the law," the President said.

The President called on everybody to leave to the judiciary the main task of “mopping up the legal issues” that have arisen from the Oakwood crisis.

Lina said that his department has presented to the DOJ additional evidence gathered in connection with the Oakwood incident.

These pieces of evidence include supplemental affidavit executed and filed by Col. Enrique Cabos, Chief of the Investigation Division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, before the DOJ on September 4, 2003.

These include 41 annexes containing 16 affidavits, 23 pieces of documentary evidence, and two video tapes.

Lina said that Col. Cabos has also filed an affidavit with the DOJ on September 12, 2003 against Navy Lieutenant (SG) Antonio Trillanes and the other young officers involved in the Oakwood incident.

According to Lina, the DILG, through the efforts of its various law enforcement agencies, has already identified 56 coup leaders who in one way or another have participated or took part in the failed mutiny.

Earlier, former President Fidel V. Ramos described Honasan as an “ambitious politician” and is no longer an idealistic soldier as he rallied the citizenry to support the President and join in the collective action for the march toward the country’s progress.

Mr. Ramos said that what the country and the Filipino people need at this stage is a continuous period of peace “and not intramural politics” if the country is to achieve significant progress.

President’s radio address to the nation

Magandang araw sa inyong lahat.

Marami pa rin tayong kababayan na walang trabaho. Maraming dahilan ito, kabilang na ang pangamba sa SARS, ang giyera sa Iraq at ang global financial crisis na naglagay sa alanganin sa maraming negosyo sa ating bansa, maging sa buong mundo. Idagdag pa rito ang sunod-sunod na mga bagyong rumagasa sa Luzon at Vizayas. Gayundin ang El Niño na labis na nanalanta sa buong bansa, lalo na sa Mindanao. Ang tagtuyot lamang na dala ng El Niño ay nakabawas na ng tinatayang ikatlong bahagi ng kabuuang mga trabaho sa ating kanayunan.

Walang kontrol ang tao sa ganitong pangyayari ng kalikasan at ang magagawa natin ay maghanda para maibsan ang kanilang masamang epekto, lalo na sa mga manggagawa. Sa mga paghahanda lamang natin malalampasan ang mga pagsubok na ito. Mabuti na lamang, ngayong humupa na ang El Niño, maraming trabaho sa ating kanayunan ay nabalik na.

Bagama’t nabawasan ang trabaho sa agrikultura, ang dalawang iba pang pangunahing sektor ng ekonomiya—the industry and services sectors—ay nagtala ng pagdami ng trabaho. Industry generated 259,000 jobs or 5.5 % increase. While services generated 254,000 jobs or 1.8% growth. Ang mga sektor na ito ang mas matatag na sukatan ng ating ekonomiya dahil ang agrikultura ay pabago-bago ayon sa kalikasan. Idagdag pa rito ang pagtaas ng ating Gross National Product o GNP o sukat ng produksyon.

Inatasan ko ang Kagawaran ng Agrikultura na magpalabas ng PIB maliliit na pautang para dumami muli ang trabaho sa kanayunan. Ang atin namang Public Employment Services Office, o PESO, at Regional Quick Response Teams ng DOLE ay patuloy na umaalalay sa mga displaced workers sa pamamagitan ng counselling at referrals. May mga livelihood programs tayong ipinapatupad upang punan ang kawalan ng trabaho. May mga ahensya rin ng pamahalaan, tulad ng TESDA at OWWA, na nagbibigay ng job and livelihood training. Libo-libo ang natulungan ng pamahalaan sa ilalim ng mga programang ito.

May mga special programs din tayo para sa mga kabataan upang makatulong sila sa kanilang mga pamilya. Kabilang dito ang OYSTERS o Out-of-School Youth Serving Towards Economic Recovery. Libo-libo na ring mga kabataan ang nakinabang sa mga programang ito. Haming sa ibang bansa, itinuturing na matatag pa rin ang ating ekonomiya dahil na rin sa mga repormang ating ipinairal. Even Fitch Ratings had assured our government that it would retain its stable outlook on our country's foreign and local borrowings. Price of global bonds has also improved.

Ayon naman sa DTI, mula Enero hanggang Hulyo ng taong ito, ang approved investment ay umabot na sa halagang P22-B na tinatayang magbibigay ng trabaho sa may 39,000 libong katao.

Determinado ang aking administrasyon na makahikayat ng karagdagang puhunan bago matapos ang taong ito, para mas dumami ang trabaho ng ating mga mamamayan. Dinaragdagan pa rin natin simula noong Agosto ang pondo sa countryside development para makalikha ng mas maraming trabaho sa kanayunan.

Itong pera na utang ng nakaraang administrasyon, binabayaran ko sa ating mga local government units. Nguni't naglalagay tayo ng guidelines na sa mga rine-release na pondo sa kanila, dapat PIM sa bawat bayan ay gagamitin nila para sa micro finance. Iyon din ay makakapagbigay ng maraming trabaho.

Naniniwala rin ako na ang nalalapit na pagbisita ni Pangulong George Bush ng Amerika ay lalong magpapalakas ng tiwala ng mga mamumuhunan sa ating bansa. Ang dala niyang economic and military packages ay lalong magpapasigla ng kalakalan ng ating bayan.

Ang mga trabaho ay produkto ng pamumuhunan, at ang pamumuhunan ay resulta ng tiwala ng mga mangangalakal sa katatagan at kaayusan ng isang bansa. Kaya, dapat nating panatilihin ang katiwasayan ng ating bayan kung nais nating dumami ang trabaho para sa lahat. At pangunahin sa dapat nating gawin ang pagpapahinto ng mga siraan at sobrang pamumulitika na lumalason sa ating pagkakaisa at sumisira sa takbo ng ating pamumuhay.

Huwag na tayong makihalo sa kanila dahil malinaw naman na pansariling kapakanan lamang ang kanilang iniintindi at hindi nila alintana kung ang ginagawa nila ay nakakasira sa bansa. Totoong ito ang pinakamurang paraan para makakuha ng boto o para makapang-agaw ng kapangyarihan, pero ang kapalit naman nito ay ang ating pagkawatak-watak at pagbagsak ng ating ekonomiya.

We as a people have a job to do and the first thing is to ward off the incessant negativism and poison politics that is worsening divisiveness and derailing the national course. Isinasa-ayos na natin ang ating bansa, pero kailangang madaliin natin ito. Kailangan natin ang higit pang pagkakaisa para bumilis ang ating pagbabago at pag-unlad.

Ang crab mentality o paghila pababa ay nagpapalala sa ating mga problema. Ibaling natin ang ating atensyon sa pagsulong ng ating ekonomiya at madagdagan ang mga trabaho. Kung maraming trabaho, lalong gaganda ang takbo ng ekonomiya at maiibsan kung hindi man tuluyang masusugpo ang krimen at terorismo.

Gusto ko ring samantalain ang pagkakataong ito para batiin ang bagong hirang na Arsobispo ng Maynila, ang ginagalang nating Bishop Gaudencio Rosales. I'm confident that Bishop Rosales will carry the torch of faith as a catalyst for positive change and as an instrument of good governance, just as ably and valiantly as his predecessor.

Sa ating minamahal na Cardinal Sin na itinuturing nating kampeon ng pambansang demokrasya, maaaring hindi na natin siya makita, as often as we would want to or as we used to, but nonetheless, alam ko na nakahanda pa rin siyang magbigay ng kanyang makabuluhang payo at tulong sa oras ng ating pangangailangan.

Mga kababayan:

Ang pagdami ng trabaho ay nakasalalay sa pagsisikap ng bawat isa sa atin, sa pagsisikap na makamit ng tuluyan ang ganap na kaunlaran at katiwasayan para sa atin at sa ating bayan. Huwag nating pabayaang manaig ang mga salot sa

ating lipunan. Dahil kapag nagkaganoon, tuluyan ng mapapariwara ang bansa at ang mga susunod na henerasyon ay magiging kaawa-awa.

Maraming salamat.

No coup attempt vs. GMA would succeed, says New York Times editorial

The highly respected *New York Times* has opined that any attempt to topple the government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo by extra constitutional means, including a coup d'etat, is bound to fail.

In its editorial on Sept. 18, 2003, which was also carried by the International Herald Tribune on the same day, the NYT said that "there is a little chance of a coup attempt succeeding, as Arroyo's opponents don't wield the 'people' power that ousted the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and Arroyo's predecessor, Joseph Estrada."

The editorial also noted that the accusations of money-laundering against the First Gentleman, Jose Miguel Arroyo, "maybe politically-motivated" because they come from Sen. Panfilo Lacson who "is a presidential candidate and a friend of Estrada."

In its editorial, the NYT also called on the country's politicians, as well as other leaders, to wait for next year's elections and not to continue engaging in talks or rumors about plots to destabilize the government.

"Manila's political class bears a collective responsibility to confine its squabbling to the ballot box, rather than the courts or the barracks, and to start providing Filipinos with solutions rather than plots and rumors," the editorial said.

The editorial said that repeated coup rumors and allegations of corruption in high places are destabilizing the Philippine government "at a time when it needs more than ever to focus on repairing the battered economy and fighting poverty."

In a statement Friday, the President said that although there are still "intermittent" spate of rumors and speculations, the truth is that she had already consolidated the armed forces from top to bottom, from the most junior officers to the retired generals.

"They have given unequivocal support to the chain of command and I believed them," the President, who is the concurrent defense secretary, said.

According to the President, the whispers of a coup "are residual put-me-downs and will die down in time as reforms and justice take root."

The editorial also called on the President to decide once and for all whether she will run or not in next year's elections.

The President has consistently said that she did not want to be distracted by politics and would rather focus all her energies in solving the country's problems, notably in the fight against terrorism and poverty.

GMA stresses anew need for unity to hasten change and attract investors

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today stressed the need for unity and order to bring about change and progress in the nation in order to attract job generating investments.

"We as a people have a job to do and the first thing is to ward off the incessant negativism and poison politics that is worsening divisiveness and derailing the national course," the President said in her weekly radio address to the nation.

Let us put our nation in order but we have to do this fast, she said, adding that what the country needs today is more unity to accelerate change and progress.

The President said that jobs stem from investments and investments come as a result of confidence of businessmen in the stability and order of the nation.

Compared with other countries, the President said, our economy remains stable as shown by the assurance of Fitch Ratings that it will retain its stable outlook on the country's foreign and local borrowings.

She also said the coming visit of US President George W. Bush will strengthen the confidence of investors in our country.

Her administration is doing everything within its power to provide more jobs, citing concrete steps already taken, the President said.

She has instructed the Department of Agriculture to release P1 billion for loans to the country folk. The Public Employment Services Office (PESO) and the regional quick response teams of Department of Labor and Employment continue to help displaced workers and livelihood programs are being conducted, she said.

The President noted that while employment has dropped in the agricultural sector, this has been partly offset by an increase in the industry and services sectors. Industry generated 259,000 jobs or 5.5 percent increase while services generated 254,000 jobs or 1.8 percent growth.

Job generation, the President said, is dependent on the effort of every Filipino to work for total development and peace. "Let us not allow the scourges of society to prevail because that will lead to a deterioration of the country and render future generations helpless," she concluded.

GMA turns over check of P500,000 to help promote industrial peace in Laguna

STA ROSA, Laguna — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today turned over a check of P500,000 to the Laguna Labor Management Council (LLMC) to help promote industrial peace and harmony between the labor force and management in industries located in various techno parks in the province.

The President handed the check to Laguna Governor Teresita Lazaro in a simple ceremony held at the premises of Honda Cars Philippines inside the Laguna Technopark in this progressive town.

In her remarks at the turnover ceremony, the President said that she hopes that with the amount, the LLMC would continue to push for labor and management partnership "so that instead of losing, more jobs could be generated."

Among those who witnessed the check turnover were Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Honda president Mitsunari Takano, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Region 4 Director Maximo Lim, and some 30 officers of the LLMC, representing the labor, management and government sectors in the province.

The LLMC, a tripartite industrial peace council, forged in May last year a Social Accord for Industrial Peace, Harmony and Stability through the initiative of the DOLE-Region 4.

To implement the social accord, an Action Plan for 2003 was approved last June and part of it was the conduct of training program on conciliation and mediation, grievance handling, voluntary arbitration, and collective bargaining and negotiation.

The President lauded the industry sector for posting 5.5 increase in employment and the services sector for a 1.7 increase in employment.

Several members of the LLMC, particularly those from the labor sector, expressed their support to the President and her ongoing programs and reforms to strengthen labor-management cooperation.

The President also advised the members of the LLMC to inform their respective managements to directly connect with the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) if their firms are consuming more than one megawatt of power to enjoy lower cost.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: September 20, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071009235343/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept20.htm>

The President's Day: September 21, 2003

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PR auto industry competitive in Asean market, Ford Motor exec informs GMA

Ford Motor Company Philippines (FMCP) has so far exported 10,000 out of 14,000 vehicles targeted for sale abroad this year, highlighting the capability of the Philippine automobile industry to compete in the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) market, a Ford executive informed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Saturday.

FMCP president Henry Co conveyed the information to President Macapagal-Arroyo when she visited the P4 billion Ford plant inside the Laguna Technopark in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. She was accompanied by Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas.

Co said the FMCP export program makes significant contributions to the Macapagal-Arroyo administration's job creation scheme, aside from pumping millions of dollars into the country's foreign exchange reserves.

To date, he said that the export of Philippine-made Ford vehicles has generated \$155 million for the country's export trade.

Co said that the 10,000 Ford units were exported to Indonesia and Thailand.

He said the total number of Ford vehicles exported from the Philippines is expected to reach more than 100,000 units once the FMCP expansion program is completed within the next five years.

According to the FMCP president, a part of their expansion plans is the launching of locally made Mazda vehicles that would be marketed in the country and exported to Thailand and Indonesia by next year. Ford has a manufacturing tie up with Mazda, a Japanese carmaker.

The export of Ford vehicles, which are completely built in this country, has been made possible by the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), Co said.

He also said that Ford Motor Company Philippines is the "biggest customer of RP-sourced components and the only company with a positive trade balance."

Co thanked the President for signing in December 2002 Executive Order 156, which provides for a comprehensive industrial policy and directions for the motor vehicle development program, and the Value-based Excise Tax this year. He said these made the local automobile industry more competitive in the ASEAN market.

But, Co cited one problem for the local car manufacturers — the importation of second-hand vehicles that are mostly shipped through the Subic and Cebu ports.

For the uplift of the local automotive industry, the President directed Secretary Sto. Tomas to coordinate with Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) Chairman Felicito Payumo on a study on how to restrict the importation of used vehicles.

Statement of the President: Re Prime Minister Koizumi

We congratulate Prime Minister Koizumi for winning a renewed mandate to lead Japan. Japan is our biggest source of official development assistance and our second largest trading partner. Prime Minister Koizumi is a friend and partner of the Philippines. We look forward to continuously working with him in pushing for the peace, security and development of our region.

Case Vs. Honasan to be resolved with or without his counter affidavit

If Sen. Gregorio Honasan fails to submit to the Department of Justice (DOJ) by Tuesday (September 23) any counter-affidavit on his alleged involvement in the Oakwood military adventurism of July 27, 2003, the DOJ is expected to proceed with resolving the case, a Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) official said today.

DILG Undersecretary for legal and legislative affairs Agnes VST Devanadera said the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) has filed additional affidavits to bolster its case against the senator. The PNP is one of the agencies under the DILG.

Devanadera said that Senator Honasan has been ignoring the charges against him before the DOJ, probably because he knows the strength of evidence proving his participation in the Oakwood Hotel rebellion. "But, with or without his counter affidavit," she said, "we shall proceed to resolve the case."

Apart from the numerous affidavits executed by witnesses, including soldiers, Devanadera said the pieces of evidence that the CIDG operatives have gathered, include two videotapes from the closed circuit TV at the Oakwood Hotel, in Makati City. This shows that the evidences against Honasan and the rebel soldiers are "authentic and not planted."

At the same time, Devanadera said that the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has gathered supplemental affidavits showing the identity of not just five but 56 leaders of the Oakwood mutiny.

She said that the NBI collected additional evidences in a case filed against Army Capt. Milo Maestrecampo and other soldiers belonging to the rebel Magdalo group before Judge Romeo Barza of the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 16. The Magdalo leader had asked for a re-investigation of the case against them.

The large number of mutiny leaders, Denavera said, indicates that the Oakwood military adventure was not spontaneous as the Magdalo group had claimed. These leaders engaged in recruitment of soldiers that showed up at Oakwood as well as lined up rebel support outside Oakwood, she said.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye

Senator Lacson sounds like a broken record. His allegations regarding the San Francisco properties are a rehash of charges which have been referred by the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee to the Ombudsman. In a resolution, the Ombudsman dismissed the charges for lack of evidence. Clearly, this is part of his squid tactics to cover his own tracks.

Malacañang says gov't budget deficit under control, notes improvement in revenue collections

Malacañang assured the people today that the budget deficit of the national government "is firmly under control."

Secretary Emilia Boncodin of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said that “the increased spending in the third quarter is a deliberate decision by fiscal authorities to accelerate implementation of projects that had been delayed due to the tight rein imposed in the first quarter.”

Boncodin said that while the appetite for expenditures had been successfully restrained in the past two quarters, “we owe it to our people to allow them to benefit from such good performance.”

She said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo continued to be committed “to keep the cumulative deficit within target.

The DBM secretary also reported that, in the first six months of 2003, revenue collections by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Bureau of Customs (BOC) have exceeded targets by P24 billion.

“This is a positive sign that the fiscal burden will finally be tamed this year,” she said. In 2003, the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) expects the deficit-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio to decline to 4.7 percent from 5.2 percent in 2002, and this will progressively fall every year until the deficit is eliminated by about 2009, she added.

The Cabinet-level DBCC, which recommends fiscal policy and tracks the government’s fiscal position, clarified that the fiscal problems of the country started in 1998 after the Asian financial crisis.

From 1994 to 1997, it pointed out that the country enjoyed a fiscal surplus totaling over P30 billion, but it was wiped out in 1998. “By 2000, the deficit has ballooned to more than P136 billion in one year,” it added.

Boncodin said that when President Macapagal-Arroyo took over in January 2001, she immediately reversed the expenditure-driven fiscal stimulus policy implemented by the Estrada administration and switched to a government-initiated but private sector-led economic policy.

“Spending is not bad but if you are borrowing what you spend and not earning it from regular income, then the so-called fiscal stimulus is actually an irresponsible undertaking,” she said. “At the risk of the government becoming a drag on the economy, we were forced to clamp down on expenditures to ensure our fiscal sustainability.”

The DBM secretary allayed fears of an expenditure blowout. “Many sectors, including those in the academe, are encouraging government to spend more to compensate for private sector’s present cautiousness,” she said. “That would be the easiest thing to do, particularly with the tremendous pressures in a pre-election year. But the economy’s sustainability is very important to us. We will not trade that off for a short term gain.”

Boncodin admitted that the last two years have been difficult years for the fiscal sector. However, since January 2003, the numbers have improved, with the BIR and the BOC meeting their revenue targets, she said.

GMA seeks descendants of heroes support to advance national interests

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo stressed before heroes descendants today the need to focus attention on moving the country forward.

“Now that the Oakwood mutiny is behind us, it is time to refocus on pushing our country forward. We must now redirect our people’s energies away from too much poison politics and towards what we will do to sustain decent development, solidarity and progress,” she said.

She has been harping on this theme in the face of incessant negativism and divisiveness derailing the national course. She has also been underscoring the need for unity and order to accelerate change and progress in the nation.

The President made her comments this afternoon at Malacañang Ceremonial Hall after thanking the coalition of various foundations and civic organizations and historic clans who responded to the call of lawyer Antonio Meer, organizer of Bayani Tulong Sa Bayaning Kawal set up to provide support for soldiers on the field.

Meer, a grandson of Gen. Miguel Malvar of Batangas who was the last general to surrender to the United States forces in the war for independence, said an initial response of P2 million from the coalition.

“To you I say, yours are also an act of heroism in behalf of our Republic,” the President told the Malvar and Rizal families, Philippine Jaycees, UP Alumni, Sigma Rho, ABS Foundation, Ahon Movement, SM Foundation and others.

“It is incumbent upon our people to give our soldiers the faith, confidence, respect and support they need to perform their duty,” the President said.

The proceeds of the project will augment the benefits and privileges extended to enlisted men of the Armed Forces by the government, like housing and health services.

GMA: True reforms come with peace not with Martial Law

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said genuine reforms should be based on democratic processes and not through destabilization that could only lead us back to the dark days of the Martial Law years.

“Ang ipinaglalaman nating reporma ay sa pamamagitan ng demokrasya at hindi sa pamamagitan ng destabilisasyon para bumalik sa batas militar,” the President said at the Quezon City Hall Rising Garden where the September 21, 1972 declaration of Martial Law was recalled.

Attending the commemoration were the leaders and members of the 3,000-strong Sulong Batayang Sektor Koalisyon, representing the 14 basic sectors in the country. The group took the occasion to further push its reform agenda that it sees as being derailed because of the destabilization plots against the government.

The group said among those being derailed were the P130-billion coconut levy fund that should benefit coconut farmers and strengthen the coconut industry, the collection of the P38-billion Marcos loot to compensate the human rights victims and fast-track implementation of agrarian reform; resumption of peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that would lead to peace and development in Mindanao, and the war against graft and corruption.

More reforms have been realized by her administration in two and a half years than in 14 years of martial law, the President said.

The President said the threat of destabilization brought by the Oakwood mutiny last July 27 has waned. She said the members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) have already expressed their support to the chain-of-command and the Constitution.

She said she already ordered the AFP hierarchy to relay the various reforms being undertaken by the government down to the lowest ranks to further strengthen their commitment to the Constitution.

On the challenges the country faces today, she said everyone should always remember the spirit of the EDSA people power revolution and continue to uphold civilian rule in the country.

She said the present time calls for everyone to unite and show their nationalism and resolve for democracy and reform.

“Ituloy natin ang ating pagkakaisa upang manatili ang demokrasya at magtagumpay ang reporma sa ating bansa hindi lamang para sa atin kundi para sa ating mga anak at sa mga susunod pang henerasyon (Let’s continue our unity to uphold democracy and the success of reforms in our country not only for us but also for our children and the next generations),” she said.

The program ended with the singing of the “Bayan Ko” led by wheelchair-bound Richard Arceno, the leader of the persons with disabilities (PWDs) sector.

Afterwards the President discussed other issues and concerns with the sectoral leaders at the Quezon City hall licensing office.

Among those present were Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman, Secretary Marita Jimenez, National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Lead Convenor Teresita Deles, and Mayor Sonny Belmonte.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: September 21, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162424/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept21.htm>

The President's Day: September 22, 2003

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- **Statement of the President: Robbery Investigation**
- **Statement of the President: Martial Law**
- **GMA advisers see economic recovery in second half of 2003**
- **GMA to meet with Mahathir in New York**
- **GMA arrives in Zamboanga City en route to Jolo**
- **Sulu Governor says GMA visit to help project better image of the province**
- **GMA leads observance of 613th Foundation of Sulu**
- **GMA switches on button that energizes Luuk, Sulu barangay**
- **GMA lauds police, military in anti-crime operations**
- **GMA visits Agar-Agar farm in remote Sulu island**

Statement of the President: Ill-gotten Wealth

The more delay in the release of these funds means the greater is the injustice against our people. Whoever is working to impede the course of justice will have to answer to the people, especially those who had long been victims of social and political tyranny.

Statement of the President: Robbery Investigation

Crime does not pay, whether for petty snatchers or rogues in uniform. The Citibank robbery has been an international embarrassment and I commend the military and police for arresting the suspects in a determined and forceful fashion. The next step is to establish the links between this group and other underworld networks so that we can bring these criminal conspiracies out of the woodwork. This is part of a self-cleansing process within the AFP and the PNP as much as it is a serious crackdown on organized crime. Rogues in uniform will be exposed, arrested and prosecuted. I also take note of another robbery of the Lepanto Mining Company in Benguet and I direct the PNP to track down the suspects with the same degree of decisiveness and alacrity.

Statement of the President: Martial Law

We shall not take the bait of martial law because our democratic institutions are strong enough to withstand the onslaught of destabilization and we have adequate constitutional powers to pursue justice and reforms. Peace and order can be attained through the instruments of democratic vigilance, criminal justice and good governance and not necessarily through military rule. Martial law is an anachronism that goes against the worldwide trend of openness and liberalism. It is a weapon of last resort that we do not need, or seek to wield.

GMA advisers see economic recovery in second half of 2003

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's economic managers today expressed optimism that the economy will recover with a stronger performance expected in the next six months of 2003.

In a press statement, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, who is concurrently Director-General of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), said that exports growth will spur the economic recovery in the second half of the year.

The NEDA has forecast a 4.5 percent growth of the gross domestic product (GNP) in the second half of 2003 as compared to the 3.9 percent GNP growth rate posted in the January-June period.

Neri said that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration has laid the groundwork for growth-inducing sectoral policies that are expected to capture the financial flows from the economic recovery of the United States and Japan, the Philippines' two leading trading partners.

The sectoral policies, he pointed out, include a productivity program in agriculture that provides for use of hybrid rice and certified seeds, rehabilitation of the irrigation network and application of roll-on-roll-off port facilities and vessels.

The government has also lined up support for medium- and small-scale enterprises by enhancing their access to credit and exempting them from the Minimum Wage Law with the passage of the Barangay Business Enterprise Law, he said.

Other sectoral policies cover support for housing by lengthening loan repayment periods and reducing the bureaucratic requirements; fast-tracking micro-credit lending, particularly the release of P1 billion for loan applications already approved; and more timely payments of payables to government suppliers and contractors.

In a separate statement, Secretary Emilia Boncodin of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said that the "appetite for expenditures in the past two quarters" of 2003 had been contained, and that "the budget deficit of the national government is firmly under control."

Boncodin also noted that the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Bureau of Customs (BOC) have finally been meeting their revenue collection targets.

"In the first six months of the year, revenues have exceeded targets by P24 billion," she said. "This is a positive sign that the fiscal burden will finally be tamed this year."

The DBM secretary was likewise hopeful that the budget deficit would eventually be eliminated. "In 2003," she said, "the Development Budget Coordination Committee expects the deficit-to-GDP (gross domestic product) ratio to decline to 4.7% from 5.2% in 2002. This will progressively fall every year until the deficit is eliminated by about 2009."

In the meantime, Boncodin called on government agencies to exercise fiscal discipline in their operations and to direct resources to their best use.

GMA to meet with Mahathir in New York

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is set to hold one-on-one talks in New York with Malaysian Prime Minister Mohammad Mahathir, particularly on the Malaysian offer to host the resumption of peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in a radio interview this morning.

The President and Mahathir may also talk about issues concerning peace, security and development in the region, Bunye added.

The primary purpose of the President's New York visit is to address the 58th session of the United Nations General Assembly where she is expected to push the country's bid for a seat in the UN Security Council.

Bunye said that the UN Security Council seat is very important because it is one of the major organs of the UN and decides on most of the major world policies.

Over the prestige that goes with being a member of the Security Council, the Philippines will also be able to take part in the discussions and decision-making process of the world body, Bunye furthered said.

Bunye said that the Philippines has been angling for a seat in the Security Council for so long and now is the most opportune time to really go for it since a seat has been reserved for an Asian representative.

He expressed optimism on the chances of the Philippines landing a seat since the President herself would be making a pitch for it before the UN General Assembly.

While in New York, the President is also expected to meet with the foreign ministers and ambassadors from the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and discuss ways on how OIC member countries can help in the development of Mindanao, especially in the former conflict areas.

The President also plans to call on UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and meet with the members of the Filipino community in New Jersey.

From New York, the President goes to Rome (Sept. 27) for an audience with Pope John Paul II then Paris (Sept. 29) to address the 32nd general conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and visit the Mother House of the Religious of Assumption.

GMA arrives in Zamboanga City en route to Jolo

ZAMBOANGA CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived at 9:25 a.m. today at the Edwin Andrews Airbase here en route to Jolo, Sulu, where she was the guest of honor at the 613th founding anniversary of the province.

The President was met by government officials led by Governor Farouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and Chairman Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC).

Also in the President's party were Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Lead Convenor Teresita Quintos-Deles of the National Anti-Poverty Commission.

President Arroyo took a few minutes rest before boarding a helicopter for Luuk, Sulu, to inaugurate a Kapit-bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI) project of the DSWD in the town.

In Jolo, the President would deliver a speech as part of the province's 613th founding anniversary at the Sulu Sports Complex. She will also participate in the *Maligay* Festival, an annual event that showcases the rich cultural heritage of the Tausug tribe.

Local officials and residents in Sulu have expressed elation over the President's visit because they would be able to present their problems, particularly on the peace and order situation of the province.

Sulu Governor says GMA visit to help project better image of the province

JOLO, Sulu — Sulu Governor Yusup Jikiri today said that the visit here of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would help in projecting a better image of the province, which had been portrayed as a war-torn area by the media mainly due to the activities of the Abu Sayyaf.

"The President would fairly see for herself that Sulu is not as bad as it has been projected on the papers. We live normal lives here and it is as peaceful as you can get feel of it now," Jikiri said.

Jikiri also emphasized that the provincial government has been supportive of the military and police authorities in their campaign to attain sustainable peace and tranquility in the province, which has been tagged as home to a faction of the Abu Sayyaf terrorists.

“The Abu Sayyaf has weakened and with sincere efforts to cripple its strength, one day this problem would be eliminated in Sulu,” he said with optimism.

The governor said that the *Maligay* Festival, which is held as part of the celebration of the 613th founding anniversary of Sulu, showcases the rich cultural heritage of the Tausug tribe.

A *maligay* is a tower-like shape of artistically decorated colorful foodstuff such as steamed rice, native cakes, local delicacies, viands prepared by villagers during festivities like weddings, graduation, baptism, thanksgiving prayer and other religious celebrations.

The festival is a community-oriented annual felicitation in honor of the “*maligay*” draped in colorful display of the richness of the culture, lifestyle, tradition and values of the Tausugs.

The festival also fosters better understanding, peaceful co-existence and unity in diversity among the people in this province.

GMA leads observance of 613th Foundation of Sulu

JOLO, Sulu — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the observance of the 613th foundation of Sulu Governance and Public Administration and participated in the celebration of Maligay Festival.

The President landed at Jolo Sports Complex around 11:30 A.M. on board a Bell helicopter. She flew in from Luuk, Sulu where she presided over a ceremony that energized some 200 houses at Barangay Capual and distributed livelihood assistance to local farmers and fisher folks.

The President was received by Sulu Gov. Yusop Jikiri, Rep. Hussin Amin, Vice Gov. Abdel Anni, Jolo Mayor Hadji Suod Tan and Vice Mayor Hadja Delma Ynawat.

While on her way to the Provincial Sports Complex, the President stopped by the Agro-Industrial Exhibit located in front of the provincial capitol building. Twenty six municipalities and local government agencies are participating in the exhibition, which the President opened today.

During the anniversary program, President Macapagal-Arroyo presented assorted medicines to Mayor Tan and 50,000 units of canned goods to Maj. Gen. Gabriel Habacon, commander of the 104th Brigade.

The President also handed a check for P100,000 to Nursida Nain, president of Balik Bayan Livelihood Association, and another P100,000 check to the Pabahay Livelihood Association.

She also distributed certificates of ownership to some 40 beneficiaries of the Pabahay Project and deportees under the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAH) program, 1,000 hybrid coconut seedlings to the Farmers Association of Paticul, 10 bags of open pollinated variety (OPV) of registered corn seeds under the GMA Corn Program, 1,800 packets of assorted vegetables seeds to the Pabahay Livelihood Association, and 10 certificates of land titles under the Handog Titulo Program of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

One of the highlights in the 613th founding anniversary of Sulu was the Maligay Festival, which showcases the rich culture, lifestyle, tradition, and values of the Tausug, and aims to foster better understanding, peaceful coexistence, and unity among the diverse peoples of Sulu.

In Tausog culture, Maligay signifies thanksgiving, merrymaking, festivity, sharing, peace, security, abundance, prosperity and solidarity. The festival features spectacular events, like cultural presentation, parade, traditional sportsfest, native food exhibit, and beauty pageant.

GMA switches on button that energizes Luuk, Sulu barangay

LUUK, Sulu — Finally, after many years in the dark, some 200 houses in the remote Barangay Kapual here now have electricity after President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo officially switched on today the button that energized the barangay.

The President made a short visit here on board the presidential chopper before she personally led the 613th founding anniversary celebration of the province held this noon at the Sulu Sports Complex in Jolo, just a 2-minute walk from the Provincial Capitol of Sulu.

Before the ceremonial switch-on of the electric facility, the President inaugurated the Children's Playground in front of Luuk Municipal Hall.

The Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) Social Fund allocated P6.9 million for the project out of a loan grant from the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) of US\$ 1 million.

The President also handed over a check of P200,000 for the construction of day care center here, another check of P300,000 for the livelihood assistance for fishermen for the purchase of fishing boats, and P80,000 for the construction of solar dryer.

After the distribution of checks, the President turned over some 2,000 hybrid coconut seedlings worth P60,000 for the coconut seed bank here; 1,000 packets of assorted vegetable seeds worth P30,000 to support the nutrition program of the local government for small farmers and fisher folk.

She also turned over 25 bags of open-pollinated variety (POV) corn registered seeds variety BAR 10 and 12 worth P37,500 for the town's seed production program and assorted medicines to Luuk Mayor Abdurahman Arbison.

Among the Cabinet members who accompanied the President in her visit here were Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman of the Department of Socio Welfare and Development; Lead Convenor Teresita Quintos-Deles of the National Anti-Poverty Commission; and Chairman Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC).

Governor Parouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) also accompanied the President during her visit here. She was welcomed by local officials led by Luuk Mayor Arbison.

GMA lauds police, military in anti-crime operations

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today that the raid on robbers' lair in Taguig, Metro Manila is a serious crackdown on organized crime even as she commended the military and police for arresting the suspects in the series of bank heists that included one on Citibank in Makati City, the first on an international bank.

In a statement, the President said the next step is to establish the links between the robbers' group and other underworld networks "so that we can bring these criminal conspiracies out of the woodwork."

"This is part of a self-cleansing process within the AFP and the PNP as much as it is a serious crackdown on organized crime," the President said.

Saying crime does not pay whether for petty snatchers or rogues in uniform, she said the culprits would be exposed, arrested and prosecuted.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in a press briefing that the President expressed elation over the positive results of the raid which was actually part of a PNP clampdown on robbery syndicates.

The raid netted 12 suspected robbers, some of whom were former policemen.

In a related development, Bunye denied reports that Malacañang has given the go signal for summary executions in the wake of the recent spate of crimes, saying it will not condone any extra-judicial acts.

He also said the President has already asked the PNP to coordinate with the National Press Club in the solution of cases involving journalists.

It is in the wake of this recent spate of crimes that rumors about another coup attempt and the possible declaration of martial law surfaced which Malacañang has repeatedly denied.

Bunye said in the press briefing the President has effectively consolidated the Armed Forces from top to bottom and that she enjoys wide support from the police and the military.

GMA visits Agar-Agar farm in remote Sulu island

MARUNGAS, Hadji Panglima Tahil, Sulu—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today made a quick visit to this remote island to personally inspect the huge agar-agar (carrageenan) farm here.

The presidential party, which included civilian and local officials, rode in six speedboats from the port of Jolo in going to the island. Travel time was about 20 minutes.

The President was the guest of honor this noon at the 613th founding anniversary celebration of the province held at the Sulu Sports Complex in Jolo.

The President stayed for about 30 minutes in the island before boarding the presidential helicopter for the hop to Zamboanga City where she was scheduled to visit the Camp Navarro General Hospital in the city.

During her visit to the island, the President was accompanied by Chairman Michael Defensor of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Lead Convenor Teresita Deles of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, Governor Parouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and Sulu Governor Yusop Jikiri.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya and Major Gen. Roy Kyamko, commanding general of the Southern Command (Southcom), also joined the President's trip to this island but on a separate speedboat.

The seaweed farm here, which literally encircles the island, is being funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The US government has earlier pledged to extend financial support, mostly in the form of grants, to residents of Mindanao, particularly those in conflict-affected areas.

Earlier, the President also visited Luuk, Sulu where she switched on the electric facility that energized some 200 houses in Barangay Kapual.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President's Day: September 22, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162437/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept22.htm>

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Military retirees, business group, former C.O.P.A. member pledge unqualified support for GMA

The umbrella organization of all the military retirees' organizations, the Federation of Retired, Commissioned and Enlisted Officers (FORCES), has pledged its unqualified allegiance and unwavering support for the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, saying it will do its "utmost best" to help in the attainment of a sustainable political, economic and military stability in the country.

Composed of retired soldiers, from the rank of general down to sergeant, FORCES has among its member organizations the Association of Retired Master Sergeants and the Last Watering Hole Association, Inc. that has as its members retired officers from the different services in the military.

It also boasts of individual members from the military organizations that have as members both active and retired military officers such as the Association of Generals and Flag Officers (AGFO).

"Rest assured that FORCES shall go hand in hand with the Arroyo administration in its endeavors to bring prosperity, unity and lasting peace and order in our beloved nation," the group said in its manifesto to the President.

In separate manifestos, the AGFO and the Last Watering Hole Association also expressed unequivocal support for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The AGFO, in a board resolution, called upon the government and the people "to restrain unscrupulous politicians and/or groups from exploiting the situation for their own ulterior motives to the grave prejudice of national interest."

It also asked that the Senate investigation on the Jose Pidal case be concluded "so that the senators can attend to their constitutional duty of legislation."

The Last Watering Hole Association, also in a manifesto, reiterated its unending loyalty and support to the President's continuing efforts to build a strong Republic.

In a related development, the officers and members of the Zonta Club of Pasig Foundation Inc. also sent a message of admiration and congratulations to the President for her resolution of the mutiny in Makati by misguided officers and men of the Armed Forces.

“Her wisdom and courage reflect an admirably worthy leadership; her decisions and resolution show astute understanding and awareness, and successfully resolved the crisis at no loss of life or property; her swift diffusion of the danger has minimized the extent of adverse national and international repercussions,” the message said.

Meantime, noted businessman Amaury R. Gutierrez has dissociated himself from the Council on Philippine Affairs (COPA), saying he has resigned from the organization over a year ago because of “differences in our perception of COPA policy matters.”

“Since then, I have not participated in COPA’s activities nor have I been consulted on any matter related to the organization’s policies,” Gutierrez said.

Gutierrez made the clarification in view of numerous stories in media regarding destabilizing actions by COPA.

“I want you to know that I’m no longer a member of COPA,” Gutierrez told the President in a personal letter handed to Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo.

In that letter she expressed full support for the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

“I made a promise to Dña. Eva Macapagal in the early days of our association that I shall never abandon Gloria in her political career and I intend to stand by that promise,” Gutierrez said.

Statement of the President: Mindanao peace and development initiatives

The hunt for Al-Ghozi will continue in the sidelines of our advancing peace development initiatives in Mindanao. Muslims, Christians and Lumads are joining hands with the rest of the country in working onwards to development and prosperity. We shall reinforce the support of other nations for our national goals when we travel to the UN in New York and Paris shortly. We are steadily consolidating the domestic and international components of national security and development. Today, we greet all Muslim Filipinos and the world Islamic community in commemorating Isra wal Miraj, as we pray for greater peace, harmony and understanding.

Statement of the President: Alerts mere tactical decisions

These alerts are tactical decisions that are made from time to time and do not impact on the overall state of national stability. In particular, special alert in the Metro Area are part of our overall security plan to provide safety and peace of mind to the millions of people here. These are a deterrent and protective measure and should not cause undue alarm. We need sustained vigilance and I call upon our people to cooperate with the authorities to check any threats to public order.

Statement of the President: Investigate “ghost payroll”

All department and agencies should look into possible “ghost payrolls” and purge these immediately. This is one of the worst forms of robbery of the public coffers, especially if done by purported law enforcers. Those who benefit from it should go to jail.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: A leader’s options

The nation is undergoing extraordinary circumstances and it is but natural for any national leader to weigh the options of service, sacrifice and responsibility. Although this decision is entirely in the hands of the President alone, many people think that she would be forsaking the country if she did not vie for the polls, despite her earlier decision. But in the end this is a matter of conscience, destiny and divine guidance. We must be patient enough to wait for the decision because there are many other priorities that have to be served and these are uppermost in the President’s order of business.

Peace and development are GMA's priorities in Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today that the administration is committed to advancing the peace and development initiatives in Mindanao.

The President, who concluded today a two-day visit to Jolo, Sulu, and Zamboanga City, lauded the cooperation of Muslims, Christians and Lumads with the rest of the nation in working for the development of Mindanao.

In a press statement, President Macapagal-Arroyo said that she will “reinforce the support of other nations for our national goals” during her foreign travels to New York, Rome and Paris starting Wednesday (September 24).

Apart from addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York City, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo will also meet with Malaysian Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir on the peace process in Mindanao, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said in an interview with *Radyo ng Bayan*.

Malaysia is brokering the resumption of peace talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Bunye said that the President likewise hopes to meet with leaders of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) on a Philippine request for observer status in meetings of the OIC.

“*Mayroon ding mga binabalak na panayam ang ating Pangulo sa ating mga kababayan sa Amerika, particular doon sa New Jersey kung saan maraming mga Pilipino ang naninirahan* (Our President plans to meet with the Filipino community, particularly in New Jersey),” Bunye said.

In Jolo Monday, President Macapagal-Arroyo participated in the celebration of the 613th anniversary of the Sultanate of Sulu and in the Maligay festival. She also inaugurated several livelihood and development projects, including the electrification of some 200 houses in Barangay Kapual in Luuk, Sulu.

In Zamboanga City, she visited soldiers wounded in battles with outlaws and dissidents, who were confined in a military hospital. She also conferred with senior military officers led by Gen. Narciso Abaya, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Asked if the President's visit to Mindanao had something to do with efforts to recapture Indonesian terrorist leader Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi, Bunye said the President and the military leaders have discussed the continued hunt for the escaped terrorist.

The President said that “the hunt for Al-Ghozi will continue in the sidelines of our advancing peace and development initiatives in Mindanao.”

Palace cites strong fundamentals that could foster economic growth

Strengthening macro-economic fundamentals coupled with prudent economic policies of the government will ensure the country's economic growth for the second half of the year.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said during radio interview that the Philippines' economic fundamentals remain strong and that the country's economic performance continues to be better than those of our Asian neighbors.

The government is certain that it will be able to meet its full-year growth target. The robust growth of the domestic demand will offset the weakness in the agriculture output brought about by the El Niño weather phenomenon, Bunye said.

“We are on the right track as far as development is concerned. Our economic managers expect the agriculture sector to post substantial growth, in terms of employment and production, once favorable weather prevails,” Bunye said.

The expected strong output in the agriculture sector during the second half of the year will help strengthen the export sector. The strong economic growth for the second half of the year will enable the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) to grow by 4.5 percent for the second half of 2003, from 3.9 percent from January to July.

The government expects the economy to bounce back sharply in the second half this year on the back of higher exports to the United States and Japan, which are the Philippines’ top trading partners.

Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said that the government has already laid the groundwork for growth inducing sectoral policies that would allow the Philippines to take advantage of the opportunities presented by higher demand from the United States and Japan.

Pump-priming activities by the government will inject new life into the agricultural sector where the unemployment rate has risen to record levels as of July this year due to El Niño.

GMA to advance RP’s peace and development thrusts in 5-day working trip abroad

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will advance the country’s peace and development initiatives, particularly in Mindanao, during her five-day working visit to the United States, Italy and France.

Although the President will leave late Wednesday evening, her working trip officially starts Thursday, September 25, when she and her official delegation arrive at the Newark International Airport in New Jersey. From the airport, the President and her party will motor to the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City.

In a formal statement, the President said she will reinforce the support of other nations for the country’s national goals during the New York and Paris leg of her trip.

In New York, the President will address the 58th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and in Paris, she will speak at the 32nd General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

“We are steadily consolidating the domestic and international components of national security and development,” the President said.

The President’s first official engagement on Thursday is a 30-minute meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad at the UN Building. The outgoing Malaysian leader would also address the 58th session of the UNGA.

The two leaders are expected to discuss the scheduled resumption of the formal peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which is being hosted by Kuala Lumpur.

Afterward, she would have a luncheon with officials of the US Institute of Peace to be followed by a roundtable discussion with the US media at her suite at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

On Friday, September 26, the President would have a breakfast meeting at the Asia Society Building hosted by the Asia Society and Council on Foreign Relations.

At 10:45 a.m., the President will deliver her address before the 58th Session of the UNGA at the Plenary Hall of the UN headquarters in New York.

The President will be the fourth speaker of the day. The UN has requested all heads of delegation to speak for only 15 minutes.

She would then call on UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at the latter's office at the UN headquarters.

The President would then have a luncheon meeting with the foreign ministers and ambassadors of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) at the Delegates' Lounge of the UN Building.

After this, she would meet with the International Board of Advisors at the Carnegie Suite of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

In the evening, the President would meet with the Filipino community at St. Peter's College in Jersey City before the eight-hour flight to Rome.

She and her party would stay for two days in Rome highlighted by the meeting with Pope John Paul II and the Filipino community.

On September 29, she would deliver her address before the 32nd General Conference of the UNESCO in Paris.

In Paris, the President would visit the Mother House of the Religious of the Assumption and also with Filipino community leaders in France.

She and her official delegation are expected to arrive back in Manila before noon of September 30.

GMA unveils package of benefits for soldiers

IPIL, ZAMBOANGA SIBUGAY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today unwrapped a package of incentives for the officers and men of the armed forces, particularly those fighting in the battlefields of Mindanao.

Speaking at the 4th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army based in Tungawan, Zamboanga Sibugay, the President disclosed several benefits that include education, housing and medical aid to soldiers wounded in firefight against secessionist rebels in Mindanao.

Despite the heavy downpour upon her arrival in Tungawan, the President was warmly received and cheered by the big crowd composed of public school teachers, local government officials and employees and residents of neighboring municipalities.

The President said soldiers who were wounded and awarded medals and citations will be given priority to housing and educational benefits.

“Kasama iyon sa inyong bala, sa inyong kabayanihan (It's part of your bullet, of your heroism),” the President said.

Under her administration, the President said she had proclaimed land sites that can accommodate housing for at least 30,000 up to 60,000 soldiers.

The President urged the soldiers to take advantage of the benefits provided under the Pag-IBIG plan of the government.

During her visit at the 4th Infantry Battalion headquarters, the President also donated some P50,000 worth of assorted foodstuffs and medicines.

The donated items were handed to Col. Joselito Bernardo, commanding officer of the 4th IB under the supervision of the 102nd Infantry Brigade commander Col. Emmanuel Cayton.

The President said these medicines were intended for the soldiers everytime they get sick and wounded in the battlefield.

The President expressed pity for the soldiers, particularly those in the battlefield, who could not avail of immediate medical attention, particularly when military physicians are not available.

She said she wanted AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya to look into their problems and to possibly enter into an agreement with the Secretary of the Department of Health to assign at least one military physician in all government hospitals.

The President said with this arrangement, soldiers getting sick or wounded in the battlefield need not go far to get treatment but can only proceed to the nearest hospital where a military physician is assigned.

“I hope that this program will be implemented soon so that our soldiers would be able to get the immediate treatment they deserve in the nearest hospital in their area of operation,” the President added.

GMA cites peace, livelihood, education priorities for Sulu

ZAMBOANGA CITY — A stable peace and order situation, livelihood and education are the priorities set by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for the province of Sulu.

Speaking during the celebration Monday of the 613th anniversary of Local Government and Public Administration of Sulu, the President assured Filipino-Muslim constituents of Sulu that her government will continue to bring progress and development to Southern Philippines, particularly to the province of Sulu.

The President was received by enthusiastic Jolojanos who took every inch of opportunity just to take a glance and have a handshake with the Chief Executive.

The President said that upon her return to Manila, she will study the student-classroom ratio of every public school in Sulu so that the government can provide the necessary upgrading of the education system in the province.

She said that after evaluating the situation of education in Sulu, she will release appropriate funds to the Department of Education to construct additional classrooms in the different public schools all over Sulu to accommodate a greater number of students.

At present, the classroom-student ratio of the province is one room for a hundred students packed like sardines in almost all public schools.

In areas where there is unstable peace and order situation, the President said she will initiate the distance learning process of education by adopting the program, “Education by Television.”

The Chief Executive also assured Sulu constituents that the government will immediately start the rehabilitation of two public hospitals in the province and the delivery of necessary medical equipment and services to the people.

She will refer to the Department of Health the allocation of necessary funds to fix Sulu Provincial Hospital and Pangutaran Hospital, even the deployment of health personnel to far-flung areas, especially those who are presently affected by tuberculosis and malaria.

Other presidential actions for Sulu include the rehabilitation of Patikul and Talipao water systems, construction of a cold storage for the Provincial Agriculturist Office so that farmers and fisherfolk could store their harvests before selling them to traveling merchants.

The President also encouraged residents living in the mountains who own vast tracks of land to plant cassava because root-crops will sell not only locally but also in the international market with the help of the government.

She said that she already directed the DPWH to complete the on-going construction of Sulu Circumferential Road to make travel for farmers easier.

“We can develop Sulu not by the rule of the gun, but by peaceful means. Together let us fight rebellion in Sulu,” the President stressed.

The President made the first-ever awarding of six Rajah Baguinda Most Outstanding Tausugs. The awardees were Dr. Cabile Asian, former Senator Santanina Rasul, Dr. Jaman Imian, Prof. Nurulaji Misuari, Dr. Abraham Sakili and Justice Jainal Rasul.

The Rajah Baguinda award was issued by virtue of Sulu Governor Yusof Jikiri’s Administrative Order 2-02-A as a showcase of the Maligay Festival, an event that revives for the first time the cultural heritage of Sulu.

Soldier-awardees priority in housing and other benefits — GMA

IPIL, Zamboanga Sibugay — Soldiers who have received military awards for their heroic actions in battle will be given priority in the list of soldiers applying for housing and other benefits in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

This was announced by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo this morning in Tungawan town, this province, where she made a one-hour side-trip before her return to Manila after visiting Sulu province Monday.

The President declared this policy after conferring the Gold Cross, Bronze Cross, and Military Merit medals to eight soldiers of the Philippine Army in a simple ceremony held at the mess hall of the 4th Infantry Battalion based in this town.

Those who received the Gold Cross medals were 2Lts Marcelo Valdez and Filven Noche; T/Sgt. Eufrazio Flores, Jr. and S/Sgt. Francisco Barcoma.

The Bronze Cross medals were presented to Capt. Epifanio Gaminde VI and M/Sgt. Felix Blanco, while the Military Merit medals were given to T/Sgt. Wilmer Fontanilla and Sgt. Diego Lood, all of the Philippine Army.

“These soldiers have shown extraordinary acts in the battlefield in Jolo and Siocon during the recent encounters with members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group,” the President said.

The 4th Infantry Battalion is only 2-weeks old in the province after it replaced the 33rd IB which was sent to Jolo, Sulu where the former came from.

Witnessing the awarding ceremony were 102nd Brigade Commander Col. Emmanuel Cayton and South Command chief Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko.

The President said all awardees including those who received the military merit medals are entitled to the priority scheme in the application for housing or loans to buy their own land where they could build their houses.

She said she also approved recently the amount of P100 million for the immediate purchase of military uniforms, combat shoes, raincoats and other needed paraphernalia of the soldiers “who are risking their lives to protect the Constitution and the entire Filipino nation.”

Datumanong clarifies judicial council meeting

An inter-department meeting presided by Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong was aimed at enhancing the speedy dispensation of justice and not focused on a particular case, like the controversial Kuratong Baleleng multiple murder case.

Datumanong issued the clarification to dismiss insinuations that the council that met Monday was designed to prepare for the expected Supreme Court decision on on the Kuratong Baleleng case.

“No. It’s not about Kuratong Baleleng case,” Datumanong said. “It was about the cooperation and coordination of various agencies in the gathering of evidence and testimonies which we can present to the court so that we can have a speedy dispensation of justice.”

Meeting at the headquarters of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), the group, called the Council for the Criminal Justice System, is composed of representatives from the DOJ, the Philippine National Police, Department of Interior and Local Government, NBI and the courts.

Datumanong said it was the first meeting since three weeks ago when they agreed to form the council.

Datumanong said that while the celebrated Kuratong Baleleng case was mentioned during the meeting, discussions were centered on law enforcement and prosecution.

“It’s all about how the law enforcement agencies of the government and the prosecution arm will be able to enforce the law and apply the rule of law,” Datumanong said.

Datumanong stressed that he has no information about the status of the case with the Supreme Court. “We don’t know whatever the decision of the high tribunal on the case but we are prepared because it’s part of our mandate,” he added.

The Justice Secretary also said the council has no definite calendar but can be convened “once in a while to assess our capability on what we are supposed to do, such as, to enforce laws and to apply the rule of law to anyone.”

GMA names Ermita new Defense Chief

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today appointed Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita as new Secretary of National Defense, replacing Angelo Reyes who resigned a month after the July 27 Oakwood mutiny.

In a press briefing, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the appointment of Ermita to the post, concurrently held by the President, in an acting capacity, was made in advance “in the interest of the country.”

Bunye said that Ermita was supposed to take over the DND portfolio in six weeks time but the announcement was advanced because of the President’s five-day working visit to New York, Rome and Paris, which starts Wednesday.

Ermita, who is also the concurrent chairman of the Government Peace Negotiating Panel in talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, was acting DND secretary when the President assumed the presidency in late 2001.

He was Vice Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces from 1986 to 1988. He was also DND Undersecretary from 1988 to 1992 during the term of President Corazon Aquino.

The DND post became vacant when Reyes, in the aftermath of the Oakwood mutiny, resigned in what Malacañang described as “an act of sacrifice” and “a good gesture on the part of the secretary.”

Former President Fidel Ramos said Ermita was a good choice, saying he is well rounded in military and civilian matters. He also said Ermita has a good image internationally as a negotiator.

“He should continue his job as negotiator so that he will have more clout,” Ramos said.

Ramos advised the new DND chief to consolidate all armed forces units and their counterparts in the DILG so that they will have more coordination in their operations.

GMA designates Guingona as caretaker during her five-day trip abroad

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today designated Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. as caretaker during her five-day working visit to New York, Rome and Paris, from September 25-30.

In her letter, the President asked the Vice President “to act for and in my behalf during my absence.”

The President is scheduled to leave late tomorrow for New York, the first leg of her trip, to address the 58th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

In a statement, the President said that during her visit to New York and Paris, she would advance the country’s peace and development initiatives, particularly in Mindanao.

While in the United Nations, the President will also meet with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and the foreign ministers and ambassadors of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Malaysia and the OIC member countries are involved in the ongoing peace process in Mindanao.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: September 23, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20081119030209/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept23.htm>

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- **Statement of the President: Re Designation of VP as government caretaker**
- **Statement of the President: Re Secretary Ermita**
- **Statement of the President: Re Bar exams leak**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re 2004**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Pulse Asia**
- **New DND chief to fast-track GMA-initiated reforms**
- **Guingona wishes GMA 'successful journey'**
- **No decision yet on GMA's plans for 2004 — Palace**
- **Malacañang sees RP economy to bounce back**
- **GMA leaves tonight for five-day trip to advance RP's foreign policy anchored on peace and development**

Statement of the President: Re Designation of VP as government caretaker

The designation of the Vice President as government caretaker while I am away is a routine, institutional act and there is nothing special about it. Some people are sowing intrigues about our policy differences with the Vice President but these are not pertinent to his designation. I am confident in his full capacity and resolve to uphold and implement Constitutional governance and he will have the full support of the Executive Branch.

Statement of the President: Re Secretary Ermita

I call on the Armed Forces, the Defense department and the public to lend their full support for Secretary Ermita. He comes with an impressive track record in peace, development and security management. He has three priorities: sustain the momentum of reforms in the military organization, bring the peace process into the mainstream of defense doctrine, and push forward the AFP modernization program. I am confident his impressive government record and vast experience will lead him on.

Statement of the President: Re Bar exams leak

Cheating is a bad ticket to the law profession. The Supreme Court did right and we hope that the people responsible for the leak are identified and charged. I am appalled that would-be lawyers are capable of, or can get away with, such dishonesty. This is a grave threat to the integrity of our system of justice. More stringent measures are needed to prevent a recurrence of the shameful incident.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re 2004

We have to wait for the President's decision. The media agenda cannot force it and she has chosen to focus on vital affairs of state. Her trip abroad is important to national security and development and she has a full schedule waiting in New York. She considers it more important to anticipate the fruits of her trip rather than deliver any message on the 2004 polls.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Pulse Asia

Senator Lacson's politicking has undercut trust in the Presidency and other national institutions including the legislature and the judiciary in a poisoned political atmosphere. Our society is in the middle of a mood swing towards negativism instigated by malicious mudslinging. We have seen the worst and we think the ratings have bottomed out. There are ups and downs and the President has learned to live with them.

New DND chief to fast-track GMA-initiated reforms

Defense Secretary-designate Eduardo Ermita said that he will fast-track reforms initiated by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to further strengthen the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and respond to grievances aired by some sectors in the military.

The President named Ermita, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, as defense secretary Tuesday (September 23) while he was on an official mission in the Middle East.

A three-term congressman of the 1st district of Batangas, Ermita will assume the DND post on September 30 upon his return with the President from trips to New York, Rome and Paris. Ermita is an official member of the presidential entourage in the five-day foreign trip.

In an interview with *Radyo ng Bayan*, Ermita noted that President Macapagal-Arroyo, while serving concurrently as defense secretary in the past three weeks, introduced AFP reforms, like speeding up delivery of adequate logistics to soldiers in the battlefield, releasing P100 million for soldiers' boots, ponchos and battle wear, and providing housing for some military families.

Under DND Order 165 issued by the President in her capacity as concurrent defense secretary, the maximum amount allowed for contract approvals by AFP officers was raised from their outdated 1996 levels. These measures are expected to reduce the practice of splitting contracts and so-called conversion to make urgently needed purchases.

"Ating itutulak upang mapabilis ang reporma, lalo na 'yong mga bagay na naging sanhi ng mga ginawang kaguluhan ng mga sundalo o opisyal noong July 27. Makakasiguro tayo na mabibilis ang mga pagpapatupad ng mga reporma na inutos ni Presidente... (I'll push for fast implementation of reforms, especially those in response to the causes of the July 27 military mutiny. I can assure you that the President's reforms will be implemented immediately)," he said.

Ermita said that the President may have plans for appointing a new adviser on the peace process. In the meantime, however, he will continue that function as peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) are forthcoming.

He noted that President Macapagal-Arroyo will have a meeting in New York City with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad whose regime is brokering a peace parley between the Philippine government and the MILF.

The incoming defense secretary appealed to the Filipino people to unite and help the government in efforts to attain peace, stability and progress.

Guingona wishes GMA 'successful journey'

Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. today said he "humbly values" the decision of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo designating him to act for and on my behalf "as head of the government caretaker committee during her five-day working visit to New York, Paris and Rome.

Guingona's spokesperson, Danilo Venida, said the Vice President "humbly values the gesture and will work closely with the officials and people in government in discharging this duty."

"Vice President Guingona joins our countrymen in wishing the President Godspeed and a safe, successful journey," Venida said.

Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo sent the President's letter designating the Vice President as government caretaker by fax to the Office of the Vice President at 9:32 a.m. today.

“I am confident that as always this arrangement will ensure national stability and delivery of basic services and that you will always uphold the interest of the nation,” the President said in her letter to Guingona dated Sept. 24, 2003.

The Vice President is expected to join members of the Cabinet and other top government officials at the send-off ceremonies for the President at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport at 11:00 p.m. tonight.

It is the fifth time this year that the President has designated Guingona as caretaker in her absence.

The Vice President was named caretaker when the President visited Kuwait from Feb. 2 to 4; Malaysia, from Feb. 23 to 25; the United States from May 17 to 26; and South Korea and Japan from June 2 to 7, 2003.

No decision yet on GMA’s plans for 2004 — Palace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has no final plan yet on whether to run in the 2004 elections or not.

“As far as the President is concerned, there is no final decision yet on this matter,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said, reacting to reports that the President’s candidacy next year is a “done deal.”

“*Ang bagay na ito ay pinagiisipan* pa (This matter is being studied). But let’s be patient. Let’s wait for the President to make her decision,” Bunye said.

Bunye said whatever will be the decision of the President “it’s a matter of conscience, destiny and divine guidance.”

Presidential Political Liaison Officer Joey Rufino also clarified reports indicating that the President is definitely going to be picked as the administration’s candidate in next year’s presidential elections.

In a separate radio interview over *Radyo ng Bayan*, Rufino said the standard bearer of the ruling Lakas-NUCD party has yet to be discussed in a meeting on October 7 to be attended by Cabinet members, officials of government agencies, elected senators, congressmen, governors and city mayors.

While the presidential candidate would be one of the topics to be discussed in the Lakas Party national directorate meeting, Rufino said other items in the agenda include party matters and policies.

During the party meeting, Rufino said party members will also express their support for the President and her program of government.

Malacañang sees RP economy to bounce back

The country’s economic growth that is being stymied by the too much politicking and a destabilization attempt by mutinous soldiers last July is expected to bounce back, Malacañang said today.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said a better quality of life for Filipinos is expected soon because of the social and welfare program of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Deputy Presidential Spokesman Ricardo Saludo also shared the view in an interview with the ABS-CBN News Channel (ANC) in reference to the latest Pulse Asia survey which affected the President’s approval rating.

“I think it’s important to note one aspect of the Pulse Asia survey indicating that great many of our people anticipate better quality of life next year,” Bunye said in a news briefing in Malacañang.

“So, this could be indicative of a possible upswing in the ratings of the President in the future survey,” he added.

Saludo also noted that during the first semester of this year, the country's economy suffered a major setback as a result of the Iraq War and the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus which dampened tourism and investment.

He also blamed too much politics and the foiled attempt by mutinous soldiers to grab power last July 27 have contributed in pulling down the President's rating.

"The survey was done at the height of the controversy when Senator (Panfilo) Lacson was making all the charges. But eventually you will note that he has failed to support his charges with hard and documented evidence," Bunye said.

"We have seen the Oakwood incident, we have seen the effect on the peso, we have seen the effect on unemployment and all the work factors," Bunye said, in reference to the possible causes of the downtrend in the President's rating.

What the President will do in the coming months, Bunye said, is "to concentrate on doing what she has been doing and that's improving the economy, and with the improve perception of the economy, improve perception of the quality of life. I think things will be better next time around," Bunye said.

Saludo also expressed optimism for a significant economic rebound.

"We feel this is bottoming out that we're seeing. We're probably seeing the worst of this. And we're hoping that the economy starts to grow again, all of that will eventually rebound to an economic pickup in the Philippines," Saludo said.

With positive outlook for the economy, Saludo added that it would mean a big turnaround "particularly in the quality of life, and certainly even in the approval and trust ratings of the President."

GMA leaves tonight for five-day trip to advance RP's foreign policy anchored on peace and development

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo leaves tonight for New York, the first leg of her five-day working visit to the United States, Italy and France, in the pursuit of the country's foreign policy anchored on peace, progress and commitment to the global fight against terrorism.

During her speaking engagements and talks with foreign dignitaries, the President will also advance the country's peace and development initiatives, particularly in Mindanao.

The President has designated Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. as government caretaker while she is on her official mission abroad.

She said that she is confident in the Vice President's "full capacity and resolve to uphold and implement Constitutional governance and he will have the full support of the Executive Branch."

In a separate statement, the Vice President said that he "humbly valued" the President's decision to designate him as government caretaker as she wished the President "Godspeed" and a "safe, and successful journey."

Although the President will leave late Wednesday evening, her working trip officially starts Thursday, September 25, when she and her official delegation arrive at the Newark International Airport in New Jersey. From the airport, the President and her party will motor to the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City.

In a formal statement, the President said she will reinforce the support of other nations for the country's national goals during the New York and Paris leg of her trip.

In New York, the President will address the 58th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and in Paris, she will speak at the 32nd General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

“We are steadily consolidating the domestic and international components of national security and development,” the President said.

The President’s first official engagement on Thursday is a 30-minute meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad at the UN Building. The outgoing Malaysian leader would also address the 58th session of the UNGA.

The two leaders are expected to discuss the scheduled resumption of the formal peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which is being hosted by Kuala Lumpur.

Afterward, she would have a luncheon with officials of the US Institute of Peace to be followed by a roundtable discussion with the US media at her suite at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

On Friday, September 26, the President would have a breakfast meeting at the Asia Society Building hosted by the Asia Society and Council on Foreign Relations.

At 10:45 a.m., the President will deliver her address before the 58th Session of the UNGA at the Plenary Hall of the UN headquarters in New York.

The President will be the fourth speaker of the day. The UN has requested all heads of delegation to speak for only 15 minutes.

She would then call on UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at the latter’s office at the UN headquarters.

The President would then have a luncheon meeting with the foreign ministers and ambassadors of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) at the Delegates’ Lounge of the UN Building.

After this, she would meet with the International Board of Advisors at the Carnegie Suite of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

In the evening, the President would meet with the Filipino community at St. Peter’s College in Jersey City before the eight-hour flight to Rome.

She and her party would stay for two days in Rome highlighted by the meeting with Pope John Paul II and the Filipino community.

On September 29, she would deliver her address before the 32nd General Conference of the UNESCO in Paris.

In Paris, the President would visit the Mother House of the Religious of the Assumption and also with Filipino community leaders in France.

She and her official delegation are expected to arrive back in Manila before noon of September 30.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). [The President’s Day: September 24, 2003]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100514162506/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2003/sept24.htm>

President's Month in Review: October, 2003

President's Month in Review: November, 2003

President's Month in Review: December, 2003

President's Month in Review: January 2004

President's Month in Review: February, 2004

President's Month in Review: March, 2004

The President's Day: April 1, 2004

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The Good News: Max's chicken eyes further expansion abroad

Give it to the Pinoy.

The House that Fried Chicken Built will soon try to accommodate the big foreign market.

With the success it is reaping here and some key areas of the United States, Max's Chicken is eyeing expansion abroad to continue the legacy that started 59 years ago in a residence-turned café on Scout Tuazon in Quezon City.

Some of the areas being eyed by the Filipino chicken chain are Hawaii, New York, Las Vegas and some parts of California.

Serving mostly American servicemen shortly after the Second World War, the restaurant has since become a household name with its native and flour-free chicken concocted by a niece of Stanford-educated Maximo Gimenez, the owner.

To date, the company has expanded to 90 company-owned and franchised stores in the Philippines and the United States.

Last year, it was named as the Most Outstanding Filipino Franchise by the Philippine Franchise Association of the Philippines for having opened 38 franchised branches in a span of five years when the Pinoy chicken chain started franchising its stores.

It was cited for having maintained food quality and service amid the expansion.

Max's Franchising Inc. Chief Executive Officer Robert Ocampo said the chain was honored for its good operations franchising program.

"We were able to grow at a steady pace, in terms of sales and also employment opportunities," he said.

The restaurant ended 2003 with P2.2 billion in sales and hopes to breach the P3 billion mark at the end of the year. It currently employs 1,500 workers and provides 400 to 500 job opportunities for Filipinos annually.

Even the branches abroad are crewed by Filipinos who originally come from the Philippines, according to Ocampo.

In spite of the bird flu epidemic that hit neighboring countries, Max's hopes to open 37 more franchises this year, placing the yearend total to 50. It also hopes to open its 100th branch before the end of the year.

Since opening its first branch in 1960, there was no stopping expansion as Max's followed suit with branches in Makati, Caloocan and in Southern and Northern Luzon. In the US, it can be found in four key areas of California where many Filipinos reside.

It was only after 48 years did Max's entertain the idea of franchising, mainly due to numerous offers from interested parties. In 1993, Max's tapped the help of FranCorp, an American franchising company to help in the study which resulted in the establishment of Max's Franchising Inc in 1997.

A year later, the restaurant opened its first franchised store in Harrison Plaza followed by 37 more in the next five years.

The company is currently studying the Mindanao market for expansion possibilities. It would soon open stores in key cities in Bicol and Western Visayas.

"We hope to be in each major city in the Philippines," Ocampo said.

Despite its success locally, Max's is keeping its expansion efforts abroad as conservative as possible.

"The owners, in penetrating the US market, are very conservative," Ocampo said. "That's why their initial entry points are areas where there are strong or big Filipino communities."

Max's clientele in the US are 99 percent Filipinos, according to Ocampo.

"It's so difficult to get Americans to patronize the stores. If you have a strong base of Filipinos in the area, you have a market," he said.

Statement of the President: Re Anti-terrorism

The opposition must never make terrorism a political issue.

By doing this they are playing into the hands of evil.

They are out of touch of the security needs of our nation.

It is my obligation to protect the people and I will stop at nothing to do so.

If the opposition wants to waffle on defending the nation, they would do so at their peril, and at the peril of the average Filipino.

The issue is not the elections, it is protecting the people.

That is what I am doing; and that is what they should be supporting.

Statement of the President: Re SC ruling

We welcome the Supreme Court ruling as a vindication of good governance.

We are confident that the decision would pave way for the junking of other charges leveled against President Arroyo.

We hope that the High Court's ruling would serve as a wake-up call for the opposition to shift their campaign to a higher plane instead of engaging in the politics of obstruction and harassment.

GMA cites need for ‘holistic thinking’ towards good government

BATANGAS CITY – Stressing moral governance in her platform of government, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has reiterated that what the country urgently needed is a holistic thinking towards good government.

The President said that her late father, President Diosdado Macapagal-Arroyo was former student of the late President Jose P. Laurel.

She said that with the late Laurel, her father learned the principle of fundamental thinking where it is now popularly known as holistic thinking.

She likewise expressed elation and respect for the Laurel family during the 37th commencement exercises on Wednesday of the Lyceum of Batangas where she was welcomed by the university President Peter P. Laurel.

“Maraming natuto ang tatay ko sa matandang Laurel.

Ang natutunan ng tatay ko sa late President Laurel nung propesor pa niya sa U.S.T. ay yung tinatawag na fundamental thinking, sa ating lengguwahe ngayon, yung holistic thinking, yung hindi na iisipin ang pangyayari sa sariling niyang pangyayari na bahagi ng isang kabuuan,” she said.

She said that if we looked at the system as a whole in solving the problem, then we look at the holistic system rather than solve it by itself it will have the tendency in outgrowing the system.

She even extended her congratulation to all the Lyceum graduates, the parents and their relatives.

“Binabati ko ang lahat ng nagtatapos ngayon, mga estudyante ng Lyceum maganda ang inyong kinabukasan dahil maganda ang inyong pinag-aralan dito sa Lyceum,” she said.

She told the graduates that during her three-year term, for the last 11 years there was low level of reported strikes whether labor or transport unrest.

She added that with the immediate prioritization and implementation of foreign policy in her term, this has become the great weapon for investment and jobs creation.

“Dahil sa foreign policy marami ang namuhunan, marami ang nagtiwala, nadagdagan ang trabaho,” she said.

She attributed this foreign policy with the late President Laurel and his son, the late Vice-President Salvador Laurel who were the great believers and implementors of foreign policy.

She said that from 5 million cellphone units, under her term, the country now registered 25 million cellphones units.

She said that before her term it is only 2,006 call centers but now it has 60,006 call centers nationwide.

With this fundamental changes, she said that more jobs will be created in the next six years if God providence allowed her.

“Sa fundamental changes na ginagawa natin para magkaroon ng ginhawa, para magkaroon ng trabaho ang ating mga graduates,” she said.

GMA to provide scholarship for each poorest family

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today that her administration would provide one scholarship for each of the poorest families in the country under her Education for All program as early as next school year.

Speaking at the 39th commencement exercises of the Novaliches High School in Quezon City this morning, the President said the Education for All program would be launched within this year, if she would be given the people's mandate in the May 10 elections.

“Sa susunod na school year puwede nating bigyan ng scholarship bawat isa sa pinakamahirap na pamilya sa ating bansa (Next school year, we could provide scholarship for each of the poorest families in our country),” she said.

The President said details of her Education for All program would be spelled out on Easter Sunday.

The Education for All program is a continuation of her Student Assistance Fund for Education for a Strong Republic (SAFE 4 SR), she said, adding that SAFE 4 SR has helped the families of poor students to come up with much-needed fund, particularly towards the end of their schooling.

In launching SAFE 4 SR, she noted that 40 percent of the parents of senior college students from poor families usually run out of funds when their children reach 3rd and 4th year college. That eventually results in high dropout rate, she said.

This year alone, the President said that almost 150,000 3rd and 4th year college students were provided with interest-free fund assistance.

The President advised the 1,333 graduating secondary students to reciprocate the sacrifices of their parents by doing their best in whatever course they would take and to stay away from illegal drugs that have already ruined the lives of many students and families.

President Macapagal-Arroyo handed out the certificates and other awards to the top 16 graduates led by class valedictorian Sally Baltazar who garnered the PGMA Leadership Award and PGMA Academic Excellence Award.

The President was warmly welcomed by some 3,000 students, teachers, parents, and local officials led by Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte when she arrived at 7:45 A.M. at Novaliches High School in Barangay San Agustin.

Among the welcomers were City Schools Superintendent Dr. Victoria Fuentes, school principal Sheridan Evangelista, and Barangay chairman Almario Francisco.

GMA orders CHED to work out details of scholarship program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo directed the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) officials today to prepare guidelines of the one scholar for one member of every indigent family program to be started this school year opening in June.

Addressing the 35th Commencement Exercises of Pasay City East High School (PCEHS) at Cuneta Astrodome, Pasay City this morning, the President said she plans to make the announcement about the Education for All Program in her Easter Sunday message.

The Chief Executive disclosed to the 810 graduating students that the scholarship program would be the next thrust of her administration, if she gets a fresh mandate in the May 10 national elections.

According to President Macapagal-Arroyo, the government learned about 40 percent of college dropouts are children of families from the marginalized sector.

Because of this, the Chief Executive has formulated the Student Assistance Fund for Education for a Strong Republic (SAFE 4 SR) that would provide easy-to-pay loans for third and fourth year college students so they can finish their studies to ensure a better future after graduation.

She also urged the graduating class to pursue their studies either in vocational or college courses and help their parents in completing their studies by being working students during their first two years in college.

The President stated that upon reaching senior year in college, cash-strapped students could avail of the P8,000 emergency loan funds as their assurance in completing their studies and in getting their diplomas.

“I had directed the CHED officials to come out with the details of the education for all scholarship program so we can implement it this coming school year opening. I will make the proper announcement this Easter Sunday,” said President Macapagal-Arroyo who was applauded not only by the graduating students but also by the parents of the 2003–2004 graduating class of PCEHS.

She also stressed to the parents that her administration would pursue not only the well-being or the health of indigent families but also the education of their children.

The President noted that this is only a “down payment” from her brief governance and in her next installment, she wants to make sure that all poor families in our country will be entitled to one scholarship aside from Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) cards.

The President said the scholarship program would be based on the listing of indigent families with PhilHealth cards.

Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao Trinidad, Pasay City Representative Consuelo Dy, Department of Education (DepEd) Regional Director Corazon Santiago, Division Superintendent Rosalinda Tongco and PCEHS Principal Lourdes Monje assisted the President in presenting medals to honor students.

Presidential Medal for academic excellence was awarded to class valedictorian Edgardo Carlos Jr., while the Presidential Medal for leadership went to Jonna Lauchengco.

Other awardees of PGMA Certificates of Awards for Outstanding Achievement were Mary Grace Mendoza for campus journalism, Perlita Valera for arts and culture, Rodalyn Runez for technology and entrepreneurship, Jacky Egalin for athletics and Jonna Lauchengco for student leadership.

GMA praises community elders for help in maintenance of peace and order

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has lauded the 1,691 members of the Councils of Community Elders (CCE) for their help in maintaining peace and order as well as in providing information to law enforcement agencies that leads to arrests of some criminal elements.

“Thank you for what you have done together with the police and my administration. We have made significant gains in peace and order during the short period that I have been President,” she said.

The President spoke extemporaneously at the closing ceremony of the 1st National Conference of the Councils of Community Elders Wednesday night at the Manila Hotel.

In her remarks, the President told the elders that without their cooperation, the Philippine National Police (PNP) campaign against criminality would have not gained positive results.

She said that in her short presidency, the government’s intensive campaign against organized crime, particularly kidnapping-for-ransom and illegal drugs, has unprecedented achievements.

The campaign against illegal drugs has netted some 23,000 drug pushers and users and P22 billion worth of illegal drugs, aside from the dismantling of drug laboratories in Metro Manila and the nearby provinces of Bulacan and Cavite, she said.

On the anti-kidnapping drive, the President said that even Teresita Ang-See of the Citizens Action against Crime Movement has been impressed with its results. *“Mismo si Tessie Ang-See na parating bumabatikos sa ating accomplishments na ipinagamalaki, siya ay pumunta sa Malacañang noong isang lingo at sinabi na in the last 11 years, this is the lowest kidnapping rate,”* she added.

Before her speech, the President received a copy of the covenant of the CCE for a peaceful, crime-free community.

The goals of the covenant are: reinforcement of the crime prevention program and activities such as the campaign against street crimes and terrorism; enhancement of the drive against organized crime groups; strengthening of barangay crime monitoring and reporting system; and improvement of PNP response with the support of the community and other pillars of the criminal justice system.

The President ordered Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina, Jr. to prepare an executive order that would institutionalize the Councils of Community Elders.

The President also urged the elders, along with business and community leaders, to help the PNP by sending their recommendations on studies being conducted to introduce reforms in the police organization.

Present during the occasion were Secretary Lina, businessman Jose Miguel Varela, Don Emilio Yap of the Manila Bulletin, and other top officers of the PNP.

GMA to parents of this year’s graduates: Choose your future

In four high school and one collegiate commencement exercises that she went to today, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has only one overriding message to both graduates and parents: Choose your future.

“We have two choices for the future in the forthcoming elections,” she said. “A future under a leadership based on experience or one that is untested with no platform of governa*”

* Incomplete as per original archived source.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: April 1, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028184756/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr01.htm>

The President's Day: April 2, 2004

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- **Statement of the President: Re Anti-terrorism**
- **Statement of the President: Re Racist attack on Filipinos in Northern Ireland**
- **Statement of the President: Re NAKTF campaign**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Nuisance cases**
- **Government to honor commitment to release APOs**
- **GMA orders review of rules of engagement**
- **GMA signs law improving tax collection efficiency**
- **Palace clears "Ching" Suva of wrongdoing**
- **Arrest of Abu Sayyaf suspects result of hard work, all their rights to be respected — Palace**
- **GMA saddened by Jennifer's death; vows to curb lapses in law enforcement**
- **Ramos: 'My main concern is to ensure the victory of K-4 in the coming polls'**
- **GMA swears in new associate justices, judges**
- **NPA stepping up extortion activities — Ermita**

Statement of the President: Re Anti-terrorism

Terrorism is a crime against all humanity, and there are no political or religious undertones to the anti-terror campaign.

Questions raised over the legitimacy of the arrests can be fully addressed in the courts.

As far as I am concerned, the apprehension of these suspected terrorists is a product of diligence and hard work on the part of the police and the military, which deserves full commendation and praise.

The people can rest assured that the government is using all means at its disposal to stave off this threat.

Statement of the President: Re Racist attack on Filipinos in Northern Ireland

I have directed the Department of Foreign Affairs to immediately look into this matter and to coordinate with the Irish authorities for the protection of other Filipinos who are in that country.

We condemn this attack not only because the victims are Filipinos but because we abhor all forms of racism, what with more than 8 million Filipinos in foreign lands and thousands of foreigners residing in our country.

Racism is out of place in a rapidly integrating world seeking to rid itself of discrimination and inequality arising from color and creed.

Statement of the President: Re NAKTF campaign

I acknowledge the accomplishments of the NAKTF and the Philippine National Police in the relentless campaign against kidnapers, but I am saddened by the fact that a four-year old girl's life was needlessly sacrificed in this latest incident.

The government takes full responsibility for this and will provide the necessary assistance to the innocent civilians who were injured in the clash in Navotas.

I have likewise ordered an investigation as to who should take responsibility for the death of Jennifer Gallano as well as the injury of six other children.

The end can never justify the means, and lapses on police operations must never be tolerated.

I expect the NAKTF and the PNP to review their rules of engagement to avoid a repetition of this unfortunate event.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Nuisance cases

We expect more nuisance cases to crop up in the following weeks as the elections draw near.

The President remains unperturbed by the rash of disqualification cases.

We are prepared to answer any charges in the proper forum.

We remain confident that these accusations will eventually be junked by the COMELEC and the Supreme Court, or in any other tribunal because they are absolutely baseless and utterly bereft of merit.

Government to honor commitment to release APOs

OSLO, Norway — Chief government peace negotiator Silvestre H. Bello III said yesterday during the Oslo formal talks that the government would continue to honor its commitment to release alleged political offenders (APOs)

Bello informed the National Democratic Front (NDF) panel that within one month from April 5, 2004, the government (GRP) panel would work for the release of 32 APOs, including nine individuals covered by the 2001 release order of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ms. Zenaida Llesis, who is one of the seven women APOs, will be given the highest priority because she is a nursing mother.

In 2001, the NDF panel submitted to the GRP panel in Oslo a list of 121 APOs. Of this total, 98 had already been released by the government.

The GRP continues to release APOs as one of its confidence-building measures for the ongoing peace negotiations with the NDF to end the 35 years of armed conflict in the Philippines.

The GRP's commitment to release APOs refutes the statements made the NDF chairman Luis Jalandoni that the government is not complying with the agreement to release APOs and that this non-compliance is causing delay in the peace negotiations.

GMA orders review of rules of engagement

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered a review of the rules of engagement of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTAF) and the Philippine National Police after a four-year-old girl was accidentally killed in a shootout Thursday between their operatives and suspected kidnapers in Metro Manila.

"The end can never justify the means and lapses on police operations must never be tolerated," the President said in a statement.

The President said the directive was "to avoid a repetition of this unfortunate event."

Jennifer Gallando was hit by a stray bullet and was declared dead on arrival in Tondo Medical Center after five suspected kidnapers engaged NAKTAF operatives in a firefight.

Four kidnapers were also killed — three at the shootout – and one in a nearby hospital.

The President also lauded the NAKTAF and the PNP for their successes in the campaign against kidnapping syndicates in the country.

“I acknowledge the accomplishments of the NAKTAF and the PNP in the relentless campaign against kidnapers, but I am saddened by the fact that a four-year old girl’s life was needlessly sacrificed in this latest incident,” the President said.

The President said the government would take full responsibility for the incident and would also assist the civilians who were injured in the clash in Navotas.

GMA signs law improving tax collection efficiency

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today enacted two bills expanding the jurisdiction of the Court of Tax Appeals (CTA) and institutionalizing the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution system in the country.

The signing ceremony was held on the occasion of the oath-taking of the new Court of Appeals and Sandiganbayan justices this afternoon at the Rizal Hall of Malacañang.

The signing of the two bills into law was witnessed by Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Sen. Francis Pangilinan and Congressmen Raul Gonzales, Marcelino Libanan, Aleta Suarez and Salacnib Baterina, and Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Jr.

The act expanding the jurisdiction of the Court of Tax Appeals, elevating it to the level of a collegiate court with special jurisdiction and enlarging its membership, amends for the purpose certain sections of Republic Act 1125 as amended, otherwise known as the law creating the Court of Tax Appeals.

Docketed as House Bill 6673, authored by Reps. Suarez, Libanan and Exequiel Javier, and Senate Bill 2712, authored by Sens. Drilon and Ralph Recto, the new law seeks to improve the tax collection efficiency of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Bureau of Customs and other collecting agencies of the government by lodging both the criminal and civil jurisdiction over tax cases with the CTA.

It would also effectively enhance and maximize the development of jurisdiction and judicial precedence on tax matters which is of vital importance to revenue administration.

Under this new law, the CTA shall be of the same level as the Sandiganbayan and its judges bearing the new titles as justices.

The act institutionalizing the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) system in the country has been docketed under House Bill 5654, authored by Congressmen de Venecia, Libanan, Baterina and Oscar Rodriguez, and Senate Bill 2671, authored by Senators Pangilinan, Noli de Castro, Manuel Villar and Joker Arroyo.

It seeks to bring justice nearer to the people by providing for the alternative method of settling disputes between and among the litigants in appropriate cases.

Before the enactment of this law, traditional access to the court system has been hampered by several factors such as vacancy in the judges positions in the judiciary; lack of prosecutors, public attorneys or adjudicators, heavy caseload of the existing courts; and high cost of litigation as a result of delay in the disposition of cases.

It was noted that lengthy proceedings are not only costly but also tedious, creating more avenues for graft and corruption in the process.

The ADR system provides a cogent solution to the said problems as it involves conciliation, mediation, early neutral evaluation, mini-trials and arbitration. While there are existing mediation processes already available to party litigants, these, however, are limited in scope and application.

The institutionalization of the system covers a wide range of dispute resolution mechanisms for efficiency and better administration of justice.

With the establishment of the Office for Alternative Dispute Resolution, a more participative, innovative and less costly procedures for settling disputes will now be in effect as the system also consists of practices in mediation and arbitration which are consistent with international practices.

The Supreme Court and the Department of Justice are amenable to the proposal in view of the many benefits of the ADR system.

The Office for Alternative Dispute Resolution will be an attached agency to the Department of Justice.

Palace clears “Ching” Suva of wrongdoing

The Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) today dismissed the graft charges against Press Undersecretary for Media Relations Carmen Suva for lack of merit.

In an 8-page resolution, the PAGC, after a careful review of the records, recommended to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo the immediate dismissal of the case “for lacking in probable cause.”

The case stemmed from the non-inclusion of a 1999 model of Toyota Tamaraw FX GLX in the respondent’s 2000-2002 sworn Statement of Assets and Liabilities (SAL).

“After a thorough evaluation of the evidence on record, the Commission is of the considered view that herein respondent did not violate Section 7 of Republic Act No. 3019, and Section 8 (a) of Republic Act No. 6713,” said the PAGC in the ruling, which was affirmed by Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo.

After presenting to the Commission respective argumentations and evidence by the complainant and respondent, the PAGC ruled in favor of the respondent.

The Commission gave credence to the affidavit submitted by Suva’s son-in-law admitting that he is the rightful owner of the controversial 1999 Toyota Tamaraw FX GLX with plate number BSA-555.

“All told, there being insufficiency of evidence on record to prove that the respondent willfully and feloniously omitted as one of her assets the subject vehicle in her 2000 – 2002 SALs, the Commission is not convinced that the offense charged has been committed,” according to the decision submitted to the Office of the President (OP) by PAGC Director Dario Rama and Commissioner Teresita Baltazar.

Suva, fondly called “Tita Ching” by newsmen covering the Malacañang beat, has served the Malacañang Press Office for four decades now in a stint spanning six presidents — from the administration of the late President Diosdado Macapagal to his daughter, President Macapagal-Arroyo.

She had rose from the ranks and had been serving the Press Office for an uninterrupted 42 years since 1962.

In 2002, “Tita Ching” was given a gold necklace in recognition of her 40 years of unblemished and dedicated service to the government.

She was also the recipient of the “Outstanding Employee” of the Department of Public Information in 1980 and the “Outstanding Woman Employee” of the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) in 1989 to edify her untainted record in public service.

Arrest of Abu Sayyaf suspects result of hard work, all their rights to be respected — Palace

The legitimacy of the arrests of four Abu Sayyaf terrorist suspects can be fully addressed in the courts, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today in a statement in the wake of criticisms over the arrests.

“As far as I am concerned, the apprehension of these suspected terrorists is a product of diligence and hard work on the part of the police and military, which deserves full commendation and praise,” said the President who is bent on eliminating or neutralizing terrorist activities in the country.

She assured the country the government is using all means at its disposal in the anti-terror campaign, terrorism being a crime against all humanity for which there are no political or religious undertones.

Four Abu Sayyaf terrorist suspects were arrested recently and a cache of explosives taken, averting their plans to stage a Madrid-like bombing attack in Metro Manila which could lead to the death of hundreds. One has already been formally charged before the Department of Justice.

In line with the President’s uncompromising stand against terrorism, Malacañang called on the opposition and other quarters to help the government’s anti-terrorism campaign instead of obstructing it.

All rights of the Abu Sayyaf suspects are being respected and all procedures on due process are being observed, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said this afternoon in a press briefing at Malacañang.

“We leave the handling of this to the AFP. I’m sure they are aware of the proper procedures and we believe these procedures will be followed,” Bunye said in response to queries why the suspects have not been presented to the media and the public.

Meanwhile, Bunye said the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), Rep. Tom Reynolds, has apologized for including the Philippines in a list of countries harboring terrorists.

Reynolds accepted responsibility for the mistake and the US government deeply appreciates what the Philippines has been doing in the war against terrorism, Bunye said.

“The chairman of the NRCC himself apologized to the Philippine Ambassador and gave the assurance that they will take the necessary remedial action,” Bunye said.

GMA saddened by Jennifer’s death; vows to curb lapses in law enforcement

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today warned that lapses in the conduct of police operations against suspected criminals would not be tolerated.

The President issued the warning as she ordered a full-dress investigation to pinpoint responsibility for the death of a four-year-old girl in Thursday’s shootout in Navotas between law enforcers and suspected kidnapers.

At the same time, the President ordered a review of the rules of engagement of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTAF) “to avoid a repetition of this unfortunate event.”

“The end can never justify the means, and lapses on police operations must never be tolerated,” the President stressed in a statement.

Jennifer Gallardo was hit by a stray bullet and was declared dead on arrival at the Tondo Medical Center following a shootout between NAKTAF operatives and five suspected kidnapers.

Four of the suspects were also slain—three of them on the spot and the fourth in a nearby hospital.

To alleviate the suffering of Gallardo's family, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said the government would take full responsibility for the incident. She also offered assistance to the civilians who were wounded in the crossfire.

At the same time, the President cited the efforts of the NAKTAF and the Philippine National Police (PNP) against kidnapers.

Ramos: 'My main concern is to ensure the victory of K-4 in the coming polls'

Former President Fidel V. Ramos today assured the K-4 coalition led by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of his unequivocal support, saying that his primary and immediate concern now is to ensure the victory of the entire K-4 ticket in the May 10 polls.

In a press conference in Malacañang, the former President also took exceptions to charges that he was involved in alleged moves to junk K-4 senatorial bet, Sen. John Osmeña.

"I wish the good senator well as a member of the K-4 coalition and as an official senatorial candidate of the Lakas-CMD and the K-4 coalition," Ramos said.

Osmeña has charged that Ramos was involved in moves to junk him from the K-4 slate in favor of independent candidate Heherson Alvarez.

Ramos said that a lot of people are convinced that the allegations against Sen. Osmeña are untrue and can be refuted in a court of law. "I hope he can establish a credible defense," he added.

The former president is chairman emeritus of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (CMD), the leading party in the Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan, or K-4.

"Obviously, there's someone or some people doing this. But not me. Why should I?" Ramos rhetorically asked, calling the filing of a criminal case against Osmeña a demolition job.

"Our efforts, including those of the good senator, must be focused in finding out who is that person or persons," Ramos said.

Ramos is chairman of the Ramos Peace and Development Foundation and has pitched for the Philippines and the government of President Macapagal-Arroyo in international economic forums.

He said that he will continue to exert his best efforts and to give his time and modest resources toward empowering the Filipino people and attracting more investments, trade, tourism, technology transfer, and other forms of regional and international cooperation for a better future for all Filipinos.

GMA swears in new associate justices, judges

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today inducted 17 new associate justices of the Court of Appeals (CA), one associate justice of Sandiganbayan, three assistant solicitor generals and Regional, Metropolitan and Municipal Trial Court judges.

The oath-taking took place during the signing of Republic Acts 9282 and 9285 at the Rizal Hall of Malacañang.

Joining the President in inducting the 17 new CA associate justices was Supreme Court (SC) Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Jr.

The new CA associate justices are Isaias Dicedican, Santiago Javier Rañada, Arcangelita Romilla Lontok, Lucenito Tagle, Jafar Dimaampao, Celia Librea-Leagogo, Monina Arevalo Zenarosa, Pampio Abarintos, Mariflor Punzalan Catillo, Teresita Dy-Liacco Flores, Arturo Tayag, Sesinando Villon, Vicente Yap, Ramon Bato, Jr., Romulo Borja, Edgardo Camello and Rodrigo Lim, Jr.

Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Minita Chico-Nazario then witnessed the oath-taking of Jose Hernandez as associate justice of Sandiganbayan.

Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo later joined the President in officiating the oath of office to Assistant Solicitor Generals Marissa dela Cruz-Galandines, Vida San Vicente and Bernard Hernandez.

Those who were inducted Regional, Metropolitan and Municipal Trial Court judges were Virgilio Macaraig, Bartolome Flores, Joselito Villarosa, Calixto Adriatico, Angelo Albano, Gina Bibat-Palamos, Reginald Fuentebella and Candelario Gonzales.

Other government officials present in the ceremony were Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., Acting Justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez, and Public Attorney's Office (PAO) chief Persida Rueda-Acosta.

NPA stepping up extortion activities — Ermita

Communist guerrillas of the New People's Army (NPA) have intensified their extortion activities disguised as "progressive taxation" in the light of the forthcoming elections.

The National Intelligence and Coordination Agency (NICA) issued this assessment during a briefing on the national security situation called by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang this morning.

The briefing was attended by Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, former Presidents Fidel V. Ramos and Corazon C. Aquino, Senate President Franklin Drilon and House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr.

According to Ermita, the NPA has also been mounting sabotage operations against business establishments and government facilities and infrastructure projects.

"The trend has risen for the past years (inflicting) estimated damage of around P713 million worth of properties due to NPA atrocities, especially on those who do not give in to their progressive taxation," Ermita said.

The Secretary noted, however, that the NPA strength had gone down to 8,690 from about 9,500 in the previous years.

Ermita also said at least 249 barangays, representing six percent of the 42,000 barangays nationwide, were still considered under the influence of the communist guerrillas.

He also pointed out that the figures indicated that in recent years, the NPA has increasingly engaged in terrorism apart from its guerrilla operations.

"Due to a mounting reliance on terrorism by the NPAs, civilians have borne the brunt of conflict as shown in the charts of the NICA," Ermita said.

“The atrocities since the 90’s have become qualitatively more significant, bolder and sensational as it involved assassination of political personalities, liquidation, ambushes for which the NPA have openly and brazenly claimed responsibilities,” Ermita said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: April 2, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026143328/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr02.htm>

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The Good News: IMF projects 4.5 percent economic growth for RP in 2004

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected a 4.5 percent growth of the Philippine economy this year, even if less than the 4.9-5.8 percent gross domestic product (GDP) target of the government.

The IMF also had good words for the monetary authorities and fiscal managers of the country for their success last year.

The Philippine GDP grew 4.5 percent in 2003 despite the global economic slowdown, the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), the US-Iraqi war, a failed mutiny and destabilization attempts. Its Gross National Product (GNP) then also grew 5.5 percent.

"Economic growth should continue to be favorable," the IMF said in an advisory/statement released in Washington and Manila.

The IMF based its growth projection on the expected good performance of the export sector, largely on account of the recovery in the global economy.

Furthermore, it noted the important economic reforms undertaken by Philippine authorities in recent years and the favorable macroeconomic performance with sustained growth and declining inflation.

On the country's monetary authorities, and fiscal managers, the IMF gave its stamp of approval for measures they adopted to contain financial market pressures while keeping inflation at an average of three percent, below the 2003 target, and instituting tight expenditure patterns to check the budget deficit.

The IMF also gave its nod to the continuance of the country's post program monitoring expected to extend to 2009 when the government has programmed its financial position to get back to the black.

The IMF commended the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas for its conduct of monetary policy which helped contain market pressures in 2003. It also lauded fiscal managers for the belt-tightening program of the government that resulted in a lower than programmed budget deficit.

It urged economic managers with the support of lawmakers to continue implementing bold structural reform measures to maximize the country's growth potential and fast track the debt reduction process.

The IMF also commended the authorities' steadfast resolve to strengthen tax administration which helped to halve the declining trend in the revenue-GDP ratio and the tight control over spending.

However, the IMF warned the GDP growth could be considerably weighed down by uncertainty from the political environment.

It also cautioned the government against a further depressed spending pattern, particularly on capital outlay.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Anti-terror campaign

There is no politics or ethno-religious discrimination in the government's anti-terrorism drive.

We shall not fall into the hands of extremists who want to use the alleged oppression of Muslims to justify lawless violence.

The AFP and PNP have always conducted themselves professionally and without bias in targeting terrorist cells.

We have always considered the anti-terror campaign a responsibility for both Muslims and Christians.

GMA's patubig project now covers entire Quezon City

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ceremonially opened the faucet of a water truck in Novaliches, Quezon City, making potable water now available to all poor families in the metropolis.

The President launched another project under her *Patubig* program Friday afternoon in Sitio Tawid Sapa I, Barangay San Agustin.

The President said that San Agustin is the last barangay in Quezon City to be provided with clean water through delivery by water trucks, static water tanks, or water pipes under the *Patubig ni Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo* project.

"*Ito ang huling lugar sa Quezon City na walang tubig. Buong Quezon City me tubig na* (This is the last barangay in Quezon City without clean water. It is now provided with clean water. The entire city now has water)," she said.

The Chief Executive advised the public to report to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) or the Maynilad Water Services Inc. (MWSI) any area that is not yet serviced or inventoried by the *Patubig* project.

President Macapagal-Arroyo arrived 5:25 P.M. in Sitio Tawid Sapa I and was welcomed by some 2,000 residents and local officials led by Barangay San Agustin chairman Almario Francisco.

Also at hand for the welcome were eight persons with disabilities (PWDs) from the nearby *Bahay Pangarap*, a branch of the *Tahanang Walang Hagdanan* of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), led by Supervisor Virgilio Torres, who is a wheelchair-bound PWD.

After the opening of the water project, Francisco accompanied the President to the nearby *Gulayan ni Pangulong Gloria* project in the barangay.

Palace assures Filipino Muslims that they are not being discriminated against in anti-terror campaign

Malacañang today assured Filipino Muslims that they are not being discriminated against in the government's stepped-up campaign against terrorism and that religion or ethnic origins have never been taken into consideration in this campaign.

In a statement, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said that there is “no politics or ethno-religious discrimination” in the government’s anti-terrorism drive that has so far rounded up a number of suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf terror group and seized a cache of explosives, averting what could have been Madrid-type bombing attacks in Metro Manila.

Bunye said that the administration will not “fall into the hands of extremists who want to use the alleged oppression of Muslims to justify lawless violence.”

“The AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and the PNP (Philippine National Police) have always conducted themselves professionally and without bias in targeting terrorist cells,” Bunye said.

Bunye stressed that the anti-terror campaign is a responsibility of all Filipinos, whether they are Muslims or Christians.

In an interview with *Radyo ng Bayan*, Bunye also fended off criticisms of alleged indiscriminate arrests of Muslims who were being tagged as terrorists.

“*Ang importante dito ginagawa ng ating armed forces at ng police, sa tulong na rin ng mga mamamayan, iyong kanilang dapat gawain para labanan ang banta ng terorismo* (What is important is that our armed forces and police, with cooperation from the citizens, are doing their job to fight the threat of terrorism,)” he said.

Bunye said that criticisms against military and police operatives would not deter them from performing their mission. “If there are legal issues, these will be answered in the proper forum,” he added.

He said that the arrests of terrorist suspects have been carried out not only based on “solid information” gathered by the intelligence community, but primarily for the purpose of protecting the people.

Bunye assured the families of the Abu Sayyaf members who have been arrested that their rights will be protected and all procedures on due process will be observed.

On travel advisories of foreign governments advising their nationals against visiting the Philippines due to Abu Sayyaf threats, Bunye said that the government prefers not to dispute them anymore.

Bunye said that despite travel advisories, foreign tourists continue to visit the country. “We will just go on with our daily activities,” he said.

GMA: Gov’t does not plan to increase power rates

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ruled out any increase in power rates even after the May 10 elections.

The President said Friday that Secretary Vince Perez of the Department of Energy (DOE) had been misquoted in a news report that the cap of 40 centavos per kilowatt hour (KWh) on the purchased power cost adjustment (PPCA) would be lifted 50 days from now.

“*Kinausap ko na si Secretary Vince Perez tungkol diyan at hindi totoo ‘yan* (I’ve talked with Secretary Perez on that (cap removal) and that’s not true),” she said.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo imposed the cap almost two years ago. As a result, the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) has been charging P2.22 per kwh, instead of P3.01 in Luzon.

The Energy Regulatory Commission says that only Malacañang has the power to lift the cap. The President, who imposed the cap, has no plan to change it.

GMA leads officials in celebrating Cardinal Sin's 50th year as priest

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today joined former President Corazon Aquino and other officials in celebrating the golden jubilee of the ordination of Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop Emeritus of the Manila Archdiocese, which was commemorated by a solemn mass at the Manila Cathedral in Intramuros, with Sin himself as the main officiating priest.

Pope John Paul II, in a special message read by the Papal Nuncio to the Philippines Antonio Franco, said: "The occasion aptly commemorated Cardinal Sin's gift of priesthood, as shown by his long and eventful tenure, and fruitful shepherding of his flock, and of his love for Christ and the Gospel."

Cardinal Sin, who was wheeled into the Cathedral since he could not walk because of failing health, said in a message: "I cannot retell my life without EDSA. It is perhaps the most important chapter of my life. I admit finding a secret joy and pride in being called the Cardinal of the EDSA revolution."

Sin said that he does not claim that it was a right but it was a blessing that he was the archbishop of Manila when the EDSA rebellion in 1986 happened. Sin was also one of those instrumental in the downfall of former President Joseph Estrada in what is now known as EDSA 2.

Cardinal Sin was ordained in Roxas City, Capiz, on April 3, 1954 by the late Bishop Antonio Frondosa.

He first served the Roman Catholic Church as a missionary in the Panay hinterlands against the wishes of his bishop, who wanted him to pursue studies in Rome.

Sin was appointed bishop of the Jaro Archdiocese on March 19, 1967 at the age of 39, and as metropolitan bishop of Jaro in October 1972. At the age of 46, he was installed Archbishop of Manila. He became a cardinal on May 26, 1976.

Among those who assisted Cardinal Sin in celebrating the mass were Manila Archbishop Gaudencio B. Rosales, Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, and Auxiliary Bishop of Manila Socrates Villegas.

Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Jr., Speaker and Mrs. Jose de Venecia, Jr. and K-4 vice presidential candidate Sen. Noli "Kabayan" de Castro also attended the mass.

GMA praises women health volunteers for promoting social welfare in Nueva Ecija

MUNOZ, Nueva Ecija — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today praised the women of Nueva Ecija for their role in promoting social welfare of the people, particularly in the provision of health care.

The President, who arrived to an enthusiastic welcome here this morning, spoke before a meeting of the *Boluntaryong Manggagawa ng Nueva Ecija* at the Multi-Purpose Gymnasium of the Central Luzon State University.

"*Grabe ang malasakit ninyo para alagaan ang kalusugan ng inyong mga inaalagaan* (You show great concern for the health of people under your care)," she told the audience, composed mostly of members of the Provincial Federation of Barangay Health Workers and the Day care Workers Association, both of Nueva Ecija. Also in attendance were nutrition scholars, service point officers and barangay executives.

She said that the health workers could be of help in implementing the government's family planning program. Her administration, she pledged, would look for ways to provide the volunteers with incentives.

Noting that most of the women volunteers are married to farmers, the President underscored the importance of modernization of agriculture in developing not only Nueva Ecija but the country as a whole.

She said that her administration has prioritized propagation of the “Gloria Rice,” a high-yielding variety developed in China and adopted right here in Muñoz, which has increased production. “*At hindi lamang iyon, ang presyo ng karaniwang bigas na binibili ng mga mahihirap ay nananatiling matatag* (Furthermore, the price of rice has become stable),” she said.

The President praised the “good work” of the National Food Authority, which has started early its palay-buying program, at P9.19 per kilo, to the benefit of farmers.

The President arrived here after attending a holy mass, held at the Manila Cathedral, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the presbyteral ordination of retired Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin.

She met with barangay captains, headed by Leonardo Garcia, president of the Association of Barangay Chairmen of Nueva Ecija. Also present at the meeting at the CLSU gym were Nueva Ecija governor Tomas Joson, and Congressmen Josefina Joson, Aurelio Umali and Raoul Villareal.

She subsequently had lunch with mayors, headed by San Antonio Mayor Dr. Jose Salonga, president of the Nueva Ecija Mayors’ League.

Political parties, led by Joson clan, assure GMA of ‘landslide victory’ in Nueva Ecija

MUÑOZ, Nueva Ecija – All political parties in Nueva Ecija, led by the Joson clan, assured President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today that they fully support her candidacy in the May 10 elections and, in particular, she will score a “landslide victory” in the province.

Nueva Ecija Governor Tomas Joson III made the assurance in welcoming the President to the general assembly of Barangay Health Workers at the multi-purpose gymnasium of the Central Luzon State University here.

“*Ang ating bansa ay malalagay sa panganib kung hindi si Pangulong Gloria ang magiging Pangulo muli pagkatapos ng Mayo 10* (Our country would be in danger if our President Gloria would not be the next President after May 10),” Joson said.

Joson said that the other political parties are really concerned about the future of the country if the President’s bid for a full six-year term would fail.

“*Umasa po kayo na ang mga hidwaan, yung mga hindi pagkakaintindihan sa aming mga politiko ay aming isasaisantabi alang-alang sa inyong tagumpay sa darating na halalan* (You can rest assured that we, politicians, will set aside our misunderstandings so that you will win,” Joson told the President.

The governor admitted that the administration’s strong start in agricultural modernization, micro-finance and livelihood assistance to the farmers, along with her successful job creation program, would go to naught if the President would not win.

He also said, in an ambush interview at the Talavera National High School in Talavera, Nueva Ecija, that all political parties in the province are confident that the President will have a landslide victory in Nueva Ecija.

“Definitely, we will try our best,” Joson said right after the President boarded the presidential chopper for the trip back to Manila.

Joson said that all political parties, including rival factions, were present at the luncheon meeting with the President at the CLSU Research, Extension and Training Center.

“You know this is the first time that the different political parties, even our political rivals, joined each other to express our full support to President Gloria,” Joson added.

Vice Presidential candidate Noli “Kabayan” de Castro, Press Secretary Milton Alingod, National Food Authority administrator Arthur Yap, Presidential Assistant for Northern Luzon Secretary Rene Diaz accompanied the President in her fruitful visit here.

The local officials present during the President visit here were Governor Joson, Nueva Ecija 3rd District Representative Aurelio Umali, 1st District Rep. Josefina Joson, 4th District Raoul Villareal and Talavera Mayor Manolito Fausto.

GRP, NDF conclude ‘frank and fruitful’ round of negotiations

OSLO, Norway—The government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF) today concluded what both panels jointly billed as a “frank and fruitful” round of formal peace talks.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Sec. Teresita Quintos Deles said the panels for both the government and the NDF “rose above expected contention issues to hammer out substantive agreements.”

Deles said that the two panels agreed to have another round of formal negotiations on April 26 to 29.

She said that the two panels were resolute in not allowing any issue to derail the agenda jointly set for the latest round of talks, which was held from March 30 to April 2 here.

Deles said that as expected and as scheduled within the formal agenda, the NDF brought up the matter of the NDF’s inclusion in a US listing of terrorist organizations, and demanded that the GRP take a more active stance in the NDF’s removal from the same.

“But, with the GRP upholding the position that the ultimate resolution of the terrorist listing issue requires effective measures to be undertaken by both sides, we quickly moved above and beyond the matter,” Deles said.

“There were apprehensions—aired by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, no less—that only a delisting of the NDF would ensure the progress of the talks. But, after an affirmation of shared principles on national sovereignty and the protection of human rights and international humanitarian law, both the GRP and the NDF panels agreed that there were more than enough common themes to move forward on, and there was no need to stray from the agenda,” Deles said.

More substantively, the GRP and NDF panels agreed:

- To finally set in motion the full operationalization of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), which is the principal mechanism tasked to monitor the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Right and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). In this light, members of the JMC held their first formal meeting on the second day of the peace talks (April 1). They also agreed to form a Joint Secretariat that will be up and running within the month.
- On a common draft of the “Guidelines for the Work of the Reciprocal Working Committees on Social and Economic Reforms (RWCs-SER), the panels also moved closer to finalizing the Preamble and the Declaration of Principles of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms, and reaffirmed their commitment to an accelerated schedule for the RWCs-SER.
- To continue working for the release of alleged political prisoners and detainees, pursuant to the GRP’s commitment under the Oslo Joint Statement of 14 February 2004. The GRP committed to take steps to obtain the release of 32 prisoners and detainees named in a list submitted by the GRP, within 30 calendar days starting April 5, 2004.

Chief Government Negotiator Silvestre Bello III noted that in 2001, the NDF panel submitted a list of 121 alleged political detainees. Of this total, 98 had already been released by government. The latest GRP list of 32 detainees

nominated for release includes nine individuals covered by the release order of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2001. It also includes seven women, 10 minors, and six sick and/or elderly persons.

Deles said that “of the seven women, the case of nursing mother Zenaida Llesis will be given the highest priority and she shall be released forthwith.”

The two panels also agreed to work for the indemnification of human rights victims of the Marcos regime.

Deles noted that that an administration bill on the matter has been certified by the President as urgent and has already passed the House of Representatives. The bill, which would set aside P8 billion from the assets covered by the January 30, 2004 custodian agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the PNB, is awaiting similar resolution at the Senate.

Both the GRP and the NDF discussed general and specific issues pertaining to alleged violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

In particular, Deles said “concerns were raised about reported attacks on human rights workers, leaders and supporters of legal organizations including some progressive party-list groups, as well as reported attacks on communities, civilians, and properties.”

The panels agreed to look into the complaints and to refer their findings to the JMC, Deles said.

Deles said that on complaints of harassment and the collection of permits to campaign fees by the NPA, both panels agreed to affirm in a joint statement “that freedom of thought and expression, freedom of conscience, political and religious beliefs, freedom of movement and travel, as well as the rights to free speech, press and assembly shall be observed and protected.”

Deles said that with a desire to build on the “fruitful” talks, the panels agreed to meet again on April 26 to 29, in a venue yet to be finalized in consultation with the Royal Norwegian Government.

The latest round of talks were held under the auspices of the Royal Norwegian Government, to whom both panels expressed their deepest gratitude.

Tricycle drivers, out-of-school youth express support for GMA’s candidacy

More than 10,000 officers and members of the Federation of Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association (TODA) in the National Capital Region (NCR) today pledged their full support to the administration and candidacy of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during a rally at the Quezon City hall grounds this afternoon.

Jun dela Cruz, president of the NCR TODA federation, said they openly support the President because she has supported their cause, particularly when the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) made a standing order phasing out the two-stroke motorcycle engine in 2002 because it allegedly contributed to more pollution in the metropolis.

“President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo supported our cause when the MMDA made a resolution phasing out the two-stroke motorcycle engines in year 2002,” Dela Cruz said.

Dela Cruz, also president of the 30,000-strong Quezon City TODA federation, said some 90 percent of the tricycles in Metro Manila still use the two-stroke motor engines.

He said illegal logging and smoke-belching buses, and not the two-stroke engines, should be first eliminated as it contribute more to over pollution in Metro Manila.

During the rally, the President allocated P1 million for the establishment of a cooperative in Quezon City that would sell cheaper 2T engine oil and rice for the members of the tricycle groups in the area.

Dela Cruz said they are planning to sell the 2T engine oil at P50-P55 per liter compared to its present P63 to P65 per liter cost.

The President also instructed National Food Authority (NFA) Administrator Arthur Yap to help the TODA cooperative sell rice at P16 per kilo for its members.

Aside from Yap, also present were Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, vice presidential bet Noli “Kabayan” de Castro, Vice Mayor Bistek Herbert Bautista, Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose LIna Jr., and Senatorial bet Mar Roxas.

Afterwards, the President proceeded to the Quezon Memorial Circle fronting the city hall where some 10,000 out-of-school youths (OSYs) welcomed her.

The OSYs are members of the Negosyanteng Out-of-School Youth (NegOSYouth) under the President’s “Kalinga sa Kabataan” Emergency Employment Program.

The President led the distribution of certificates of recognition for best practices to 13 OSY entrepreneurs in Metro Manila.

For her birthday, 100 children of TODA members gave the President a birthday cake and sang “Happy Birthday” at the QC hall grounds. The OSYs also sang Happy Birthday for the President.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: April 3, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028191846/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr03.htm>

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- **Good News: Road/bridge-building achievements under GMA's watch cited in DPWH report**
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Good News: Road/bridge-building achievements under GMA's watch cited in DPWH report

Bridges of peace, roads to progress.

At the rate the government is building them, this probably is the best way to call the bridges and roads that were constructed under the watch of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In the short span of two years, the President, has built a total length of 9,960 lineal meters of bridges and 6,911 kms of roads since 2001, the Department of Public Works and Highways has announced.

A total of 163 bridges have been built under the "*Tulay ng Pangulo sa Barangay*" project, 120 bridges under the "*Tulay ng Pangulo sa SZOPAD*" project, and 49 bridges under the "*Tulay ng Pangulo sa SALAM*" project.

The DPWH has 819 other ongoing and proposed bridges with a total length of 24, 570 lineal meters. These will be completed between now and 2005 under the "*Tulay ng Pangulo*" program.

Of the 6,911 kms of roads that were either improved or constructed, 2,542 were paved, according to the DPWH.

In addition, the government has completed 2,860 flood control projects and 11,513 classrooms under the Department of Education school building program. It has also completed 17, 255 other infrastructures nationwide including those for local roads and local flood control, aside from water supply and national buildings.

In line with the President's vision for a Strong Republic, the DPWH takes a big responsibility in the nation's fight against poverty, being a lead agency in building the infrastructure or foundation that will breathe life to the national economy.

"When the DPWH says it is building bridges to connect towns and communities, it actually means building bridges of peace and understanding," DPWH Secretary Florante Soriquez said. "When we say we are bridging roads to open new territories, we actually mean we are building roads towards progress and prosperity."

In her first State of the Nation Address, the President detailed her new policy thrusts and policies, the most urgent of which is winning the war against poverty within a decade. Such thrust is to be achieved by modernization of agriculture, development of tourism, improvement of law and order and decongestion of traffic.

Special priority was also given to the improvement of infrastructure in Mindanao, which received only 23.6 percent of the DPWH budget in 2000.

Nationwide projects to kick-off on PGMA birthday tomorrow

A unique present for the President

Government agencies and non-governmental organizations will celebrate President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's birthday on Monday April 5, 2004, with simultaneous kick-off key pilot activities showcasing the President's achievements in pursuing development and the welfare of the people.

The series of activities will serve as their gift for the Chief Executive.

The day-long celebrations start with a holy mass for the President at the San Agustin Church in her birthplace in Lubao, Pampanga. The President will attend the mass together with some 5,000 farmers and local officials of Lubao, to be followed by a breakfast *salu-salo* at the church patio.

Shortly after the breakfast the Friends of PGMA and Cabinet ladies together with *Gawad Kalinga* (GK) movement, the City government of Angeles and Ms. Luli Arroyo will launch the construction of "Gloria Village"—a housing project for the benefit of indigent families in Angeles City.

For its part, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will mount a concerted nationwide tree planting activity to be led by DENR Secretary Elisea Gozum, also in Lubao. DENR will be distributing seedlings in its regional offices. The seedlings most of which are fruit-bearing trees and easy to grow vegetables shrubs, will be planted in designated parks, nurseries, orchards and gardens for the project. Patents will also be distributed per region.

The Department of Health (DOH) will also kick-off its national blood-letting program "*Dugtong Buhay, Handog sa Kaarawan ni* President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo." The program will involve blood donation missions around key hospitals in NCR, CARAGA and Regions IV, VI, VII and XI. DOH will also be honoring 2,401 barangay health workers who have been instrumental in the President's call for assuring the immediate delivery of basic health services via the barangay health centers.

Also, the Department of Agriculture will be conducting testimonial plugs on the adoption of "Gloria Rice" under the hybrid commercialization program to be presented at the DA lobby. The department will also hold the GMA rice harvesting festival in Don Simeon and San Antonio, Nueva Ecija. Farmers will also be given discount cards as part of the on-going "Feed Assistance Program."

GMA joins El Shaddai in Palm Sunday mass, prays for peaceful, orderly and credible elections

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has called on members of the influential religious group Yahweh El Shaddai to pray for peaceful, orderly and credible elections on May 10 and for all the candidates to avoid black propaganda and character assassinations in the campaign.

The President joined some 1.5 million members of Bro. Mike Velarde's El Shaddai in celebrating a midnight Palm Sunday mass at the AMVEL Business Park in Barangay San Dionisio, Parañaque City.

In her short message, the Chief Executive asked for intercessory prayers of the El Shaddai members during Holy Week so that the candidates would uplift their campaign and focus on issues.

"During this season of Lent, I am urging you my brothers and sisters in Yahweh El Shaddai to pray for peaceful, orderly and credible elections and also pray for uplift of the kind of campaigning by others, some of whom are using black propaganda and character assassinations instead of laying their platforms of government," she said.

The President said that Saturday night was her 13th attendance in the celebration of Palm Sunday Mass with the El Shaddai, five of them during election years in 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001 and 2004.

She stressed that it is important, like a divine plan, to have a time-off from the campaign so that every candidate can have a time of silence for discernment and prayer for the coming polls.

“May you have a prayerful Holy Week and a very happy Easter this coming Sunday,” the President told fellow El Shaddai members.

The Mass was officiated by Parañaque Bishop Jessie Mercado, who was assisted by Manila Auxiliary Bishop Socrates Villegas and Rev. Fr. Randel Sanchez.

In his homily, Bishop Villegas stressed to the El Shaddai faithful the importance of PSST (Pray, Silence, Say No, and Think) before choosing the next leaders of the country in the May 10 polls.

“Holy week is not only for feelings, Holy Week is the time to discern, to renew our faith. Next month there will be an election, and as we vote for the next leaders of government, always be reminded of PSST,” Villegas said.

President Arroyo was received warmly by Bro. Mike and wife, Sister Belen Velarde, upon her arrival to attend the two-hour Mass.

Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4) senatorial bets Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Ramon Revilla, Jr., Manuel Roxas III, Robert Jaworski, John Osmena, Lito Lapid, Robert Barbers, Parouk Hussin and Orlando Mercado also attended the El Shaddai midnight mass.

Other government officials present were House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., who was accompanied by his wife, Gina, and Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan.

Palace: GMA is taking measures to avert possible power crisis

Malacañang assured the public today President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been taking measures to avert a possible power shortage in the near future.

“The President is doing everything to see to it that the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) is implemented,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said this morning in a radio interview.

EPIRA calls for the privatization of generation and transmission sub-sectors to compete the restructuring of the country’s power industry.

The President recognizes the need to focus attention on the energy sector because a gauge in the progress of the country is a vibrant energy sector and if we cannot give it the proper and necessary attention, the progress of our country may be delayed, Bunye said.

In a television interview last week, the President said “we have to privatize our generation cost now and we also have to bring in new power plants” as she emphasized the power industry is next in the reform agenda of the government.

She has ordered Energy Secretary Vince Perez to privatize our generation cost not sequentially but to prepare the bidding documents for all and to sell the moment anybody is willing to buy.

The response from the energy sector has been favorable with different multinational groups and power companies showing keen interest in acquiring generation assets of the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR), according to Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong who also chairs the Private Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation (PSALM).

Amatong said then the Napocor board had already approved the sale of some of its plants – the 22-megawatt Loboc, two-megawatt Barit, 0.4-megawatt Cauayan, 3.5-megawatt Talomo and 1.55-megawatt Agusan hydroelectric plants

The President said she has been inaugurating a number of power plants lately, citing off the cuff those in Bantayan Island in Cebu, Meran in Iloilo, and two others in Batangas City.

The President also ruled out Saturday any increase in power rates even after the May 10 elections.

Perez had been misquoted in a news report that the cap of 40 centavos per kilowatt hour on the purchased power cost adjustment would be lifted 50 days from then.

Only Malacañang has the power to lift the cap, according to the Energy Regulatory Commission. The President imposed the cap two years ago and has no plan to change it.

ROCO leaders rejoin GMA camp

The core group behind the Reform Oriented Citizens Organization (ROCO) has switched back its support to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to prevent what it called “ominous development in FPJ’s candidacy.”

ROCO, composed mostly of members of the 9th and 10th Congress and former Constitutional Convention (ConCon) delegates, used to provide the engine for the campaign machinery of *Alyansa ng Pag-asa* presidential candidate Raul Roco.

The erstwhile ROCO political leaders said that national interest and leadership experience have influenced their decision to shift back their support for President Macapagal-Arroyo’s bid for a full six-year term in the May 10 elections.

“We regret abandoning Senator Roco with all his idealism and crusade for good governance, but we certainly could not hang on to a leadership campaign while the prospect for a great disaster over the leadership issue looms in the horizon,” they said.

On Friday, they called on President Macapagal-Arroyo at Malacañang to pledge their support for her in the coming polls. Their group included former Laguna Congressman Rodolfo Tingzon, former Pangasinan 4th District Congressman Jose Bengzon, former Lakas National Spokesman and Ifugao Governor Gualberto Lumauig, former Congresswomen Luz Bakunawa of Masbate and Venice Agara of Bohol and former ConCon delegate Emil Ong.

Earlier, former Congressman Jerry Paras of Negros Occidental, for Governor Rodolfo Valencia of Mindoro Oriental, and Caloocan 1st District Congressman Edgardo Erice had rejoined the President’s camp.

Former Rep. Herminio Aquino, now Pag-asa vice presidential bet, was chairman of ROCO. Lumauig replaced Aquino as ROCO chairman.

More ROCO leaders, including former congressmen, governors and mayors, are expected to jump to the GMA bandwagon.

GMA taps cooperatives to expand gov’t’s micro-finance program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today tapped the expertise and resources of private cooperatives to speed up the delivery of the government’s micro-financing program for the marginalized sectors of society, especially unemployed women.

The President specifically called on the Project 4 Development Cooperative in Quezon City to help implement the government’s micro-financing program by scouting around for potential beneficiaries.

“I know that the Project 4 Development Cooperative has a track record for lending (small livelihood loans). Look for more women in Quezon City or other places to offer these loans,” the Chief Executive said keynote speech at the 31st general assembly of the cooperative.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also said the Project 4 cooperative could be a conduit of the government’s National Livelihood Support Fund (NLSF).

She revealed that the government’s soft loan financing for women offers loans ranging from P2,000 to P100,000 for small and medium enterprises.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is seeking a full six-year term in the May 10 elections, pointed out that the NLSF has been instrumental in providing micro-financing to one million jobless women who now have their own sources of income.

“That is part of my platform, to provide one million jobs a year over the next six years,” she added.

“That is why this election is not about me. This election is about you. How you could gain more power. It is only proper that you are further empowered to provide employment not only for residents of Quezon City, but other areas as well,” the President stressed.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo cited the Project 4 cooperative for efficient management of its finances, with assets now reaching P200 million.

Joining the President in the Project 4 event were senatorial candidates of the ruling Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan para sa Kinabukasan (K-4) Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Parouk Hussin, Orlando Mercado and Rodolfo Biazon.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: April 4, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028003057/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr04.htm>

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- **FG inaugurates the Macapagal Rehab Center in Cavite**
- **Thousands of farmers greet GMA on her birthday**
- **Gov't open to limited ceasefire with rebels on Holy Week, election period**
- **A clear platform can make or break a candidate in next month's polls – GMA**

The Good News: FedEx to remain in RP and invest \$450 million in business expansion

Federal Express Corporation (FedEx) will remain in the Philippines after all as it junked its plan to relocate to China.

Moreover, it will invest \$450 million to expand and move operations of its Asia-Pacific hub from Subic to Clark to continue providing revenue to the government and employment to Filipinos.

FedEx signified plans of moving to China in August last year but the move was averted, thanks to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declaring open skies in cargo in SBIA and DMIA, thus resolving differences between Philippine and American transport officials.

Over this clearing action by the President, FedEx also prefers doing business with the Philippine government and the many advantages of operating in the country, according to Clark International Airport Corp. president Adelberto Yap.

FedEx prefers the country's cheap and skilled labor, the work culture of Filipinos who can readily adapt to Americans and has no problems with communicating here.

Also, Clark already has a two-runway capacity at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport which has yet to be built in China.

Yap said he will sign a 25-year lease agreement with FedEx on April 11 in Memphis.

FedEx signed a letter of intent with the Guangzhou Airport Authority in August last year as it considered leaving Subic and transferring there because Philippine transport officials did not grant the demand of their US counterparts in July last year for seventh freedom operations in the country.

Seventh freedom rights allow a carrier to fly to other destinations from a particular hub without first passing its home base, which Philippine transport officials deemed a violation of the Constitution and the RP-US air transport agreement.

This led FedEx to sign a letter of intent with the Guangzhou Airport Authority in August last year to signify its plan to move to China.

But President Macapagal-Arroyo resolved the differences, issuing Executive Order 253 in December last year, declaring open skies in cargo in SBIA and DMIA

Subic Bay became the Asia-Pacific hub of FedEx in 1995, connecting 19 key Asian cities. The hub enables overnight delivery to the US West Coast from Penang, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Manila and East Timor.

Construction of FedEx's new hub at Clark should start next year for a smooth transition from Subic from which it will continue operating for two more years. The contract between the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority extends up to 2007.

FedEx decided to leave Subic because it can no longer expand there, it being primarily for port terminals.

Pampangeños' birthday wish for GMA: Victory in May 10 polls

LUBAO, Pampanga – Victory in the May 10 presidential elections.

That is the birthday wish of thousands of her kinsfolk for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who returned today to her hometown for the celebration of her 57th natal day.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's birthday celebration began with a mass at the St. Augustine Church here, with members of her family in attendance.

From Malacañang Palace in Manila, the President reached the church in time for the morning mass, which she traditionally attends every year she celebrates her birthday.

Thousands of people gathered at the church area, many of whom could no longer be accommodated inside and had to stand in front of the gate just to catch a glimpse of the President.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo's family, relatives, friends and supporters all have one common wish on the occasion of her birthday – victory in the presidential elections so that she could see the fulfillment of her government programs for the country's progress and the welfare of the people.

Statement of the President on her Holy Week Message

There is no more I can ask for on this day than for peace and solidarity among our people.

Let us celebrate the Holy Week in the tone of sacrifice, forgiveness and concern for one another.

Let us make it a time to contemplate the blessings that have come our way from the Almighty: the wholeness of our families, the peace of our communities and the unity of the Filipino despite the trials of a harsh and uncertain world.

Let us be thankful to God for the great gifts bestowed upon us.

Statement of the President on Anti-Terrorism

The Muslim faith is for peace and we respect Islam as a way of peace.

It is unfortunate that Islamic principles and beliefs are being twisted and exploited to justify sinister acts because we know that our Muslim brethren condemn terrorism as much as we Christians do.

But the problems besetting the Islamic faith in regard to terrorism are not only for Muslims to address, but also for all of us since what is at stake here is the security of the whole citizenry and the whole nation.

There is no hate campaign or witch hunt directed against Muslims.

They too play a vital role in nation-building and their concerns are being looked at and properly addressed.

Statement of the President on Spratly Islands

The Philippine government adheres to the peaceful, civilized and collective settlement of disputes among country-claimants on the Spratly Islands.

All our policies and actions have consistently been oriented toward this direction.

We expect all country-claimants to observe and respect the principle of non-occupation until such time that the matter is settled in the proper international forum.

GRP, NDF panels confident of overcoming obstacles to peace negotiations

The government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF), political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), are confident they can overcome any obstacle that may hinder progress of their peace talks.

GRP Chief Negotiator Silvestre H. Bello III made this point in a formal statement read at the Malacañang press briefing this afternoon. Bello has just returned from another round of peace talks in Oslo, Norway, on March 30-April 3.

Bello assured the people that the “partners in these peace efforts ... pursue the track of the peace negotiations towards the attainment of a just and lasting peace in our country.”

According to Bello, the GRP and NDF peace panels have agreed on three important goodwill and confidence-building measures. These are:

- The GRP shall work for the freedom of 32 prisoners and detainees, including nine covered by a presidential release order in 2001, within 30 days starting today (April 5). The government has released 98 alleged political offenders out of a total of 121 individuals whose names were in the NDF list submitted to the GRP in 2001.
- The GRP shall take steps to ensure the indemnification of the victims of human rights violations under the Marcos martial law regime. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has already earmarked P8 billion from the Marcos family’s Swiss bank accounts returned to the government.
- Both GRP and NDF reaffirmed commitment to comply with their obligations under the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). Bello said that this aims at ensuring the protection of rights of individuals to freedom of thought and expression, freedom of conscience, political and religious beliefs, freedom of movement and travel, as well as the rights to free speech, press or assembly.

“The reaffirmation was made by the panels in light of complaints received by either side regarding reported attacks on human rights workers, leaders and supporters of legal organizations, as well as reported attacks on communities, civilians and properties,” Bello said.

The next round of talks will be held from April 26 to 29 at a venue mutually agreed upon by both parties, in consultation with the third party facilitator, the royal government of Norway.

The Second Oslo Joint Statement, issued after the March 30-April 3 peace talks, noted that both panels initialed the guidelines for the conduct of work on social and economic reforms.

They also completed negotiations on the introductory sections, including the Preamble and the Declaration of Principles, of the draft Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms, it said.

According to the Oslo Joint Statement, the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) initialed, at its first formal meeting, the rules of procedure that will guide the members and observers of the JMC in carrying out their mandated duties.

The Reciprocal Working Committee on Social and Economic Reforms and the JMC have scheduled meetings in May and June 2004.

No hate campaign or witch hunt against Muslims – GMA assures nation

There is no hate campaign or witch hunt directed against Muslims, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo emphasized today as she deplored anew efforts to taint the government campaign against terrorism.

“The Muslim faith is for peace and we respect Islam as a way of peace. It is unfortunate that Islamic principles and beliefs are being twisted and exploited to justify sinister acts because we know our Muslim brethren condemn terrorism as much as we Christians do,” the President said in an official statement.

The problems besetting the Islamic faith in regard to terrorism are not only for Muslims to address, but also for all of us since what is at stake here is the security of the whole citizenry and the whole nation, the President furthered said.

“They too play a vital role in nation-building and their concerns are being looked at and properly addressed,” the President said.

Last week, the President said terrorism is a crime against all humanity and there are no political or religious undertones to the anti-terror campaign.

The legitimacy of the arrests can be fully addressed in court, she said, as she lauded the military and the police for their diligence and hard work.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said there is “no politics or ethno-religious discrimination” in the government’s anti-terrorism drive that has rounded up a number of suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf terror group and seized a cache of explosives, averting what could have been a Madrid-type bombing attacks in Metro Manila.

“The AFP and the PNP have always conducted themselves professionally and without bias in targeting terrorist cells,” Bunye added.

What is important here, Bunye said, is that our armed forces and police, with cooperation from the citizens, are doing their job to fight the threat of terrorism.

He said that criticisms against the military and the police will not deter the authorities from performing their mission.

Bunye also assured the families of the Abu Sayyaf members who have been arrested that their rights will be protected and all procedures on due process will be observed.

GMA-De Castro team attend El Shaddai Palm Sunday mass

Front-running vice presidential candidate Senator Noli “Kabayan” de Castro, together with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, joined some 1.5 million Yahweh El Shaddai followers in the celebration of the midnight Palm Sunday mass that ushered in the Holy Week.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and Senator de Castro were seated beside El Shaddai spiritual leader Brother Mike Velarde and his wife, Sister Belen, during the mass at the AMVEL Business Park in Barangay San Dionisio, Parañaque City.

The President called on her fellow El Shaddai supporters to pray for peaceful, orderly and credible elections on May 10 and for a high level of campaign that focuses on platform of governance instead of mudslinging, black propaganda and character assassination.

De Castro leads his rivals for the vice presidency by a wide margin in the latest survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations for Manila Standard.

Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4) senatorial bets Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Ramon Revilla Jr., Manuel Roxas III, Robert Jaworski, John Osmeña, Lito Lapid, Robert Barbers, Parouk Hussin and Orlando Mercado also attended the El Shaddai mass.

Other government officials present at the mass were House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., and his wife, Gina, and Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan.

GMA’s birthday wish: Peace, prosperity and unity for the Filipino people

LUBAO, Pampanga – Even on the occasion of her 57th birthday today, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has nothing in mind but the welfare of the nation, wishing for peace, prosperity and unity for the Filipino people.

In remarks after the birthday mass celebrated in her honor at the St. Augustine Church here, the President, a devout Catholic, said that this week being “Semana Santa, “should be celebrated with sacrifice, forgiveness and giving support to each other.”

“*Ito ang panahon para magnilay-nilay sa mga biyaya sa atin ng Maykapal, ang kabuuan ng ating pamilya, ang kapayapaan sa ating pamayanan at ang pagkakaisa ng ating lakas at sa hindi katiyakan sa mundo* (This is the time to thank God for the blessings, solidarity of the family and peace in the community as well as unity in the face of uncertainties),” she said.

After thanking the Lord Almighty for the gifts that she received on her natal day, the President expressed her gratitude to all her friends and all Filipinos all over the country who greeted her.

Former Presidents Fidel V. Ramos and Corazon C. Aquino greeted the President personally by attending the birthday mass. Also present were House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., members of the Cabinet, members of the First Family composed of First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, daughter Lulli and sons Mikey and Dato, as well as the members of the K-4 team, namely vice presidential candidate Senator Noli “Kabayan” de Castro, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Richard Gordon, Orly Mercado and Parouk Hussin.

Before the start of the mass, former President Ramos said that his birthday wish for the President is for her and the whole K-4 team to win in the coming elections.

Former President Aquino, on the other hand, said she wished the President all the best, good health and success. “I hope that she will receive all the blessings she is asking for,” Cory said.

Former Senator Santiago, who shook hands with President Fidel V. Ramos before the arrival of Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, recounted her conversation with the former President. She said Ramos told her that “I am campaigning for you.”

“So I said, I believe you,” Santiago said, emphasizing that this being the Holy Week, she should be filled with forgiveness and tolerance.

The two were among the protagonists in the 1992 presidential elections where Ramos won and Santiago lost.

According to daughter Luli, the President will spend her time resting in Malacañang after the birthday mass here, adding that the whole Arroyo family will be gathered at the Palace for an intimate dinner.

“We will continue to campaign for the President here,” Luli said, after the President left, expressing her fervent hope that her Mommy will be able to continue her programs and realize her dream of a progressive Philippines.

Later, Luli represented the President in the inauguration of “Gloria Village,” a housing project for indigent families in Cauyan, Angeles City. The village was built by the Friends of PGMA and Cabinet ladies in cooperation with the Gawad Kalinga and the city government of Angeles City as a birthday gift for the President.

Other activities during the President’s birthday were as follows:

- Simultaneous tree planting activities nationwide, with Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Elisea Gozun leading a tree-planting activity in Lubao, Pampanga;
- Launching of the unified ticketing system for the LRT and the MRT from Cubao, Quezon City to Legarda in Manila;
- Conducting a blood donation activity nationwide. A recognition ceremony for 2,401 barangay health workers was led by Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit also in Lubao, Pampanga;
- Groundbreaking of the Manila North Rail project in Caloocan City, with Transportation and Communication Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Presidential Adviser for Priority and ODA Projects Secretary Marita Jimenez as guests of honor;
- Inauguration of a Drug Rehabilitation Center in barangay Capipisa, Tanza, Cavite. The center was once a big shabu laboratory which was raided by police authorities; and
- Presentation of an audio-visual production showing the testimonies of farmers who have increased their yields through the use of “Gloria Rice,” hybrid variety and thanking the President for her efforts in improving their lot. The presentation was produced by the Department of Agriculture.

OPS officials deny mock polls story

Officials of three government information agencies denied today having conducted mock elections among their officers and personnel last March 30-31 saying the published reports “are baseless, to say the least.”

Philippine News Agency (PNA) Executive Editor Iluminado Varela, Philippine Broadcasting System (PBS) Director Rafael Dante Cruz and National Broadcasting Network (NBN) Channel 4 General Manager Jose Isabelo all denied there was such a poll, which was allegedly topped by Senator Panfilo Lacson.

“We are disappointed that such a story, which was built around statements like ‘employees and officials who requested anonymity, are given credence at all by the reporter,’” Varela said referring to Bulletin Reporter Roy Sinfuego.

In his letter to Bulletin Editor in Chief Cris Icban, Varela said it is unfair to mention PNA without providing details substantiating the allegation.

“It is on record that in its 30 years of service to the nation, PNA has never been involved in mock elections or has been the subject of election surveys,” he said.

Another story which came out in Malaya had no byline, but mentioned that officials of the three government agencies under the Office of the Press Secretary “were taken aback by the results of the mock poll.”

It also stated that officials “even made an attempt to hide the results of the mock elections to the media for fear that they could reach the President.”

“The story is baseless,” said the three officials. “No mock election or similar survey had been conducted on that date or at any other time.”

GMA calls on Pangasinenses to rally behind K-4

BAYAMBANG, Pangasinan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo asked the people of this town Sunday night to help change the life of the ordinary Pangasinense for the better now that their leaders are together with her in Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan Para sa Kinabukasan (K4).

During the Balikbayan Grand Ball and Coronation Night of “Pista’y Baley 2004” in honor of the town’s patron saint Senor San Vicente Ferrer, the President reminded Pangasinenses that Gov. Victor Agbayani, Vice Governor Oscar Lambino, and the board members and Bayambang Mayor Leocadio de Vera are running under her coalition, K-4.

She said that they are all behind her platform of creating one million jobs each year, emphasizing that her administration produced a million jobs each year since taking over in 2001 compared to the half million in former President Estrada’s time.

The President recalled she acquired funding for the San Roque Irrigation Project in the province during her last visit to Japan.

The President vowed to deliver not only irrigation project, but also clean water to all barangays in the country.

The President crowned Merinessa Fernandez Junio Miss Bayambang 2004 with the assistance of Mayor de Vera before addressing the huge crowd at the Bayambang Park Auditorium.

Pangasinan officials headed by Gov. Agbayani surprised the President with a prayer, wishing her success in the May polls on the eve of her birthday, and presented her with a cake. The President gamely blew out all the candles.

After the occasion, the President motored to Clark Air Base where she spent the night.

The President arrived at 8:00 a.m. Monday at the St. Augustine Church in Lubao, Pampanga for her birthday mass officiated by Archbishop Paciano Aniceto.

FG inaugurates the Macapagal Rehab Center in Cavite

TANZA, Cavite – What used to be a clandestine drug laboratory producing tons of shabu worth millions of pesos is now a rehabilitation center named after former First Lady Doña Eva Macaraeg-Macapagal.

No less than the First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo led the inauguration of the rehabilitation center which, he said, is President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s gift to the Filipino people on the occasion of her 57th birthday.

The First Gentleman flew here from Lubao Pampanga, where he and the President attended mass at San Agustin Church on the occasion of the President’s 57th birthday.

Present during the inaugural ceremony were Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations (AID-SOT) Task Force Chief and PNP Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay and Center for Ultimate Rehabilitation of Drug Dependent (CUREDD) Director Bonaparte Francisco.

The President approved Aglipay's recommendation for the conversion of the 3000-sq/m former shabu laboratory into a drug rehabilitation center to decongest the PNP-administered drug rehabilitation facility inside Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig.

This is the first time a former shabu laboratory has been converted into rehabilitation and treatment center for the victims of drug abuse.

The First Gentleman stressed that Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo is the first president to do so.

He likewise cited the anti-illegal drug team of the president and their dedication.

According to Francisco, the Doña Eva Macapagal Rehabilitation Center would serve as a halfway house for drug patients undergoing rehabilitation in Camp Bagong Diwa.

He said from Camp Bagong Diwa, drug patients would be transferred to the facility here one to two months before the release and formal integration to the society.

Already, he said, the Center has 100 drug patients.

Aglipay said the newly-opened facility will initially accommodate at least 250 drug dependents coming from Southern Tagalog provinces, with preference to those coming from Cavite, Rizal, Batangas, and Quezon.

On July 25, 2003, the shabu lab was raided by a team led by Aglipay and confiscated some 113 kilos of shabu, 700 kilos of ephedrine, a yacht, two motor boats, two jet skis, a van, and assorted shabu-making equipment.

The seacrafts were believed to have been used in transporting precursors and finished shabu product through the sea to facilitate the immediate transportation.

The raid was done a day after authorities arrested Li Ya Lan, alias Jackson Dy, a Chinese national and believed to be the leader of the Jackson Dy group that was nabbed in Parañaque City.

To date, the AID-SOTF has raided and dismantled a total of 22 laboratories and warehouses with a total value of P22 billion.

Dy is among the 31 top drug traffickers and shabu manufacturers arrested by the task force.

For his part, Tanza Mayor Raymundo del Rosario thanked the President for the project, noting it is the people of Cavite who will benefit most from the rehabilitation center.

Thousands of farmers greet GMA on her birthday

LUBAO, Pampanga—Agriculture Secretary Luis "Cito" Lorenzo thanked more than one thousand farmers from Central Luzon who gathered here to show their support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on her birthday.

Lorenzo said the farmers came early and were excited about meeting the President who introduced the commercialization of hybrid rice, also known as "Gloria Rice," which has led to an increase in their income.

“They wanted to show their appreciation and affection to the President who has been a consistent advocate of agricultural modernization and rice-sufficiency,” Lorenzo added.

A group of hybrid rice farmers belonging to areas outside Central Luzon also prepared a video tape containing their greetings and birthday wishes for the President in different dialects, which was presented by the Department of Agriculture to thousands of the President’s supporters, including K-4 senatorial candidates.

In the said videotape, Antonio Villanueva, a hybrid rice champion farmer of Ilocos Sur, led other farmers from Laguna, Pampanga, Cavite, Pangasinan and other parts of the country in wishing the President a happy birthday.

According to Villanueva, farmers like him who have shifted to planting “Gloria Rice,” have experienced a higher yield, and better income. He said he was able to harvest as much as 10.7 metric tons per hectare using the hybrid rice seeds endorsed by the Department of Agriculture.

Villanueva’s sentiments were echoed by other hybrid farmers who joined a visit to a technology farm in Victoria, Laguna last Saturday. Farmer Jaime Morados of Cavite said he has been able to help his married children with their family’s needs because of “Gloria Rice.”

Among the farmers who sent their greetings were Rudy Placino of Victoria, Laguna, Roberto Julao of Guagua, Pampanga, Terry Balatibat of Pila, Laguna, and Luciano Galicia. There were also birthday messages from “Gloria Rice” farmers from as far as Kalinga-Apayao, Bohol and Davao City.

Lorenzo personally conveyed to the President the warmest wishes of the hybrid rice farmers. “She was deeply touched by the personal stories of these farmers on how Gloria Rice improved their lives,” Lorenzo added.

According to the DA Secretary, the country will likely produce more grains between January and March this year, with palay seen to be 9 percent higher and corn up by 12.8 percent, from their respective levels a year ago.

Gov’t open to limited ceasefire with rebels on Holy Week, election period

Malacañang today said that the government will consider a limited ceasefire with the communist rebels during the Holy Week and in next month’s elections.

Chief Government Peace Negotiator Silvestre H. Bello III said at the press briefing in Malacañang, that the ceasefire is an important matter that the negotiating panels of the government and the National Democratic Front should discuss.

“There is a possibility of ceasefire for the Holy Week, maybe from Thursday up to Easter Sunday but these things have to be discussed by both panels,” Bello said.

He said there is also a possibility of an election ceasefire.

Bello, however, said that ceasefires during the Holy Week and the elections should be only for a limited period.

He said that the declaration of a ceasefire will depend on the recommendation of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

“If they will consult us, definitely we will give our recommendation,” Bello said.

A clear platform can make or break a candidate in next month’s polls – GMA

A clear platform on how each candidate would solve the ills now plaguing the country should be the main issue in next month's presidential polls.

This, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo believes, is what will make or break each of the candidates gunning for the highest post in the land.

In a television interview over the Iglesia ni Kristo-owned Cable Channel Net 25, the President told 'Con Todos Recados' hosts Ellaine Fuentes and Totoy Talastas that in her consultations with the people all over the country, she found out that what they really want to know is the platform of each of the presidential candidates.

"Gusto nilang malaman ang balak ng ibat ibang kandidato tungkol sa pagbabago ng kanilang buhay lalo na sa mga bagay ng ekonomiya, trabaho, presyo, hanapbuhay... hindi yung mga generalities kundi yung specifics. Yun ang kanilang pinagbabatayan (They want to know how each of the candidates can change their lives particularly on issues affecting the economy, employment, prices, jobs ... not generalities but specifics. That would be the basis of their decision)," she said.

The President deplored that the campaign had degenerated into character assassination and black propaganda instead of purely tackling issues.

"Okay lang po kung isyu, puwede nating pag-usapan, puwede nating linawin. Ang problema kapag character assassination at black propaganda, yan ang problema (It's okay if it's issues, they can be talked about, they can be cleared. The problem is if it's character assassination or black propaganda)," she clarified.

The President noted that like her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, she believes that the basic issue now confronting the country is poverty.

In her four-point agenda against poverty, the President revealed that creating jobs is of paramount importance that is why she said the government is focused on creating an environment conducive to investors.

In the countryside, focus is on agriculture and land reform, which, according to her, was her father's legacy during his presidency.

Direct services to the poor has also been taken care of, she said, like her water for the waterless program, housing and Medicare benefits.

The fourth agenda in her program, she said, is good governance.

On the issue that she has the undue advantage of using government resources for her campaign, the President said she is not the first President nor the first politician running as an incumbent.

The Chief Executive cited the case of former President Marcos who was even charged but subsequently cleared by the courts.

"Hindi mapaghihiwalay yon at rule na yon in favor of Marcos noong panahon niya. Marami pa pong jurisprudence tungkol sa mga incumbent na tumatakbo (It cannot be separated and the courts have ruled in favor of Marcos during his time. Besides, we have many jurisprudence about incumbents running for office)," the President said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 5, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026061753/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr05.htm>

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GMA stresses value of education, morality and faith in God in address to high school graduates

CONCEPCION, Tarlac – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo counseled graduates of a public high school in this town today to keep in mind that education, morality and faith in God are the keys that open opportunities to a better life.

Speaking before 1,042 graduates of the Benigno S. Aquino National High School in Barangay San Nicolas, Concepcion, the President recalled the struggles to obtain good education by her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, to stress the value of education in improving one's life.

But, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said, "*Hindi lang edukasyon ang mahalaga. Mahalaga rin ang mabuting moralidad at pananampalataya sa Diyos.* (It's not only education that is valuable. It is also important to have moral values and faith in God)."

The President arrived in Concepcion by helicopter at 7:45 A.M. She was accompanied on the presidential chopper by Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Press Secretary Milton Alingod, and Lupita A. Kashiwahara.

Tarlac Governor Jose Yap, Concepcion Mayor Benjie Lacson, and Congressmen Jesli Lapus and Benigno Aquino III, School Division Superintendent Victoria Aguas, high school officials, students and parents welcomed the President after alighting from the chopper on the campus.

In her speech, the President recalled how her father, born to a poor family, walked to school everyday, borrowed books from classmates, and nearly failed to attend the commencement exercises for lack of shoes.

But, according to the President, her father studied hard and graduated valedictorian of his high school class. With financial help from a rich townmate, he graduated from the UST College of Law and topped the bar examinations, she said.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said that her father eventually became a congressman, senator, vice president and president. One of the significant achievements of his presidency was the proclamation of a land reform program that freed farmers from the bondage of unjust tenancy nationwide.

"*Kung ang Tatay ko ay hindi nag-aral na mabuti, hindi marahil namin narating ang tugatog ng tagumpay*(If my father did not study hard, we would have not reached the pinnacle of success)," the President said.

Like her father, the President said that she also studied hard and absorbed in school as much knowledge as she could. She graduated at the top of her class from elementary to high school and college. She became an economist and joined the government service as official of the Department of Trade and Industry under former President Corazon Aquino.

President Macapagal-Arroyo handed diplomas to the graduates led by Paul Kenneth Miilat as class valedictorian.

Statement of the President: Re Muslim Christian solidarity

I am glad in the growing solidarity of Muslims and Christians behind our campaign against terrorism.

Everyone can be assured that this campaign will continue to be carried out without any ethnic or religious bias, and with only the enforcement of impartial justice in mind.

Every Filipino must guard against the exploitation of his or her faith to justify terrorism.

This is our common enemy and our fight must not be divided.

Statement of the President: Re Faith in the Filipino voter

Let us shake off this doomsday syndrome about the forthcoming elections.

It demeans our people to say that a close race is a recipe for post election chaos.

We must have greater faith in the Filipino and our strong and courageous adherence to democracy.

What is more important is to make every vote count, and to safeguard the democratic process.

For every election in our history, the will of the people and the strength of our institutions have upheld clean, honest and orderly polls.

This will happen in May 10 and in every future election in our country, and I am confident that the results will be accepted and our political stability will remain unsullied.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re MILF

We do not negotiate with terrorists and as far as the government is concerned, any faction of the MILF harboring terrorists is beyond the ambit of the peace process.

All salient agreements with the MILF explicitly exclude terrorists from the process.

We are strictly enforcing this caveat.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Presidential debate

This election is about issues and how each candidate will bring about specific changes to improve the lives of the average Filipino.

President Gloria has a clear vision and a very specific platform.

She believes the people deserve to hear about the specifics of her program and debates are central to bringing these specifics to the people so that they can judge for themselves the power of each candidate's agenda.

In her case, President Gloria wants to debate her agenda to bring clean water to every barangay, cut the price of medicines in half, extend more loans for the self employed, create 6 million new jobs and extend electricity to every barangay in the nation.

President Gloria is disappointed that her main challenger does not want to attend the PPCRV-COMELEC debate.

A debate without him is meaningless.

In the meantime, she will be promoting her specific agenda of change to the people.

GMA's 'landmark' North Rail project will ease travel & promote trade

Malacañang today welcomed the North Rail project whose construction will be funded by a \$400 million loan to be provided by the People's Republic of China.

In a radio interview this morning, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the North Rail project is one of the "landmark projects" of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

"Actually, mayroong North Rail project tayo, mayroon ding South Rail. Itong North Rail ay aabot hanggang La Union. Imu-modernize talaga itong ating rail system na matagal nating napabayaan (Actually, we have a North Rail project. We also have a South Rail project. The North Rail will reach up to La Union. Our rail system, which has long been neglected, will be modernized)," he said.

Bunye said that modernization of the rail system would not only ease travel to different regions of the country, but also speed up the movement of goods and, thus, promote trade.

The Presidential Spokesperson also expressed the appreciation of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to the Chinese government's extension of a US\$400 million loan for the project.

Funding for the North Rail project has been secured by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during her working state visits to China.

Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. has said that the project would constitute a "lasting legacy" of President Macapagal-Arroyo to the Filipino people, because it would boost the Philippine economy and help promote greater unity and solidarity among the Filipino people.

China's \$400 million loan will be concessionary, with three percent interest and a five-year grace period.

The North Rail project will be implemented jointly by the Philippine National Railways (PNR), Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) and its subsidiary, the North Luzon Railways Corp., Department of Transportation and Communication (DoTC), and the National Machinery and Equipment Corp. owned by the Chinese government.

Spirit of Capas is how to achieve peace and prosperity, says GMA

CAPAS, Tarlac—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that in remembering the sacrifices of those who perished in the infamous Death March some 60 years ago, the Filipino people must strive to work for peace not only in society but also in their hearts.

In her remarks at the Capas National Shrine here, the President said that in commemorating Bataan Day or *Araw ng Kagitingan*, which also falls on Good Friday, the people should think of ways on how to achieve peace and prosperity, on how to make sacrifices and on how to care and serve one's fellow men.

"Ito ang diwa ng Capas, ito ang diwa ng Bataan Death March. Ito ang diwa ng Semana Santa. Ito ang pangangailangan ng ating bansa sa mga panahong ito (This is the spirit of Capas. This is the spirit of Bataan Death March. This is the spirit of the Lenten Season)," the President said.

The President recalled the heroism and the sacrifices of more than 50,000 Filipinos who marched the 155-kilometer Bataan to Capas, Tarlac Road under a sweltering heat, with no water, food and shelter.

Waxing philosophical, the President said that the Death March did not actually end in death but in triumph "because we won the war and this was the beginning of a new hope for change."

The President said that everybody yearns for change, particularly in the search for peace and prosperity, including the present generation, adding that she, too, yearns for change for the Filipino people, a change for the betterment of their lives.

She fondly recalled that while hundreds of people were executed from breaking away from the Death March column and it was lucky indeed for her paternal uncle, Angel Macapagal, to escape while in Lubao, Pampanga.

The President said that war is a burden that humanity has to contend with. But in order to avoid war, we should strive to remove the reasons for most conflicts in the world, like inequity, injustice, ignorance and poverty, the President added.

And this is what she has been doing during her presidency, the President said, attracting foreign investments into the country so that people can have stable jobs and, therefore, food on their tables and security in their homes.

The President also reiterated her administration's policy of seeking peace with all sectors in society, including the communist rebels and the secessionist forces in Mindanao.

She then thanked Tarlac Governor Jose Yap, who was among those in the audience, for being a member of the government peace panel that is currently holding talks with the National Democratic Front (NDF).

The President was accorded a 21-gun salute upon her arrival at the shrine after addressing the 56th graduation rites of the Benigno S. Aquino National High School in Concepcion, Tarlac.

Assisted by Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, the President laid a wreath at the shrine.

Other officials who welcomed the President here were Tarlac 2nd District Congressman Benigno Aquino III, Tarlac 3rd District Congressman Jesli Lapus and Mayor Reynaldo Catacutan.

GMA authorizes Occupational Specialty Pay for air traffic controllers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has authorized the grant of Occupational Specialty Pay (OSP) to air traffic controllers in recognition of the unique duties and responsibilities of their profession.

The grant was contained in Administrative Order 97 signed March 24 but took effect March 1 of this year.

Under AO 97, a monthly OSP of P2,000 each shall be given to those holding positions as air traffic controller I and II, senior traffic controller, supervising air traffic controller, assistant chief air traffic controller, chief air traffic controller, air traffic services supervisor, and director I and II of air traffic service.

The Technical Incentive Allowance (TIA) being received by air traffic controllers will be integrated into the OSP. Henceforth, according to the AO, no separate payment shall be made for the TIA for the Air Traffic Controllers.

The OSP shall be charged against the savings of the Air Transport Office. In case of deficiency, the balance shall be charged against savings of the whole Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC). Any remaining deficiency shall be charged against the Miscellaneous Personnel Benefits Fund.

In authorizing the grant, the AO cited the role the air traffic controllers play in providing air traffic control services to the flying public in order to maintain safe, expeditious and orderly flow of air traffic.

It also said that lives and properties are at stake and must be protected through the conduct of alert and efficient air traffic control services.

The AO also cited air traffic control as a vital component in the preservation of Philippine sovereignty and implementation of national security policies.

Boncodin assures release of teachers' honorariums for poll duty on April 25

Here's good news for teachers who will render poll duties in next month's elections.

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) announced today that P1.4 billion for the honoraria and per diems for all public school teachers and members of the Board of Canvassers in the May 10 elections would be released on April 25.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin made the announcement at a press briefing in Malacañang to ensure that all the teachers will be paid in advance.

"We will release that on April 25 as programmed and as agreed upon with the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and the Department of Education (DepEd)," Boncodin said.

Boncodin said the release of the P1.4 billion is part of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's commitment to ensure that two weeks before the conduct of May 10 local and national elections, all the members of the Board of Inspectors and Canvassers would already get their two-day honoraria at P1,000 per day.

She also assured that the third day honoraria will be paid after the election once the DepEd, the COMELEC, and DBM have determined the actual number of teachers scheduled to participate in the elections.

Boncodin added that the funds would be released directly to DepEd.

Boncodin also reported that the DBM has released P3.3 billion to the COMELEC, including the funds for absentee voting, to cover all the operating expenditures of the poll body in the forthcoming elections.

She reiterated that P4.7 billion has been allocated for the COMELEC. The remaining P1.4 billion which goes to the honoraria and per diems of all teachers and elections officials would be released on April 25.

GMA's bid in the May 10 polls gets another boost from Tarlac officials

TARLAC CITY, Tarlac—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's bid for a full six-year term in the May 10 elections got another boost today with the expression of full support of provincial officials of Tarlac.

In a luncheon he hosted for the President here, Tarlac First District Congressman Gilbert Teodoro, a ranking member of the Nationalist People's Coalition, said they would exert all efforts so that the President would win overwhelmingly in Tarlac.

Teodoro, a top lieutenant and nephew of Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, NPC founder and chairman emeritus, said that only the President has the experience and know-how to handle the affairs of the state, including world affairs.

He said that it is only fitting that the President should be given a fresh mandate so that she can pursue her programs of government, particularly those that would benefit the marginalized sector of society.

The luncheon meeting was also attended by Tarlac Governor Jose Yap, Vice Governor Marcelino Aganon, Tarlac Second District Congressman Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, and Tarlac City Mayor Genaro Mendoza.

Among the municipal mayors who were present at the luncheon meeting were Rodolfo Guerrero of Anao, Estelita Aquino of Moncada, Elpidio Ibarra of Paniqui, Wilfredo Sawit of Pura, Gil Beltran of Ramos, Reynaldo Malazo of San Manuel, Vicente Pacada of San Clemente, and Emmanuel Guiam of Victoria.

Earlier, in Capas and Concepcion, Tarlac, the President also got the assurance of support from Tarlac Third District Congressman Jesli Lapus.

Political observers here said that this is the first time in the history of the province that the Aquinos, Teodoros and the Cojuangcos are all supporting the candidacy of a single presidential candidate.

Isabela Congressman Faustino Dy III, chairman of NPC, has also said that majority of his colleagues in the House of Representatives, who are from his party, are supporting the President.

GMA cites call centers, business process out-sourcing as haven for jobseekers

CAMILING, Tarlac—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today told fresh college graduates here that call centers and business process out-sourcing are two new industries that are a rich source of employment opportunities.

In a keynote address at the graduation rites of the Camiling Colleges here, the President said call centers and business process out-sourcing can accommodate great numbers of job applicants.

"But you have to speak the English language well to work at a call center," Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo told the graduates.

On the other hand, she explained that business process out-sourcing requires proficiency in accounting and short-hand writing for transcription purposes.

The Chief Executive recalled that before she took over the presidency in January 2001, there were only about 2,000 workers in the call centers and business process out-sourcing.

"Ngayon, dahil inayos natin ang imprastraktura para doon, 50,000 na ang nagtatrabaho sa call centers, sa business process out-sourcing, nadodoble pa taun-taon (Today, since we have improved the infrastructure in these sectors, there are now 50,000 workers in the call centers and business process out-sourcing. And this is doubled every year)," the President said.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also noted strong confidence of investors in the domestic business climate under her administration, citing as example the \$500-million fund infusion into the San Miguel conglomerate, giving rise to business expansions, creation of new products and new dealers, and more jobs.

The President also reiterated that the government's micro-financing program for small and medium enterprises has provided sources of livelihood for some one million women under her leadership.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo emphasized that she intends to create one million jobs yearly over the next six years if she is given a new mandate in the May 10 elections.

Gov't has not overspent in first quarter, says Boncodin

Malacañang today assured that the national government has not spent more than its target or more than its programmed expenditures in the first quarter of the year nor has it window-dressed the revenue figures for the period as alleged by certain quarters.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin made the assurance as she denied allegations of overspending in the first quarter and incorporating money from the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) in the first quarter outlay in the General Fund.

She said preliminary numbers on the deficit figure for the first quarter show that it will be below the P58.9 billion target for the first quarter.

"Our policy with regards to CARP, and that is something we announced last year, is that, we will only record the proceeds from the CARP as they are spent, in other words, whatever we spent for CARP will be the same amount of revenues that will reflect in the revenue numbers," Boncodin said.

Proceeds from the Marcos wealth, she explained, is kept in a separate special account by the Bureau of Treasury and not with the General Fund. She expects that CARP will start reporting disbursements for March and that it is also the same number that will reflect in the revenue actual figures.

Boncodin pointed out that the program of government continues even under a reenacted budget.

"We have come up with a fiscal program as early as last year when we submitted the 2004 budget to Congress and we have not changed our targets up to now," she said. "We will only make some changes, if that is at all possible, in the middle of this year, which is our normal adjustment period."

Boncodin reported that the country's deficit target for this year remains at P197.8 billion.

"So we are not inventing any new program just because it is election season. In fact we are being very faithful to what was submitted to Congress in 2004," she stressed.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 6, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028003957/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr06.htm>

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- **GMA underscores Filipino people's need to change and to think of the nation's interest**
- **GMA extols Filipino veterans in Bataan rites**
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- **Zambo del Norte execs endorse PGMA for May 10 polls**

The Good News: FedEx, Boeing look at Clark as ideal site for business expansion

Instead of relocating, multinational delivery giant Federal Express Corp. has decided to stay in the Philippines and invest \$450 million to expand and move operations of its Asia-Pacific hub from Subic to Clark, assuring continued revenues to the government and employment to Filipinos.

Clark International Airport Corp. president Adelberto Yap said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's open skies declaration for cargoes in Subic and Clark has got a lot to do with the decision, saying it resolved differences between Philippine and American transport officials.

"This is a done deal," Yap said. "I'm scheduled to go to Memphis on April 11 and sign the 25-year lease agreement with FedEx which is reserving 50 hectares for their future operation in Clark."

FedEx had signified plans of moving to China in August last year after Philippine transport officials junked its demand for seventh freedom operations in the country, saying it is a violation of the Constitution and the RP-US air transport agreement.

Seventh freedom rights allow a carrier to fly to other destinations from a particular hub without first passing its home base.

In deciding to keep its operations in the country, FedEx cited the country's cheap and skilled labor, the work culture of the Filipinos who can readily adapt to Americans, and the ease of communication with the locals who speak English.

It also cited the two-runway capacity of the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport in Clark, which has yet to be built in China.

FedEx decided to leave Subic because it could no longer expand there. Recently two of their aircrafts crashed in the water after overshooting the runway.

FedEx's fresh expansion plans come on the heels of aircraft maker Boeing Co.'s ongoing negotiations with the government to set up a regional logistics and maintenance base worth \$400 million also at Clark.

A delegation led by Roger Kip Taylor, head of Asia Project Development for Boeing, that includes Col. Alexander Cox, head of strategic planning of the US Pacific Command based in Hawaii, was looking at leasing some 80 hectares of what was once the biggest American base outside the United States.

“To put up an investment like that would need no less than \$400 million because of the equipment and facility,” Yap said. “You can just imagine the jobs to be generated there.”

He said two meetings had already taken place but as yet no firm proposals had been put on the table.

About 60 percent of the aircraft used by commercial carriers operating in the Asia-Pacific region were built by Boeing.

The US government is funding a \$150 million modernization program for the Armed Forces of the Philippines and much of it includes maintaining the Boeing C-130 transporter aircraft.

Statement of the President on the Fight Against Terrorism

Our fight against terrorists has been relentless. We have stopped their plans but they are adamant and persistent. We caught six in the dragnet in Metro Manila but some are still in hiding. We have intercepted their explosives cache but they may be shipping in more.

Our sea and airports are under 24-hour surveillance.

Justice will catch up with the terrorists in the end. One by one, the witnesses in Basilan and Sulu are coming out and pointing to the evildoers.

We are closely watching foreigners in the country who may have taught them to make bombs, and who may have laundered money from the Al Qaeda and the JI into the pockets of local bombers.

We shall respect diplomatic conventions and be circumspect in assessing our evidence. But once we have it, they will be arrested and brought to justice.

This is a universal fight for democracy and freedom. And no set of extremists shall hold hostage the democratic bond of nations.

Statement of the President on the Energy Situation

The combined efforts of the Department of Energy (DoE), the private sector and the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) are the key to the consolidation of our power strategy.

We need long-term stability as well as long-term protection for the average customer.

Affordability must live side by side with sustainability.

We aim to energize 1,500 *barangays* a year and eventually bring the cost of power to a level that is the lowest in Asia.

Statement of the President on the Sandiganbayan Decision on Estrada

We welcome the Sandiganbayan decision on the request for a Lenten break by former President Joseph Estrada.

The granting of the three-day retreat reflects the true meaning of the Lenten Season.

President's Lenten Message

Ang Semana Santa ay panahon ng pagninilay. Si Panginoong Hesukristo ay naghandog ng Kanyang buhay upang tubusin tayo sa ating mga kasalanan. Tiniis Niya ang lahat ng pasakit, para patunayan kung gaano Niya tayo kamahal. Bilang pasasalamat, gawin nating makabuluhan ang paggunita sa Kanyang pagdurusa at Kanyang kamatayan.

Pag-isipan nating mabuti kung ano pa ang ating magagawa bilang pagsunod sa Kanyang mga utos at aral. Kailangan din nating pasanin ang ating sariling krus. Kailangan din nating magmalasakit at dumamay sa ating kapwa. Kailangan nating mag-alay bawat isa ng tulong para sa kapakanan ng ating bayan.

Sa maikling panahon ng aking pagiging Pangulo, inihandog ko ang aking sarili para ipaglaban ang pagbabago para sa karaniwang Pilipino. Wala akong tanging hangad kundi ang tapusin ang aking nasimulan at wakasan ang kahirapan.

Tulad ng pagkamatay ni Hesus sa krus, ang bawat isa sa atin ay dapat ding maghandog ng sarili nating sakripisyo. Magtulungan tayo para sa kapayapaan at kaunlaran ng ating bansa. Magkaisa tayo para sa maginhawang pamumuhay nating lahat. At tulad din ng Kanyang muling pagkabuhay, ang ating mga pagsisikap ay maghahatid sa atin ng isang magandang bukas.

GMA creates Salam force composed on Muslims to oversee police matters in Muslims areas

Muslim members of the police force will be engaged actively in the government's stepped up anti-terrorism campaign, Malacañang said today.

This developed as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered Tuesday night the creation of the Salam Police to oversee police matters concerning Muslim communities and designated Presidential Assistant on the Peace Process Teresita Quintos Deles as officer-in-charge on Muslim police matters.

The President's action came after she had a dinner-dialogue with Muslim leaders, along with movie actor and Muslim convert Robin Padilla, at the Music Conference Room of Malacañang last night.

Salam Police will be composed of Muslim members with Philippine National Police. The search committee for members of this special force would be the three Muslim PNP provincial commanders in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Zamboanga and Basilan.

Padilla welcomed the President's immediate action.

"We would like to express our gratitude and thanks to Madame President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for the positive result as she directed Secretary Deles to take charge of monitoring the arrest and possible human rights violations against our fellow Muslim brothers," Padilla said.

He particularly welcomed the President's creation of the Salam Police to ensure the safety of Muslims and protection of their rights.

Padilla called on his Muslim brothers to stay calm and set aside any plans against the government.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye reiterated in a radio interview this morning what the President has been saying all along about the government campaign against terrorism, there is no racial or ethnic bias in it.

The arrests of some suspected terrorists are not directed at Muslims but results of legitimate operations by the military and the police, Bunye explained.

"I am glad in the growing solidarity of Muslims and Christians behind our campaign against terrorism," the President said.

“Everyone can be assured that this campaign will continue to be carried out without any ethnic or religious bias, and only the enforcement of impartial justice in mind,” the President stressed.

Yesterday, the police presented to media six suspected terrorists who belong to the Abu Sayyaf Group.

They were identified as part of a group that was planning to bomb 46 targets in Metro Manila, including the United States and Israeli embassies. Shopping malls, commuter trains and television stations were also part of their targets.

The suspects were arrested late last month and more than 50 kilos of trinitrotoluene (TNT) and other bomb components were seized from them, according to the police.

Four of the six presented were tagged by some of their former hostages as their captors in the kidnap-for-ransom staged by terrorists in a posh Palawan resort in May 2001 and in Sipadan, Malaysia in 2000.

No letup in fight against terrorism – GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that there will be no letup in the fight against terrorism, assuring the public that the country’s sea and airports are under 24-hour surveillance.

“Our fight against terrorists has been relentless. We have stopped their plans but they are adamant and persistent. We caught six in the dragnet in Metro Manila but some are still in hiding,” the President said in a statement, referring to the Abu Sayyaf terrorists arrested by police authorities, thereby nipping in the bud a Madrid-level attack in Metro Manila.

The President cautioned that although authorities have intercepted their explosive caches, the terrorists could be shipping in more.

The Chief Executive expressed confidence that justice will soon catch up with the terrorists in the end.

“One by one, the witnesses in Basilan and Sulu are coming out and pointing to the evildoers,” she said.

Authorities, according to her, are closely watching foreigners in the country who may have thought their local counterparts how to make bombs and who may have laundered money from Al Qaeda and the Jemaah Islamiyah into the pockets of local bombers.

“We shall respect diplomatic conventions and be circumspect in assessing our evidence. But once we have it, they will be arrested and brought to justice,” she warned.

The President said the campaign against terror is a universal fight for democracy and freedom, adding that no set of extremists shall hold hostage the democratic bond of nations.

GMA underscores Filipino people’s need to change and to think of the nation’s interest

MOUNT SAMAT, Pilar, Bataan—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today underscored the need for the Filipino people to change and to think not only of their personal interests but also of the nation and their fellow men.

In her speech at the *Dambana ng Kagitingan* here as part of the celebration of the *Araw ng Kagitingan*, the President said the Filipinos’ enemy today is not a foreign invader but themselves.

“*Ang kaaway natin ngayon ay hindi estranghero kung hindi ang kapwa Pilipino na ang hanap ay sariling interes, hindi pambansang malasakit* (Our enemy today is not a foreigner but our fellow Filipinos who are only after their self-interest and not the interest of the nation),” the President said.

The President particularly cited Japan, saying that Japan, the country's tormentor in World War II, is now the major source of the official development assistance (ODA) and investments that have helped create jobs in the Philippines.

She then appealed to the people to help her face the new challenges and the new threats to society.

"Tulongan ninyo ako sa aking ipinaglalaman na pagbabago, hindi lamang sa pagbabago ng lipunan o pamahalaan, kung hindi sa pagbabago ng sarili, ng sariling diwa, ng sariling puso, ng sariling kaluluwa (Help me in my fight for change, not only in changing the society or government but also in changing oneself, one's spirit, one's heart, one's soul," the President said.

According to the President, the commemoration of *Araw ng Kagitingan*, April 9, which falls on Good Friday, makes the occasion all the more significant.

She exhorted all the World War II veterans and the new generation of Filipinos to help her, while commemorating the Lenten Season and the Fall of Bataan, in forging ahead a new sense of unity.

"Iisa lamang ang ating bansa, iisa lamang ang ating kapalaran, iisa lamang ating hinaharap, uunlad tayo or lulugmok tayo nang sama-sama (We have only one nation, one fate, one future, and together we will either rise or sink)," the President said.

It is only fitting, the President said, that we should all give due recognition not only to those who have shed blood in the battlefields but also to those who have steadfastly worked for the betterment of their countrymen.

GMA extols Filipino veterans in Bataan rites

PILAR, Bataan — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today extolled and thanked Filipino war veterans who remain the guiding lights in the pursuit to uplift the people and the country during the *Araw ng Kagitingan* and Philippine Veterans Week rites at the *Dambana ng Kagitingan* in Mount Samat here.

In her speech at the shrine, the President extolled the Veterans Federation of the Philippines under the leadership of Col. Emmanuel de Ocampo and other veterans groups for strengthening their influence in the policy-making of her administration.

Because of them, her administration has had a good start in setting right the system of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO) so that veterans now receive their pensions and other benefits faster.

More than 70 percent of the pensions now are received through direct bank remittances which are faster and safer than through the mail, the President said.

The President also said that in its brief term, her administration already has set aside almost P40 billion for pensions and other benefits of 260,000 veterans compared to only about P31 billion by the past administration.

Her administration has also raised old age pension, paid for about 20,000 in educational benefits and 20,000 in burial assistance, and hospitalization benefits for 4,000, the President said, even as her administration tightened up on spending to lessen the budget deficit.

More than 20,000 have benefited as the PVAO spiked its free dental and medical missions for veterans in the provinces, the President said.

The President recalled that after her state visit to the United States last year, President George W. Bush gave medical equipment worth more than P50 million to the Philippine Veterans Hospital for veterans in the country and signed two laws increasing the health care benefits and other privileges of Filipino veterans living in the US to the tune of \$40 million every year.

She has ordered the PVAO to hasten the processing of pending applications for benefits and clean the list of veterans to make sure that only genuine veterans get to accept pensions and benefits. The President also reactivated the Military Service Board to process more than 100 applications to prove their service during World War II.

Present during the rites were members of the diplomatic corps headed by US Charge d' Affaires Joseph Mussomelli and his Japanese counterpart, Akio Egawa.

Cabinet members present at the rites were Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Press Secretary Milton Alingod. Also present were Monsignor Antonio Dumaul of the Archdiocese of Balanga, AFP Vice Chief of Staff General Rodolfo Garcia and other major service commanders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Provincial officials who attended the rites were Governor Leandro Roman, Congressman Antonino Roman, Vice Governor Rogelio Roque and Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) Chairman Felicito Payumo.

Upon arrival at the *Dambana ng Kagitingan*, the President was accorded military honors before she laid a wreath at the shrine. Mussomelli and Egawa also laid wreaths at the shrine.

The President also awarded trophies to the winners of the national oratorical contest conducted by the Department of Education, in coordination with the sons and daughters of the Veterans Federation of the Philippines. Sheila Mae Unlos won in the college level and Raiza de Leon in the high school level.

Laguna's dominant political party now part of K-4

STA. CRUZ, Laguna—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo officiated today the mass oath-taking of 609 Kaibigan ni Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (KGMA) municipal and barangay coordinators to highlight the alignment of Partido Dimasalang of Laguna Governor Teresita Lazaro with the administration's Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4).

“Starting today, the Partido Dimasalang will be officially part of our Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan. I also want to acknowledge the countless support of KGMA in helping me spread government accomplishments here in Laguna,” said the President in acknowledging the newly-sworn members of KGMA to the administration coalition.

Present during the KGMA induction ceremony held at the covered court of the Pedro Guevara Memorial National High School (PGMNHS) here were Gov. Lazaro, Provincial Board Member and K-4 vice gubernatorial bet Edwin Olivares, PGMNHS Principal Emilio Ulpindo and other provincial and local candidates of the administration.

She also promised to bring the “Patubig ni Gloria” program to the province in her next administration if she will be given a chance to have a new six-year mandate in the May 10 elections.

The President explained that during her short three years in the Presidency, she was able to alleviate the woes of every ordinary family in Quezon City, Metro Manila and nearby Cavite province by providing them with potable drinking water.

She said that if she will be given another opportunity to lead the country up to year 2010, Laguna residents would be assured of having clean water under her next term of office.

The Chief Executive also stressed the more than a million jobs she had created in the past three years and a big part of these jobs were created in the industrial and special economic zones in Laguna.

“If somebody asks you about the jobs I am talking to you then, bring them to numerous factories in Sta. Rosa, Biñan, Cabuyao. Under my short leadership I always visited these places to inaugurate new factories, to attend in the

expansion programs of other companies such as the Intel's US\$ 1 billion investment here in Laguna," the President said.

She also discussed the successful hybrid "Gloria Rice" that resulted in economic activities in this part of Southern Luzon and increased farmers' income.

There are also jobs that had been created, she said. Because of the construction of several shopping malls in the region.

Other government thrusts that she said would be highlighted in her next administration are the creation of additional one million jobs a year, lowering of the prices of medicines to complement the majority of Filipino holders of PhilHealth cards.

Earlier, Gov. Lazaro and Olivares led the KGMA members in serenading the President with a birthday song and presenting her a birthday cake.

Zambo del Norte execs endorse PGMA for May 10 polls

Leaders of Zamboanga del Norte today endorsed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as their official candidate for the May 10 presidential elections.

Two representatives and 14 incumbent mayors, together with other candidates for various posts in Zamboanga del Norte, pledged their support during an informal dialogue with the President this afternoon at Malacañang's Aguinaldo Room.

Led by Zamboanga del Norte First District Rep. Cecilia Jalosjos-Carreon, the provincial leaders said they are endorsing the President because she is "the best leader to bring social reforms and usher the country into prosperity."

They said the President has the experience and has shown and espoused good governance.

"We pledge our allegiance and support to your presidential bid as the country elects our leader on May 10, 2004. We will actively campaign for your presidential election," Rep. Jalosjos-Carreon said, as she led the reading of their statement of support.

Among those who signified their support were 2nd District Rep. Roseller Barinaga, La Libertad Mayor Manuel Sulit, Sergio Osmeña Mayor Augustines Magsalay, Jose Dalman (Ponot) Mayor Oliveros Dalman, Katipunan Mayor Patchito Equia, Manukan Mayor Eugene Caballero, Pres. Manuel Roxas Mayor Carlito Feras, Sindangan Mayor Winnie Albos, Gudud Mayor Erlinda Te, Baliguian Mayor Teofilo Suson, Leon Postigo Mayor Ruperto Jamora, Liloy Mayor Bechu Uy, Salug Mayor Jesus Lim, Sibuco Mayor Nurunniam Edding, and Polanco Mayor Francis Olvis, a vice gubernatorial candidate.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 7, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071025211805/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr07.htm>

The President's Day: April 8, 2004

08 APRIL 2004

- **The Good News: RP exports expected to further surge in the coming months**
- **Zambo del Norte execs endorse GMA for May 10 polls**
- **Gov't job generation program on track with 1.4 million new jobs created in January – NEDA**

The Good News: RP exports expected to further surge in the coming months

National Economic Development Authority Director General Romulo Neri said export growth is expected to further strengthen "due to projected higher exports to Japan and other countries in the coming months."

Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar V. Purisima also said that exports would further gain momentum in the coming months.

"We expect to continue seeing a positive growth trend in our exports in the coming months," he said, adding that electronics would still be "the main driver of growth."

Earlier, the National Statistics Office reported that a healthy global demand for electronics that boosted its key trade sector accounted for the 7.5 percent increase in the country's export income in the year through February.

NSO figures saw February exports rise from \$2.789 billion to \$2.999 billion, far outstripping the 4.1 percent rise in the year through January.

Electronic exports, accounting for two-thirds of the economy's output, were 6.6 percent higher at \$1.976 billion.

The NSO attributed the growth to the economic recovery of Japan which has become the country's main export market, accounting for 17.4 percent of the aggregate export income in February at \$523.14 million, up by 24.9 percent from \$418.76 million last year.

Purisima pointed out that non-traditional electronic exports were also gaining ground.

"The growing rate of the non-traditional products reflect our gains from the country's product diversification strategy and expansion to Asian markets," he said.

Purisima noted the decline in exports to the United States but said this was compensated by orders from neighboring countries.

He said the improving US economy is not currently translated to an increase in Philippine exports since they are being absorbed by China, Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

Purisima stressed that the country's commitment to bolster intra-Asian trade and the strategies to penetrate the huge China market is working for the Philippines, saying that seven of the country's top 10 export destinations are Asian markets.

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Gov't job generation program on track with 1.4 million new jobs created in January – NEDA

Director General Romulo Neri of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has said that the Philippine economy continues to pick up as shown by the creation of 1.4 million net new jobs in January this year, as against last year's 414,000 jobs.

"This indicates that economic activity continues to pick up and that the government's job generation programs and strategies are on track," Neri said in a statement.

Neri said that the January 2004 Round of the Labor Force Survey released by the National Statistics Office showed that services contributed about 940,000 jobs to the economy, a big improvement from 284,000 in 2003, while industry put in 466,000 jobs, a reversal from last year's job loss of 14,000 and also the highest increment since 1999.

Neri, however, said that the new entrants of 1.7 million into the labor force, representing a 5.2 percent growth rate from its year-ago level, outpaced the high employment creation for the period of 1.4 million new jobs.

Neri said he shares the sentiments of Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas who believed that the labor force figures released last week indicate increasing capacity of the economy to create jobs. "In the last three years, employment has grown annually by about 1.06 million compared to just a third of a million per year under the previous administration," said Neri.

"However, the increase in labor force of 5.2 percent, which is even higher than the 2.3 percent population growth rate, outpaced the gains in employment. This is because more Filipinos are joining the labor market at a much faster pace than the record number of jobs our economy has created," he added.

Neri, who also the socioeconomic secretary, added that a closer look at the figures indicates that there are signs of positive sentiments toward the labor market.

"The relatively higher labor participation rate (around 67.2 percent of the total working age population compared to 65.7 percent last year) means that more people went out looking for jobs during the past year and that prospects for jobs in the near term are quite bullish," Neri said.

The percentage of those people waiting for rehire or job recall increased by almost 30 percent, according to the NEDA chief.

Moreover, the number of discouraged workers, meaning those who believed that no work is available, declined by 4.46 percent compared to a year ago, showing increased confidence in the economy.

This increase in the so-called labor force participation, or the proportion of the labor force to the total household population that was 15 years old and above, is backed up by a decline in the number of those who previously did not join the labor force such as students.

For example, the number of young workers (15-24 years old) who opted to go to school rather than enter the labor force declined by 7.72 percent to six million.

Neri also stressed that the quality of employment, as shown by results of the labor force survey, also appeared to have improved in January 2004.

“The number of workers who worked 40 hours or more rose by two million, an increase of 11.2 percent compared to a year ago. The number of part-time workers, meaning those who have worked less than 40 hours, dropped by five percent shedding 581,000 jobs,” Neri said.

The chief economic planner said the government will continue to enforce measures that will generate more jobs to match the increase in the number of labor force entrants.

Neri said these measures include fiscal discipline to sustain macroeconomic stability and marketing the Philippines as an information technology and services center.

He added that empowering local government units through productive public works projects, and reducing the cost of doing business, like bringing down the cost of power especially in export processing zones, can also result in stronger job creation.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 8, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026061347/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr08.htm>

The President's Day: April 9, 2004

09 APRIL 2004

- **The Good News: RP remains good place for business, 4 trade commissioners say**
- **RP, Canada provide P40-M grant for street children and Bajao**

The Good News: RP remains good place for business, 4 trade commissioners say

Don't be daunted by all those doomsday scenarios being peddled about by administration detractors on business in the Philippines.

Don't be daunted by the country's political uncertainties due to the May polls and the economic slowdown.

So goes the thinking of the trade commissioners of four countries. They believe the Philippines remains a good place for business.

While security threats in the country continue, this is not primary in the list of concerns of foreign businessmen, the trade commissioners agree.

And to back their faith in the country, they will stage the Second World's Finest Food Trade Show next month, the trade offices of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States announced recently.

The business event is an affirmation of their optimism to step up trade ties with the Philippines, Australian senior trade commissioner Alan Morrell said.

"The Philippines is seeing some sectors of economy moving quite well. Food comes into that category and consumer goods in general," Morrell amplified in a press conference at the Australian Embassy in Makati.

The retail business is growing and the existence of small chains in the country attests to the strong consumer demand in the country, according to US Agriculture Trade Officer Michael Woolsey.

"The platform for important products is growing," Woolsey stressed.

"The Philippines is a very significant export market and trade partner," said Canadian Trade Commissioner Richard Bale. He went on to add that the Philippines was Canada's largest export market in Southeast Asia last year.

From New Zealand, Trade Commissioner Ramoncito Bernales said they are strengthening their presence in the country by continuing to identify market strategies.

Yes sir! Doomsday scenarios, political uncertainties, an economic slowdown notwithstanding, there's much to be gained doing business in the Philippines.

Trust those Australian, Canadian, American and New Zealand trade commissioners. They know their business.

RP, Canada provide P40-M grant for street children and Bajao

The Philippines and Canada are providing P40.68 million worth of assistance for the street and urban working children in the Visayas and Mindanao, including the Bajao families in Zamboanga City and Lamitan, Basilan.

Augusto B. Santos, deputy director-general of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), said these projects will not only uplift the conditions of those children in the Visayas and Mindanao, but will also provide more opportunities to improve the economic well-being of Bajao families.

Santos, who chairs the Philippines-Canada Development Fund (PCDF), noted that the Street and Urban Working Children Project (SUWCP) includes school supplies and rice assistance, along with capability-building for social workers and volunteers.

The one-year P24.16-million project, of which P6.26 million is from PCDF, also has a component for barangay councils for the protection of children and local government units, he said.

The SUWCP, a project of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), will benefit children in the cities of Bacolod, Iloilo, Cebu, Mandaue and Lapu-lapu in the Visayas, and Zamboanga, Cagayan de Oro, Davao, Cotabato, and General Santos in Mindanao.

On the other hand, the P16.52-million Project Hope for Bajao Families will have components on social preparation, establishment of culturally sensitive communities, livelihood services, and networking/advocacy. PCDF has committed P11 million for the project, which will run from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004.

PCDF is a joint undertaking of the governments of the Philippines and Canada through the NEDA and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), respectively.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 9, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071025212510/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr09.htm>

The President's Day: April 10, 2004

10 APRIL 2004

- **The Good News: Tourist arrivals in RP increase despite negative travel advisories**
- **ODA to boost construction in 2004 – NEDA Chief**
- **President's Easter Message**
- **First family went on a Lenten retreat in Baguio City**
- **GMA views killing of Abu Sayyaf leader as a major victory in anti-terror drive**

The Good News: Tourist arrivals in RP increase despite negative travel advisories

Notwithstanding negative travel advisories, tourist arrivals in the Philippines increased 8.9 percent in February from 162,626 last year to 177,104 this year.

The renewed interests for travel to the Philippines are shared by North Americans, Europeans, Australians, Japanese, Koreans, Indonesians and Singaporeans.

Driven mostly by increased arrivals from France, Germany and Switzerland, tourists from Western Europe rose 21 percent from last year's February figures of 7,378 to 8,943.

Visitors from Northern Europe, bolstered by double-digit growths in arrivals from Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, rose 27.4 percent.

The biggest arrivals however were registered by North America, which despite negative travel advisories coming from the United States and Canada, has not affected the mood of their travelers.

Visitors from North America rose 19.4 percent to 40,407 in February from 33,845 in the same month last year. Americans alone comprise 36,034.

In its travel advisory last January 16, the US government warned American travelers about terrorist threats in the Philippines, advising them to postpone non-emergency travels, particularly to Mindanao.

On March 8, the Australian government also issued a travel advisory telling its citizens to "exercise extreme caution particularly in commercial and public areas known to be frequented by foreigners."

Despite these, however, tourists from Australia, along those coming from Canada, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Singapore registered double-digit growths.

More than half, or 55 percent of the total number of tourists came from members of the Association of Southeast Asian nations, as well as East Asia that includes China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

ODA to boost construction in 2004 – NEDA Chief

Projects funded by official development assistance (ODA) will boost infrastructure construction in 2004.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo L. Neri made this forecast at a recent meeting of the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations, Inc.

According to Neri, the public infrastructure undertakings this year include construction of the Iloilo and Bacolod airports, the North Rail Project, and the South Rail Project. In Southern Luzon, the projects include improvement

and rehabilitation of the Batangas Port, extension of the Southern Tagalog Arterial Road from Lipa City to Batangas City, and rehabilitation and extension of the South Luzon Expressway.

Neri, who heads the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), said the number of several good infrastructure projects this year accounts for, among other factors, the higher growth forecast of the government in 2004 which is 5.2 to 6 percent, up from 5.5-percent actual gross national product in 2003.

Neri noted that due to fiscal tightening to meet the deficit, government construction dragged down the 2003 economic figures when public construction declined by 29 percent, while private construction expanded by 10.4 percent.

Due to better prospects in construction, Neri said investments in the sector will grow by 7.7 to 8.3 percent. Of this, public investment in construction is expected to surge by 10.1 to 11 percent, while its private counterpart will expand by 5.0 to 5.9 percent.

The growth in the country's construction sector will not only benefit the housing industry but will also result in more private sector initiatives, he said.

President's Easter Message

Ang Linggo ng Pagkabuhay ay ang pinakamahalagang pagdiriwang sa daigdig ng Kristiyanismo. Sa araw na ito, bigyan natin ng halaga ang pagsibol ng bagong buhay at bagong pag-asa na tinubos ng mga pasakit at pinag-alayan ng buhay ng ating Panginoong Hesukristo dahil sa ating mga kasalanan.

Gawin nating inspirasyon ang bagong buhay at bagong pag-asa para masiguro ang mgandang kinabukasan ng ating mga anak. Tayo man ay dapat na magpakasakit at magsakripisyo upang abutin natin ang mithiing kapayapaan at kaunlaran na ipinamana natin sa kanila. Sa Romano 12:12 ng Banal na Kasulatan, hinihingi ng Panginoon na ialay sa kanya ang ating mga katawan bilang buhay na sakripisyo. Ang ating mga sakripisyo ngayon ang magdadala sa atin upang maisakatuparan ang ating pangarap na magandang bukas.

Ang pagkamatay at pagkabuhay ng Panginoong Hesukristo ay patunay na sa kabila ng kahirapan ay ginhawa. Magpasalamat tayong sa pag-asang ipinagkaloob ng Diyos sa atin. Nawa'y maghari ang pag-asang ito upang sa pagkakaisa, sama-sama nating makamit ang makabuluhang pagbabagong hinahangad nating lahat.

Maligayang Linggo ng Pagkabuhay sa ating lahat.

First family went on a Lenten retreat in Baguio City

BONTOC, Mountain Province — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo revealed here today that she and her family went on a retreat in Baguio City during the Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

“I went on retreat on Holy Thursday and Good Friday. It was officiated by Baguio Bishop Senson and Father Castro, the parish priest of St. Joseph of Pacdal which is our parish,” the President said during a press conference at the Ridgebrook Hotel here.

On Holy Thursday, the President said they reenacted the Last Supper by having their own passover meal of bitter herbs, unleavened bread and fruits and vegetables.

The President said they also had a traditional fellowship customary during the time of Jesus Christ.

As part of the retreat, the President and the First Gentleman also watched The Passion of the Christ on Thursday at the SM City in Baguio.

“We discussed it also for reflection and part of the sharing of the retreat masters the next day where we have the annual confession and counseling,” Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said.

The President said the Holy Thursday and Good Friday religious services in Pacdal were appropriate to reflect on the sacrifices of Jesus Christ underwent for humanity’s salvation.

GMA views killing of Abu Sayyaf leader as a major victory in anti-terror drive

BONTOC, Benguet — President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo viewed the killing of a senior Abu Sayyaf leader as a “major victory” in the government’s intensified campaign against terrorism.

At the same time, the President cited all the government agents who participated in the operation that led to the slaying of Abu Sayyaf leader Hamsirajih Sali who was wanted by the law for involvement in a chain of kidnap-for-ransom and terrorist activities.

“I congratulated everybody involved (in the operation) and this is a major victory in our fight against the Abu Sayyaf and terrorism,” the President said during a press conference at the Ridge Brook Hotel here.

The President said Sali is the highest ranking Abu Sayyaf leader in Basilan who carries a P5-million bounty on his head.

“We are really working very hard so that our country will be safe from terrorism. So this follows on the heels of that very, very big catch that we had the weeks before the Holy Week,” the chief executive said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said the government is working round the clock in the fight against terrorism in close coordination with other countries through the sharing of intelligence and other vital information.

The President said the death of Sali was the result of very professional surveillance and good tactical operations by the troops, policemen and intelligence operatives.

The President arrived 10 a.m. at the football field of the Mountain Province State Polytechnic College here on board the presidential helicopter from Baguio City.

She was accompanied by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, sons Dato and Mikey, Presidential Assistant for North Luzon Renato Diaz, Press Secretary Milton Alingod, and National Food Authority (NFA) Administrator Arthur Yap.

The President proceeded to the political rally at the town plaza where she was welcomed by some 5,000 residents and municipal and provincial officials led by Mayor Luis Claver Sr.

During the rally, Sabangan Mayor Jupiter Dominguez, president of the Mt. Province Mayors’ League, turned over to Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo a copy of their declaration of unqualified support to her candidacy.

After the press conference, the President had lunch with local officials where she also invited her former “yaya,” Kammy Alawas, who took care of her when she was still four years old in Timogan, Iligan.

The President and her party left 12:30 p.m. here for Dagupan City.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

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- **The Good News: \$1 million grant okayed for phase II of Mindanao rural development project**
- **GMA woos Umingan, Pangasinan**
- **“Patubig ni Gloria” brings joy to barangays in Cavite City**
- **GMA launches scholarship program targeting five million poor families**
- **GMA orders probe on mass jailbreak in Basilan**

The Good News: \$1 million grant okayed for phase II of Mindanao rural development project

The poor people of Mindanao have much to look forward to with the World Bank having extended a \$987,648 grant to follow up and continue rural development in their area in the thrust to alleviate their plight.

The grant has been approved to support project preparations for the second phase of the Mindanao Rural Development Project (MRDP) which was designed to address specific concerns of poor rural communities in five provinces.

These are North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Agusan del Sur, Compostela Valley and Maguindanao where individual and community livelihood programs have been started with the proper training provided to ensure their successful implementation.

Specifically, the grant will support the Department of Agriculture in contracting technical assistance and engaging the next set of local government units and communities for the second phase of the MRDP.

This means more people and communities will be drawn into the MRDP and benefit from it to gain more income and provide their families and children with better opportunities.

The MRDP was initially funded through a \$22-million loan issued by the World Bank and a grant of \$1.25 million from the Global Environment Facility.

The latest grant is funded from the Japanese government's Policy and Human Resources Development trust fund administered by the World Bank.

In addition to the grant for the MRDP, the World Bank also extended a \$716,000 grant to strengthen the capacity of the government's procurement program that seeks to eliminate corruption in the bureaucracy.

World Bank officials said the grant for capacity building will help strengthen the Government Procurement Policy Board to enforce and implement the Government Procurement Reform Act.

Funding for this grant is through the Asian Financial Crisis Response Fund of the Asia-Europe Meeting trust fund also administered by the World Bank.

GMA woos Umingan, Pangasinan

UMINGAN, Pangasinan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last night said that the country is winning the battle against terrorism in her administration.

Speaking at the town fiesta here, the President said top Abu Sayyaf leader with a P5 million peso prize on his head, Hamsiraji Sali, was killed in Basilan on Maundy Thursday.

The President pointed out that because of the participation of the local community and foreign allies such as the US, the country is winning the fight against terrorism.

The President also emphasized that because of the help of the likes of Speaker Jose de Venecia, there is now a ceasefire between government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao. Also with the help of Speaker de Venecia, the formal peace talks with the CCP/NDF/NPA have started.

“These are among the accomplishments of your President who is a genuine daughter of Pangasinan, who for a long time, has been helping the province of Pangasinan,” she said.

“Unlike the others who claim to be from Pangasinan, but until now has not contributed even a bag cement to Pangasinan,” the President added.

The President expressed hope that in the coming elections the residents will be together with the Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan (K-4).

The President earlier donated to the municipality of Umingan one patrol car to strengthen its campaign against drugs.

The coming of the President here is the first time ever a president attended a fiesta in this town. It was the reason Umingan Mayor Alain Rabang, an NPC party member, has defected to the Lakas Party of the President.

Mayor Rabang said that the people of Umingan usually vote for the presidential candidate who makes an effort to go there and campaign.

“This is the first time in Umingan that a fiesta is being graced by the president of the land and a re-electionist at that, and the people will never forget such a gesture,” Mayor Rabang said.

Umingan is a 35,000-vote-rich town, one of the biggest in the sixth district of Pangasinan. Urdaneta still has the biggest number of registered voters.

Congressman Conrado Estrella III said the victory of the President in the May elections would ensure more irrigation, farm-to-market roads, and construction of bridges needed to reach far-flung barangays in Umingan.

Also present during the first night of the town fiesta here were Speaker de Venecia and other neighboring mayors of Umingan.

“Patubig ni Gloria” brings joy to barangays in Cavite City

CAVITE CITY – After six years of experiencing water problems, the residents of this city now have reason to rejoice because they now have clean and potable water.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo personally brought the good news to some 2,000 families beneficiaries of one of her top priority programs when she inspected the ongoing “Patubig ni Gloria” project at Barangay 10-M here.

The President arrived here at 10:30 this morning from Malacañang to inspect the Patubig project from which some 1,785 households now get potable water since it was launched in two barangays of this city on March 1, 2004.

Barangay 10-M, where some 200 families are the direct beneficiaries, is the latest to get water. First were Barangays 10-A and 10-B.

Local and barangay officials led by Barangay Captain Pedrito Ibuya warmly received the President upon her arrival.

“According to Captain Ibuya almost six years ninyo ng pinoproblema ang mabaho at madilaw na tubig dito sa inyong lugar. Now we have a solution to finally ease your problem,” the President told the residents.

The President told the residents that while they are awaiting for the completion of the laying of the regular connection from the pipeline of Maynilad, the water concessionaire would deliver free potable water to their barangay.

“The construction of the regular pipe connection to your residences will be completed in three years, but, for the meantime, we will deliver potable water at your doorsteps,” the President said.

To date, some 805,920 households are already being served by the “Patubig ni Gloria” project in Metro Manila, Rizal, Cavite and Bulacan province since it was launched last December 31, 2003 in Payatas, Quezon City.

The objective of the project is to identify waterless communities, particularly in the depressed areas and to ensure that the health and well-being of millions of Filipinos are maintained by providing them with clean and potable water.

GMA launches scholarship program targeting five million poor families

BIÑAN, Laguna—Easter Sunday gained added dimension as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo formally launched today a scholarship program that will provide free education to five million children of indigent families.

“On this Easter of hope, the scholarship program offers the promise of a bright tomorrow to millions of poor students and their families,” the President said.

Dubbed “Isang Iskolar Para sa Mahirap na Pamilya,” the program offers two years of free college education or vocational training for poor but deserving students.

The President set off the scholarship program at the Performing Arts Theater of the University of Perpetual Help here, where she distributed scholarship certificates to the first batch of 30 students. The first 1,000 scholars would come from Biñan.

The scholars can enroll in any government-run college or university, or any vocational school accredited with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

“Education for many is the key to rebirth and transformation. Today, I signed an executive order expanding access to secondary education through the “Isang Iskolar Para sa Mahirap na Pamilya Program,” the Chief Executive said at the launching rite.

“Now, any capable, diligent Filipino child can get a college or vocational diploma through our free public elementary and secondary schools in the Iskolar and SAFE 4 SR programs,” the President added.

The Iskolar ng Pamilya program covers the first two years of college education with the government shouldering P20,000 for the period for basic tuition, transportation and food allowance.

The President said the program, which complements the SAFE 4 SR (Students Assistance Fund for Education for a Strong Republic) would make education accessible to all, especially the poorest of the poor.

The President noted that only 10 out of 100 pupils that enter grade school finish college. She said education is one sure way of pulling people out of poverty. A successful college or vocational graduate can help the rest of the family.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said the list of prospective scholars would be culled from the roster of card-bearing members of the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth).

The President directed the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of Health to assist the PhilHealth in identifying the projected family-beneficiaries of the program using records of the National Statistics Office to determine their economic status.

Under the executive order, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and TESDA are responsible for implementing the program in consultation with the Department of Education, the National Economic and Development Authority, the DSWD, DOH and DILG.

The magnitude and scope of the Iskolar program are unprecedented in the government's long history of extending support to deserving students. One student from each of the five million families would be a major boost to the current 400,000 scholars which hardly make a dent in the overall needs for quality education, it was noted. Current loans and student assistance are generally not enough to cover the total cost of college education, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said.

Joining the President at the launching ceremony were Laguna Gov. Teresita Lazaro, Biñan Mayor Hermis Perez, UPH president Dr. Antonio Tamayo, Iloilo Rep. Augusto Syjuco, CHED acting chairman Manuel Punzal, TESDA Director General Ancetes Guia, DILG Secretary Joey Lina, Education Secretary Edilberto De Jesus, Presidential Assistant for Education Mona Valisno, National Food Authority chief Arthur Yap and pro-administration senatorial candidate Pia Cayetano.

GMA orders probe on mass jailbreak in Basilan

BIÑAN, Laguna—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered this afternoon a full-dress investigation on the Black Saturday mass jailbreak at the Basilan rehabilitation center.

The President issued the order during a press briefing at the University of Perpetual Help in Biñan, Laguna where she launched earlier the Iskolar ng Mahirap na Pamilya Program.

"I am ordering a thorough investigation on this matter to look for a possible collusion in the jailbreak and make them answerable for their offenses," the President said.

Fifty-three inmates of the rehabilitation center, among them suspected members of the dreaded Abu Sayyaf armed group, bolted the detention center in Isabela City, Basilan. Eight of the escapees were reported killed and nine recaptured by responding soldiers and policemen.

Despite the incident, President Macapagal-Arroyo maintained that the government's anti-terror campaign remained on stream, citing as among its gains the killing on Maundy Thursday of Abu Sayyaf senior leader Hamsiraji Sali and five other suspected members of the group.

The President also mentioned the capture in Metro Manila of six other suspected Abu Sayyaf leaders and the confiscation of a cache of explosives believed intended for a series of bomb attacks in the metropolis.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina told reporters that hot-pursuit operations are being conducted by joint forces of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the military to recapture the escapees.

Lina said PNP chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. is personally supervising the manhunt.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 11, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071123045159/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr11.htm>

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The Good News: Filipinos have edge in Asia in call center business

The Filipinos' positive work habit has given them the edge over their Asian neighbors, notably India, as a favorite destination of foreign investors engaged in the call center business.

This was the assessment of Jon Kaplan, an American information technology expert who said the Philippines "is a choice destination for companies outsourcing their non-core functions because of the Filipino's attitude toward work."

"While it is cheaper to outsource call center jobs from India, which has 95,000 seats, the Philippines is a choice destination for companies outsourcing such services because Filipinos are more enthusiastic in satisfying customers," Kaplan noted.

Kaplan, chief of the International Committee for American Teleservices Association, pointed out that it was not a matter of lower costs.

Kaplan, who is also president of the Ohio-based TeleDevelopment Services, a call center consulting, training and management recruiting company, also said "Filipinos put more time and effort into the job while call center agents in other countries, especially in the United States, treat it as no more than a job," he added.

Against this backdrop, the local call center industry is expected to attain a hefty growth rate of between 75 percent to 100 percent annually, surpassing India's 50 percent.

Kaplan recommended, however, that Philippine call centers have to be familiar with pertinent American laws regulating the operations of call centers to be able to comply and continue their quality service and observe high standards, as well as to develop programs to effectively guide their employees on career paths to sustain the company's growth.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on various occasions underscored the remarkable growth of the call center industry and the business process outsourcing as veritable havens for jobseekers, specially the fresh college graduates.

The President stressed, however, that prospective job hunters in the call center community must be able to speak the English language well, while those eyeing employment in the business process outsourcing must be proficient in accounting and short-hand for transcription purposes.

The Chief Executive recalled that before she took over the presidency in January 2001, there were only about 2,000 workers in the call centers and business process out-sourcing.

“Ngayon, dahil inayos natin ang imprastraktura para doon, 50,000 na ang nagtatrabaho sa call centers, sa business process out-sourcing, nadodoble pa taun-taon (Today, since we have improved the infrastructure in these sectors, there are now 50,000 workers in the call centers and business process out-sourcing. And this is doubled every year),” the President said.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also noted strong confidence of investors in the domestic business climate under her administration, citing as example the \$500-million fund infusion into the San Miguel conglomerate, giving rise to business expansions, creation of new products and new dealers, and more jobs.

The President also reiterated that the government’s micro-financing program for small and medium enterprises has provided sources of livelihood for some one million women under her leadership.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo emphasized that she intends to create one million jobs yearly over the next six years if she is given a new mandate in the May 10 elections.

Statement of the President: Re Basilan Escape

Let us stop the blame tossing and finger-pointing and mop up this problem soonest.

Let us get the fugitives first and resolve the issue of accountability later.

If the massive manhunt requires cordoning off the whole Basilan province to prevent the escapees from fleeing to other provinces, so be it.

I appreciate the solid performance of the AFP and the PNP in keeping our people safe and secure during the Holy Week but they must show the same teamwork in getting the remaining Basilan prisoners and make sure they are locked up.

Some of the escapees are indeed Abu Sayyaf members and they pose a threat not only to those who stood witnesses against them in the courts but also to the whole community.

Statement of the President: Re Anti-terrorism

The United States and the Philippines have worked as strong strategic partners in the war against terror.

Those who are talking about fictitious diplomatic reproaches or anything of the sort only want this partnership to fail, and they are playing into the hands of terrorists.

Our partnership with the US has resulted in several gains, not only in terms of the Balikatan training exercises, but in terms of solid tactical gains such as the foiling of the Madrid-level attack with the arrest of six suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits and the killing of senior Abu Sayyaf commander Hamsiraji Sali and five of his men in a recent encounter in Basilan.

Everyday, Philippine and American counterparts meet to share information and map out new strategies to combat terrorist groups and their networks.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Jueteng

The law enforcement agencies have waged a strong, consistent, anti-jueteng campaign.

We are not for the legalization of jueteng and we are bearing down hard on jueteng operators.

There are several proposals from the past on the legalization of jueteng but they have never been acted upon at the level of the Palace.

More Opposition leaders shift support to GMA, K-4 bets

CABUYAO, Laguna – With less than a month away from the presidential elections, a number of opposition political allies have switched support to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, her vice presidential running mate Senator Noli “Kabayan” de Castro and the *Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4)* senatorial candidates.

The leaders of presidential candidates Fernando Poe, Jr. of *Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP)* and former Education Secretary Raul Roco of *Alyansa ng Pag-Asa* pledged their support to the K-4 ticket in the house of former Congressman Rodolfo Tingzon of Laguna.

Those who shifted their loyalty to the administration camp and pledged to campaign for the “Gloria–Kabayan” team were incumbent Naic, Cavite Mayor Efren Nazareno of *Alyansa ng Naic* and former Cabuyao, Laguna, Mayor Jun Alimagno.

Earlier, former opposition leaders who had deserted the FPJ and Roco camps were Tingzon, Gualberto Lumauig of Ifugao, Emil Ong of Northern Samar, Luz Bakunawa of Masbate and Atty. Roy Almor.

Others who defected to the administration were Dr. Virgilio Lazaga, chairman of the *Alyansa ng Pag-Asa Calamba* Chapter and Pedro Reyes, Jr., chairman of the Raul Roco Movement.

President Macapagal-Arroyo received a manifesto of support from different political organizations, like *Kapisanan ng 1st District of Laguna* (Biñan, San Pedro and Sta. Rosa), Brothers Club of Roco Party and the Calamba Professional League during a visit to this town Sunday.

Lapian ng Manggagawa president Jose Malvar Villegas also presented to the President the LM manifesto of support for the 12 K-4 senatorial bets and to the “Gloria – Kabayan” tandem.

“I am very much delighted with your support to the whole ticket of the *Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan*. I do believe that we will join hands towards victory for the betterment of every ordinary Filipino family,” said President Macapagal-Arroyo in accepting the different manifestos handed by her newly-converted supporters.

GMA working on no-cash benefits for workers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s immediate concern now is to find ways to provide workers with “non-cash benefits” to ease the burden of day-to-day living.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said, in an interview with *Radyo ng Bayan* this morning, that the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) is helping the President formulate measures on the provision of non-cash benefits to the workers.

Bunye cited as example of such non-cash benefits the discounted price of diesel products sold to drivers of public utility vehicles (PUV) by a network of gas stations nationwide.

He noted that the discount on sale of diesel products helped convince a large group of PUV drivers/operators not to join the recent transport strike. These are the kinds of benefits, giving discount or monitoring of prices so as not to affect the ordinary family, that the President had in mind, he said.

Bunye said that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration also continues its program of selling goods, including medicines, at cheap prices.

Twenty categories of medicines, particularly drugs needed for daily maintenance dosage, are now sold by government hospitals at half their usual prices, he said.

In response to the President's call for help in bringing medicines within reach of the ordinary Filipinos, Unilab and Glaxo are now manufacturing quality drugs and selling them at lower prices, he said.

GMA cites fruitful RP-US alliance in fight vs terrorism

The partnership between the Philippines and the United States in the fight against terrorism has been fruitful, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today.

“Our partnership with the US has resulted in several gains, not only in terms of Balikatan training exercises, but in terms of solid tactical gains such as the foiling of the Madrid-level attack with the arrest of six suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits and the killing of senior Abu Sayyaf commander Hamsiraji Sali and five of his men in a recent encounter in Basilan,” the President said in a statement released this morning.

According to the President, Philippine and American officials meet regularly to share information and map out new strategies to combat terrorist groups and their networks as she belied “fictitious diplomatic reproaches” designed to foil the RP-US partnership.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye also brushed off the report of an alleged accusation from the US that the Philippines has been weak in its response to the crackdown on terrorism, saying the story sources are unnamed.

The government is determined to pursue the fight against terrorism, Bunye said in a follow up to the President's statement.

Before the Black Saturday mass jailbreak of Abu Sayyaf detainees in Basilan, the operations against terrorists produced positive results, including the death of a top Abu Sayyaf leader and the capture of his cohorts, Bunye said.

“What is clear is the government is very determined to fight terrorism. We are doing this as a country, we are doing it as part of our international commitment against terrorism. We will continue to wage the fight,” Bunye stressed.

On the mass jailbreak in Basilan, Bunye said an investigation is on going to determine how it was staged and to pinpoint responsibility of the negligence that allowed the escape.

The manhunt for the escapees still on the loose goes on and the Philippine National Police, with the help of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the citizens, is confident of capturing them, Bunye said.

GMA's vision: Convert Sta. Rosa into Detroit-type hub of car making in RP

STA. ROSA, Laguna – A Detroit-type hub of car manufacturing in the Philippines.

That's President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's vision for Sta. Rosa as she unveiled expansion plans of different car manufacturers in this fast-growing town at the outskirts of Metro Manila that are expected to generate more jobs under her watch.

Speaking before some 5,000 residents at a political rally Sunday night in Barangay Kanluran, Sta. Rosa, the President noted the gradual transformation of this town into the local version of Detroit, capital of the United States' car industry, within her short presidency.

President Macapagal-Arroyo stressed the importance of maintaining the confidence of foreign investors in the country's leader in the next six years to ensure continuity of the massive expansion programs of the various automotive manufacturers.

The Chief Executive warned local residents not to commit the mistake of voting for a candidate without experience in running the government if they don't want to shoo away foreign investors from Sta. Rosa.

The President said the Ford Company decided to invest about US\$50 million in its plant in Sta. Rosa after she had met with its officials in the course of her state visit to the United States.

She added that the Japanese car makers Toyota, Nissan, Mitsubishi and Honda are all expanding their plants in Sta. Rosa, under her administration.

This car industry boom has helped President Macapagal-Arroyo achieve her government's goal of creating 1.1 million jobs annually every year since 2001.

"We must not waste our strong start because if we choose a different leader for the next six years, these foreign investors would lose their confidence and might transfer their investments out of the country if an inexperienced President would assume power," the President said.

Joining President Macapagal-Arroyo and vice presidential bet Sen. Noli "Kabayan" de Castro in Sunday night's rally were K-4 senatorial candidate Orlando Mercado and the pro-administration Laguna local bets, including reelectionist Governor Teresita Lazaro and running mate Erwin Olivares, Mayor Leon Arcillas and running mate Manuel Alipon, and reelectionist First District Rep. Uliran Joaquin.

Also present at the rally were City Council bets Raul Aala, Aries Alcabasa, Arlene Arcillas, Jose Cartano, Mythor Cendeña, Boy Factoriza, Artemio Gomez, and Toto Sigue.

Filipino voters, now more mature, will make May 10 polls clean, honest, peaceful and credible, says Bunye

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said today that the Filipino voters have become more mature and will help bring about clean, honest, peaceful and credible elections on May 10.

In a radio interview, Bunye also said that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been working diligently to fulfill her promise to uplift the lives of the people.

"Inilalapit niya yong kanyang mga programa sa ating mga kababayan," (She is trying to bring her programs to the people)," he said.

Bunye expressed hope that the Filipino people will appreciate, understand and give utmost support to her as she works hard for them.

"Sana'y mabigyan ng pahalaga iyong pagpupunyagi ng ating Pangulo at siya ay kalingain nila sa darating na eleksiyon (We hope that they will give importance to the hard work that the President has shown and that they will support her in the coming elections)," he said.

If elected, GMA assures a school in every barangay and a computer in every school

A school in every barangay. A computer in every school.

That's the plan of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for the next six years, should she be given the chance to serve a full term after next month's polls.

In line with her education-for-all program, the President, according to Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye, seeks to identify barangays which until now have no school buildings and build them in the next six years, and install at least one computer for every school.

"Alam naman natin na ang ating Pangulo talagang isa sa kanyang pangunahing prayoridad itong paghahatid ng edukasyon sa ating mga kababayan (We all know that one of the priority programs of the President is the delivery of education to our citizens)," Bunye said in a radio interview.

He said the President has assured public school teachers assigned to poll duty that they would get their increased honoraria in advance as announced by Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin.

The honorarium has been increased from P700 to P1,000 a day. The first two days of service will be paid in advance, according to Bunye.

"This is the first time in our history that before elections, the funds for the teachers' honoraria will be in the hands of the Department of Education," he said.

A total of P1.4 billion has been allocated for the purpose and will be released on April 25.

The Department of Education, Bunye said, now has enough budget for the recruitment of new teachers to address the shortage normally experienced during the opening of classes.

Massive nationwide support for GMA now evident

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been reaping the fruits of her untiring efforts to reach out to the people with an outpouring of support to her quest for a full six-year term, notably from local political leaders, including defectors from the floundering opposition parties Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) and the Alyansa ng Pag-asa.

The latest massive defection came from Mountain Province which the President visited over the weekend.

Earlier on, local political bigwigs have been hopping into the ruling Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan para sa Kinabukasan (K-4) bandwagon as the President, vice presidential bet Sen. Noli "Kabayan" de Castro, and her senatorial team barnstormed major cities and provinces across the country.

The bandwagon syndrome had already resulted in the clinching of the Bicol Region and the vote-rich provinces of Tarlac and Laguna, and of late, Mountain Province in Northern Luzon which the President visited on Easter Sunday. The President has also received bipartisan support from leaders of vote-rich Cebu and Pangasinan provinces, as well as in most parts of Mindanao.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo received a pleasant Easter gift when the entire KNP ticket in Mountain Province presented her a manifesto of support signed by mayors of the 10 municipalities of the upland province led by Sagada Mayor Tomas Killip.

Majority, if not all, of the incumbent officials of Mountain Province belonged to the KNP or the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC).

Citing President Macapagal-Arroyo's "ability to address our concerns," Killip, also president of the League of Municipalities of Mountain Province, assured her of their unqualified support in the May 10 elections.

"Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo has been very, very consistent in visiting us and in showing her support for the people here. She is a President whom we found to be very easily accessible, one who sincerely takes pain to listen (to our problems)," Killip said.

An investigative report recently published by the magazine *Newsbreak* had noted that the President's "energy never wanes in merciless heat or pouring rain" as she reaches out to the common people in the heat of the campaign season.

Erstwhile KNP gubernatorial candidate Harry Dominguez has also defected to the K-4, saying that he made the decision upon seeing that he was the only local leader supporting movie actor Fernando Poe, Jr.

Early this month, Rep. Gilbert Teodoro (1st Dist. Tarlac), a ranking NPC member, also pledged full support to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Teodoro, a nephew of business tycoon Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, NPC founder and chairman emeritus, vowed to "exert all efforts so that the President would win overwhelmingly in Tarlac."

Teodoro's switch of political affiliation marked the first time that the politically fractious Aquino, Teodoro and the Cojuangco families in Tarlac are uniting behind one presidential candidate.

Teodoro's support of the President was announced in a luncheon meeting attended by Tarlac Governor Jose Yap, Vice Governor Marcelino Aganon, Tarlac Second District Congressman Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, and Tarlac City Mayor Genaro Mendoza.

Present during the affair were Tarlac mayors Rodolfo Guerrero of Anao, Estelita Aquino of Moncada, Elpidio Ibarra of Paniqui, Wilfredo Sawit of Pura, Gil Beltran of Ramos, Reynaldo Malazo of San Manuel, Vicente Pacada of San Clemente, and Emmanuel Guiam of Victoria.

Earlier, in Capas and Concepcion towns, also in Tarlac, the President also received the assurance of support from Congressmen Aquino and Rep. Jesli Lapus (3rd Dist. Tarlac).

Rep. Faustino Dy III of Isabela, NPC chairman, said majority of his colleagues in the party are supporting Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo.

The President and the K-4 coalition have also welcomed into the K-4 fold a team of top local officials from the camp of presidential candidate Raul Roco. The group was led by former Alyansa ng Pag-asa Eastern Visayas regional coordinator Emil Ong.

Ong's departure from the Roco camp is seen as ominous of the impending collapse of Roco's political machinery in Eastern Visayas.

A week before Ong's defection, President Macapagal-Arroyo also received an overwhelming declaration of support from Bicolandia leaders led by Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Villafuerte, his Vice Governor Imelda Papin, Camarines Norte Gov. Jesus Typoco, Albay Gov. Al Francis Bichara, Sorsogon Gov. Raul Lee and Masbate Gov. Antonio Kho.

In Laguna, incumbent Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro, previously a supporter of deposed President Joseph Estrada, orchestrated a mass oath-taking of 609 municipal and barangay coordinators as members of the Kaibigan ni Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (KGMA).

The oath-taking ceremony, officiated by President Macapagal-Arroyo herself, was an affirmation of the switch of Lazaro's Partido Dimasalang to K-4.

Pulse Asia survey gives GMA a “significant lead” over FPJ

If elections were held today, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would get a fresh six-year mandate, beating closest rival Fernando Poe Jr. by a narrow margin, results of the Pulse Asia Survey released today showed.

The survey, conducted nationwide from March 27 to April 4 and covering 4,800 registered voters, gave the incumbent President 34 percent against Poe's 31 percent.

A Pulse Asia executive viewed Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo's edge as a “significant lead” coming as it does while the President and her number one challenger are neck-and-neck on the campaign trail.

Pulse Asia said the three-percentage point difference is greater than the 1.4-percent margin of error.

“This is the first time that President Arroyo has a statistically significant lead, although small, over Mr. Poe,” said Pulse Asia executive director Ana Maria Tabunda.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo and Poe were tied at 32 percent in the previous Pulse Asia survey conducted between February 16 and March 20.

A separate survey made by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) on March 11 to 19 also had the two leading candidates in a statistical tie, with Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo getting 32.9 percent versus Poe's 34.9 percent. The SWS survey involving 2,000 respondents has an error margin of 2.2 percent.

In another SWS survey conducted from February 17 to 25, the President scored 31.8 percent, while Poe got 30.5 percent. The narrow margin put the two contenders in a statistical deadlock.

The latest Pulse Asia survey result showed former Sen. Raul Roco in third place with 12 percent, followed by Sen. Panfilo Lacson with 10 percent, and Bro. Eddie Villanueva of the Jesus is Lord charismatic movement with three percent.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo's acceptance in Metro Manila, which is traditionally pro-opposition, improved by six percent, while Poe went down by five percent.

The President retained domination in the Visayas, but Poe was strongest in Mindanao and among the working class.

Pulse Asia also noted that erstwhile undecided voters have started to make a choice as Election Day draws nearer.

The survey indicated that the number of undecided voters dropped to 22 percent from 35 in the previous survey, while those who said they may still make up their minds decreased to 19 percent from 23 percent.

In the vice presidential race, Sen. Noli “Kabayan” de Castro, running mate of Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, continued to enjoy a comfortable lead over Sen. Loren Legarda of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino. De Castro had 49 percent compared to Legarda's 35 percent. Herminio Aquino, running mate of Roco, was third with four percent.

Palace denies charges of “Oplan Checkmate”

Malacañang vehemently denied today allegations that it will launch a so-called “Oplan Checkmate” designed to ensure the victory of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 elections.

Deputy Presidential Spokesman and Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo, in a press briefing at the Palace, said the allegations were merely part of a black propaganda being waged by the opposition camps against the President and her senatorial team in the Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan para sa Kinabukasan (K-4).

“We would not sabotage the country’s future by undertaking such a plan that is merely fictitious and part of the black propaganda that is being held against the administration,” Saludo said.

Saludo also said President Macapagal-Arroyo has maintained her policy of having “honest, orderly, peaceful and credible” elections, enunciated in 2001 when she took over the presidency from the failed Estrada administration.

Saludo said next month’s electoral exercise is crucial to enable the next administration to govern in a “stable and productive way” until 2010.

The Palace official likewise underscored the relevance of the elections in retaining investors’ confidence in the domestic economy which is basically essential to a speedy economic recovery and creation of more employment opportunities.

Palace: “No plans of pulling out RP contingent in Iraq”

The Philippine government has no plans yet of pulling out the 41 Filipino peacekeepers in Iraq to ensure the safety of fellow Filipinos working in the war-torn country.

According to Deputy Presidential Spokesman and Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo, the Middle East Preparedness Team headed by Ambassador Roy Cimatu and other foreign affairs officials are closely monitoring the situation in Iraq and would immediately advise President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in what course of action to take.

“Here, we are awaiting the proposals, suggestions, recommendations of our officials on the ground there because they would know how feasible it is at the moment and what would be the best course of action to take. So, we await their report, we are in coordination with them and we will advise our people of what action would be taken as soon as it becomes clearer,” Saludo said in a press briefing this afternoon in Malacañang.

Saludo assured the relatives of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Iraq that the repatriation program is part of standing measures the government is planning to assist every Filipino national in Iraq.

“Our mission there is to continue to assist the Iraqi people in their efforts to build the democracy and to resume progress and development and we will look at the situation on the ground and see whether we are still able to assist them in any way. And to ensure that our nationals are safeguarded, we shall have to defer that decision until we make our own assessment of our role and also of the safety of our nationals,” he added.

Saludo expressed the hope for the smooth resolution of the conflict in Iraq.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: April 12, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20070930185226/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr12.htm>

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Statement of the President: Re Iraq situation

I am glad that the lone Filipino captive in Iraq was released unharmed.

I am directing the DFA to ensure maximum protective measures for our peacekeeping contingent in Iraq.

The Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security is engaged in a continuing reassessment of the situation and calibrating our options.

I would like to assure that the safety and security of our nationals is on top of the Government agenda and close monitoring is in place.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Anti-terrorism

We don't have to be reminded about our responsibility to crush terrorist groups.

We have been fighting terror even long before 9-11 and we took a stand with the global community entailing great sacrifices and formidable responsibilities.

We have gained considerably against terrorist groups through sharing intelligence, information and training with other countries and we expect enough goodwill commensurate to our efforts and sacrifices.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re ASG

We are confident the remaining escapees will all be accounted for in due time, as we have seen successful operations by joint police and military operatives in the ensuing manhunt.

The President has directed that special tracking teams must concentrate on the 11 Abu Sayyaf escapees to prevent them from rejoining their cohorts.

GMA's lead over FPJ shows public appreciation of her work for the people — Palace

Malacañang welcomed today the results of a survey, conducted nationwide March 27-April 4, 2004 by Pulse Asia, giving President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo a significant 3 percent lead over her closest rival, opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., in the May 10 elections.

In separate radio interviews this morning, both Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye and Presidential Campaign Spokesman Michael Defensor expressed elation over the favorable survey outcome.

Bunye said that the President's 34 percent rating to Poe's 31 percent shows that the people appreciate the President's focus on governance, particularly in providing them services in health and education, and livelihood projects.

"Nakikita na ng ating mga kababayan kung gaano kasinsero ang ating Pangulo sa kanyang paglilingkod (The people now see how sincere the President is serving them)," Bunye said.

Bunye noted that even in Metro Manila, which has been considered a traditional opposition bailiwick, the President's rating increased by an impressive 6 percent while that of Poe declined by 5 percent.

He said that the President has emphasized the provision of basic services to the people of Metro Manila, like health, education and clean water, and that she has made herself "visible" through frequent visits to urban centers.

"We are very pleased with this development," he said, adding that President Macapagal-Arroyo will continue to bring the government closer to the people and articulate on her program of governance.

Defensor noted that President's lead exceeded the survey's margin of error of 1.4 percent, indicating that this is a clear advantage on the part of the President. *"Lumamang na kami nang kaunti. Inaasahan naming sa darating na mga araw ay talagang gaganda pang lalo ang ratings ng ating Pangulo (The President enjoys a slight edge and in the future, we expect her ratings to further improve),"* he said.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: On Roco's health

The President is concerned about Senator Raul Roco's health. She wishes him well.

Kidnapping of two Malaysians won't affect friendly ties between RP and Malaysia

Malaysian Ambassador Mohamed Taufik Mohamed Noor said today that the abduction of two Malaysians, along with an Indonesian, off Sabah's Linkian Island would have no adverse effect on the friendly relations between the Philippines and Malaysia.

In an interview at Malacañang following his farewell call on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Ambassador Taufik said that his country and the Philippines are signatories to an agreement on combating transnational crimes. "Cross-border crimes should not affect bilateral relations of countries," he said.

The outgoing ambassador said that the Malaysian government had been assured by both the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) of their full cooperation in tracking down the kidnapers.

Taufik said the Malaysian government had been informed that the kidnapers were Tausug-speaking. According to press reports, the kidnapers could be members of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

For security reasons, he declined to reveal the names of the kidnap victims, saying only that they are Malaysians of Chinese descent. The Indonesian is also of Chinese origin.

On the resumption of the formal peace talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), he said that preparations for the parley have been progressing well. The Malaysian government has been serving as third party convenor of the peace talks.

“I am encouraged by the fact that the Malaysian advance team, which visited the country last month, has reported favorably on the formation of a monitoring team,” he said. The advance team and the forthcoming arrival of the monitoring team will boost the confidence of both sides in sitting down and tackling the issues once and for all, he added.

Taufik said that Malaysia remains committed to hosting the formal peace talks, although no date has yet been fixed.

During his the farewell call, Taufik was conferred the Order of Sikatuna, with the Rank of Datu (Grand Cross), by the President. The presidential citation states that the President, by virtue of the power vested in her by law, has caused His Excellency Mohammed Taufik, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Malaysia to be inscribed in the roster of “The Order of Sikatuna.”

GMA cites role of Vietnam in forging Code of Conduct in South China Sea

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded Vietnam for the active role it played, along with the Philippines, in forging the Declaration of the Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

In a courtesy call this morning at the Music Room of Malacañang, the President told Le Van Bang, special envoy of the Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, that the agreement, signed in November 2002 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia by the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China had eased tension in the disputed territory.

The Philippines, Vietnam, China, along with Brunei Darussalam and Taiwan, have claims on the Spratly group of islands that straddle the South China Sea.

Under the treaty, the claimant countries have agreed to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the use of force.

The President also expressed her support for efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the impasse on the entry of Myanmar into the ASEAN-European Union (ASEM) meeting.

The visiting special envoy conveyed the invitation of the Vietnamese government for the President to attend the 5th ASEM summit meeting to be hosted by Hanoi in November 2004.

The Chief Executive also thanked the Vietnamese government for the warm reception that she got during her state visit to Hanoi on Nov. 6 to 7, 2002.

She conveyed her best wishes for the success of the ASEM-5 summit meeting.

ASEAN member countries are the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

Aside from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos are also seeking entry into the ASEM summit meeting.

China, South Korea and Japan are also members of ASEM.

UE counterparts in the ASEM are United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxemburg, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Sweden, Greece, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and European Commission.

Present during the courtesy call to President Arroyo were Vietnam Ambassador to the Philippines Dinh Tich, Deputy Chief of ASEM-5 Secretariat Nguyen Ten Minh, Foreign Affairs Executive Director of European Office Assistant Secretary Jaime Yambao and DFA Executive Director for Asia-Pacific Office Theresa Lazaro.

GMA orders DFA to check on conditions of Filipinos in Iraq

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo instructed today the Department of Foreign Affairs to check the status of the Philippine humanitarian contingent in Iraq and verify whether there was indeed a Filipino among those foreign civilians hostages by Iraqi vigilantes.

In a radio interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the President's instruction was for the DFA officials to assure the safety of the Filipinos helping in the reconstruction and rebuilding of Iraq and in strengthening the democracy of the war-torn nation.

Newspaper reports said that the Filipino civilian hostage was later released by his captors.

Bunye said volunteers who have finished their tour of duty and have not renewed their contracts are back in the country while those who opted to stay are doing so on their own volition.

The Presidential Spokesman cited the importance of the country's role as member of the international community against terrorism, saying the government is ready to cooperate with them anytime.

He urged the citizenry to continue to be vigilant to protect the gains that the country has achieved.

"We should always be alert," he said. "We have to be eternally vigilant to protect our democracy. But we don't need to be hysterical. We have to go about our normal ways but we should always be on the alert."

In an earlier statement, Bunye said the country has been involved in the fight against terror even before 9-11, noting how it took a stand with the global community, entailing great sacrifices and formidable responsibilities.

"We have gained considerably against terrorist groups through sharing intelligence, information and training with other countries and we expect enough goodwill commensurate to our efforts and sacrifices," Bunye said.

IMF: Arroyo reforms resulted in economic growth

Reforms in government spending, investment incentives and reduced corruption under the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo resulted in a healthy 4.5 percent growth in the Philippine economy despite efforts by various sectors to destroy the economic competitiveness of the country.

This was contained in a report on the Philippines by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which also warned that sustained economic growth could be put at risk by a change in government leadership.

"The economic outlook for the Philippines is likely to remain subject to considerable uncertainty in the period ahead, particularly the uncertain political environment ahead of the elections, which could bring downside risk to the bright outlook," the IMF said in the diplomatic language of its report.

The IMF said that growth under the Arroyo administration was better than expected despite the impact of the war in Iraq, a military mutiny, legal cases against the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the attempt to impeach the Chief Justice and the resignation of the Finance secretary.

The IMF said that efforts to destroy the economic competitiveness of the Philippines were the causes of the depreciation of the peso against the dollars. This belied efforts by opposition politicians to blame the President for the deterioration of the peso-dollar exchange rate.

The IMF pointed out that under President Arroyo's policies, gross reserves rose to \$16.9 billion by the end of the year, 'well above short-term debt.' Her tight control over spending and improved tax collection resulted in reducing deficit in 2003 to 4.9 percent of GDP, an improvement over the 5.5 percent levels of 2002.

Inflation stayed at an average of three percent in 2003, well below a 4.5 to 5.5 percent target for the year. This means that consumer prices stayed at a manageable range, well within reach of ordinary wage earners.

The President directed government spending heavily on infrastructure and human resources development, even as she strengthened governance by fighting corruption, reduced deficit and debt. These steps would insure sustained growth in the future, the IMF reported.

The IMF noted that President Macapagal-Arroyo is investing considerable resources in human resource development. This includes increased spending in education as a continuing foundation of a sustained economic growth in the future.

The IMF also noted that the President has strictly strengthened transparency in government, pursued efforts against corruption, including life style checks and reduced excessive regulations. These efforts, the IMF said, have improved the climate for investments in the country.

The IMF said that full implementation of the anti-money laundering law will remove threats of international sanctions against the Philippines. This would mean that international banks would be more inclined to support government efforts to finance infrastructure projects and remove barriers for overseas workers channeling remittances through the banks.

The country's economic growth was also supported by rising agricultural production and remittances by overseas Filipinos.

The IMF report was made as part of its annual consultation with the Philippines on how the country could sustain its momentum of economic development and to determine areas for further development.

NPC bigwigs formalize pledge of support for GMA

A total of 33 congressmen from the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC), led by Isabela Congressman Faustino Dy III, NPC chairman, today formalized their pledge of support for the bid of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for a full six-year term in the May 10 elections.

In a call in Malacañang, the NPC congressmen assured the President that they would actively campaign for her election among their constituents.

Only 28 of the NPC congressmen joined the call in Malacañang but the remaining five expressed their solidarity with the group in supporting the President's candidacy.

Earlier, Dy has assured the President that majority of the ranking NPC members would back her candidacy.

Tarlac Congressman Gilberto Teodoro, a nephew of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, NPC founder and chairman emeritus, has earlier assured the President that he would exert all efforts so that she would win "overwhelmingly" in Tarlac.

Among those who called on the President were Congressmen Felix Fuentebella of Camarines Sur, Conrado Estrella III of Pangasinan, Benasing Macarambong of Lanao del Sur, Marcelino Libanan of Eastern Samar, Vincent Garcia of Davao City, Eduardo Veloso of Leyte, Rodolfo Albano of Isabela, Roseller Barinaga of Zamboanga del Norte, Douglas Cagas of Davao del Sur, Joseph Ace Durano of Cebu, Generoso Tulagan of Pangasinan, Tomas Dumpit of La Union;

Gerry Espina of Biliran, Francisco Nepumoceno of Pampanga, Jeslie Lapus of Tarlac, Simeon Kintanar of Cebu, Jurdin Romualdo of Camiguin, Juan Bondoc of Pampanga, Nerissa Soon-Ruiz of Cebu, Agapito Badelles of Lanao del Norte, Jesnar Falcon of Surigao del Sur.

Earlier on, local political bigwigs have been hopping into the ruling Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan para sa Kinabukasan (K-4) bandwagon as the President, vice presidential bet Sen. Noli “Kabayan” de Castro, and her senatorial team barnstormed major cities and provinces across the country.

The bandwagon syndrome had already resulted in the clinching of the Bicol Region and the vote-rich provinces of Tarlac and Laguna, and of late, Mountain Province in Northern Luzon which the President visited on Easter Sunday. The President has also received bipartisan support from leaders of vote-rich Cebu and Pangasinan provinces, as well as in most parts of Mindanao.

The President and the K-4 coalition have also welcomed into the K-4 fold a team of top local officials from the camp of presidential candidate Raul Roco. The group was led by former Alyansa ng Pag-asa Eastern Visayas regional coordinator Emil Ong.

Ong’s departure from the Roco camp is seen as ominous of the impending collapse of Roco’s political machinery in Eastern Visayas.

A week before Ong’s defection, President Macapagal-Arroyo also received an overwhelming declaration of support from Bicolandia leaders led by Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Villafuerte, his Vice Governor Imelda Papin, Camarines Norte Gov. Jesus Typoco, Albay Gov. Al Francis Bichara, Sorsogon Gov. Raul Lee and Masbate Gov. Antonio Kho.

In Laguna, incumbent Gov. Teresita “Ningning” Lazaro, previously a supporter of deposed President Joseph Estrada, organized a mass oath-taking of 609 municipal and barangay coordinators as members of the Kaibigan ni Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (KGMA).

Workers urged to rally behind GMA

Labor leaders today called on the country’s workforce to rally behind the candidacy of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo “to sustain the momentum of the country’s economic growth.”

“Only President Arroyo can propel a sustained economic growth generated by more domestic and foreign investments,” Nelson Ramirez of the United Filipino Seafarers said in an interview.

Noel Josue, president of the Kaibigan ng OCWs (overseas contract workers), also called on his colleagues to support Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo’s bid for a full six-year term.

“Without Gloria (Macapagal-Arroyo) at the helm of government, we can expect capital and investments to leave the country. This means that there will be more jobs lost as plants will have to close,” Josue said.

Ramirez is also chairman of the party list group Pinoy Overseas Party (POP), with Josue sitting as secretary general of the party.

“What this country needs is more investments so that Filipino skills and talents could be harnessed to build the nation instead of the educated class seeking work overseas,” Ramirez said.

The two labor leaders pointed out that investors would only put their money in a country whose leaders have proven ability to ensure economic stability and business viability.

“Only President Macapagal-Arroyo has shown the ability to manage the economy and has a clear program for economic growth,” Josue noted.

Both men also cited results of a research conducted by the CitiGroup Inc., an investment bank, which suggested to foreign investments a stay in their investment plans in the Philippines until President Macapagal-Arroyo obtains another mandate in the May 10 elections.

“The signs are clear. Investors are not certain that (opposition presidential candidate Fernando) Poe would be able to make the right decision on the economy. He might have good economic advisers, but investors doubt he can make an economic decision,” Ramirez stressed.

He said they still have to hear Poe personally articulate on his economic program for the country, and not merely echo his advisers’ opinions. “He should be able to face public scrutiny of his program.”

Josue said Poe should “get out from behind the skirts of his spokespersons.”

“If he cannot explain his own position by himself, then he is not fit to serve as president. The last thing this country needs is a dummy being manipulated by vested interest. As far as can be seen, Poe is nothing more than a dummy,” Josue added.

The two labor leaders also pointed out that investments reached P56.74 billion last year under the Arroyo administration, representing a growth of P55 billion over the 2002 figure. In addition, there was a P33.27-billion new capital from foreign investors, plus \$675.8 million investments in the local stock market.

Business expansions generated by the new investments created over three million jobs across the country. “All of these jobs would be lost if the investors leave the country,” the labor leaders warned.

“Workers who wanted to keep their jobs and the unemployed who hope to find work should take the elections seriously and bet on the candidate who can best assure them job security and more job availability,” they added.

GMA vows to provide water to all barangays

CAVITE CITY—Given the chance, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo wants to have clean potable water in all waterless barangays in the country.

“This is part of our platform in the government. We’ll build on the strong start. *At kung bibigyan po ako ng susunod na anim na taon lahat ng barangay ng Pilipinas ay magkakaroon ng dumadaloy na malinis na tubig* (If I will be given the chance to serve six more years, I want all barangays in the Philippines to have clean water),” the President said after inspecting the ongoing “Patubig ni Gloria” project at Barangay 62-M here.

The President revealed her plans when she visited this city for the second time in a span of only two days. The President went here last Sunday (April 11) to inspect the Patubig project in Barangay 10-M.

Local and barangay officials from six barangays led by Barangay Captain Benjamin Enriquez of Barangay 62-M warmly received the President upon her arrival here at exactly 3:00 in the afternoon.

In her remarks, the President informed the residents that the bidding for the construction of new deep wells in barangays 62-M, 62-A, 62-B, 61-A, 53-A and 53-B has been completed.

The contractor who won the award in the public bidding, she said, would start drilling for the construction of the new deep well in the area on Friday.

“Sa Biyernes ay magsisimula na ang drilling sa bagong deep well ng sa ganoon pagkatapos ng drilling ay magtuloy-tuloy na ang pagdaloy ng malinis na tubig sa inyong mga gripo (On Friday, drilling for the new deep well will start so that clean water could now flow freely from your faucets),” the President said.

The Chief Executive informed them that since the Patubig ni Gloria project was started last Dec. 31, some two million households in the country are already being served especially in Metro Manila, and the provinces Rizal, Cavite and Bulacan.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 13, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071025212627/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr13.htm>

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- **GMA says RP would be a rice exporter in the next 6 years**

Statement of the President: Re Iraq situation

While the Philippine government is determined to help the Iraqi people in rebuilding their nation, the safety of our peacekeeping forces in Iraq is still our utmost concern.

The government will take all precautionary measures to ensure the safety of our contingent.

The decision on whether or not to withdraw our peacekeeping forces will depend on the security situation in Iraq in the days to come.

But our commitment to democracy in Iraq and to the progress of the Iraqi people is unsullied.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with the international community in this commitment and that is why we are not making any rush decisions.

The Good News: GMA's efforts in attracting foreign investors paying off

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's efforts to attract investors appear to be paying off.

This, after investments in government-run economic zones surged 516 percent in the first quarter of the year, reaching P21.87 billion compared to only P3.55 billion in the same period last year.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) Director General Lilia de Lima, in a report to Malacañang, said the amount is equal to 77 percent of the total investments registered by the agency for the entire 2003.

"The surge could be attributed to the decision of more multinational and local companies to make their presence felt in the Philippines by setting up more facilities while at the same time expanding existing plants," de Lima said.

She said the number of projects approved by PEZA also increased by 39 percent to 78 projects from the first quarter of the year from the 56 projects in the same quarter last year.

For the month of March alone, PEZA-registered investments went up by a hefty 1,830 percent to P8.99 billion from a measly P466 million approved in the same month last year. The number of projects increased by 63 percent from 16 to 26.

The report indicated that investments in the information technology sector jumped 89 percent to P2.6 billion in the first three months of the year from P1.37 billion in the same period last year. The number of IT projects doubled to 14 this year from only seven last year.

For the month of March alone, PEZA approved P5.48 billion in new and expansion projects of existing ecozone locators and another P1.77 billion from new enterprises that are setting up new facilities in the Philippines for the first time. It also okayed P1.62 billion worth of investments last month.

Big-ticket projects approved by PEZA last month include the P3.14 billion expansion project of Japanese-owned Nidec Philippines Corp. and the P1.57 billion steel plant of Global Steelworks International Inc. (National Steel Corp.) in Iligan City.

Palace welcomes Ombudsman ruling clearing GMA, two DOJ officials of graft on Maynilad deal

Malacañang has welcomed an Ombudsman decision clearing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and two ranking officials of the Department of Justice (DOJ) of graft charges in connection with a government deal with the Maynilad Water Services, Inc.

“It is a very welcome decision and it is a reiteration of the law,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said.

Bunye also chided the President’s accusers by insinuating that they were ignorant of the law providing that the Chief Executive enjoys immunity from suit and could only be removed from office through impeachment.

“*Parang naturuan pa nga iyong nag-file ng complaint na ito.* It looks like they don’t know that the President is immune from suit and the only way to remove a president is by filing an impeachment complaint,” Bunye pointed out.

Bunye also stressed that the primary consideration of the deal with Maynilad was to continue supplying clean water to the people residing in the utility’s service grid consisting of the western portion of Metro Manila.

“This (potable water) is a very important commodity that should also be made available to the consumers,” the Palace official said.

The Ombudsman, in a 20-page decision written by Teresita Butardo-Tacata, noted that there was nothing in the records to show that Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo had a hand in the transaction.

“There is nothing from the case records that would demonstrate the participation of (the President) in the negotiation of the agreement that led to the completion of the controversial Amendment No. 2,” the ruling stated.

The Ombudsman also noted that the complainant, lawyer Melanio Mauricio who is also an opposition senatorial candidate, “merely drew conclusions from unreliable sources, the veracity of which has to be ascertained together with the inclusion of President Arroyo who participation in the case was practically out of the way.”

The Ombudsman likewise gave the other respondents in the case a clean bill of health. They are Acting Justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez and Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee, and executives of Maynilad and Benpres Holdings.

GMA to focus on 6 basic public services if elected

CABUYAO, Laguna – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo enumerated the six basic public services that will serve as the foundations of her next administration if given a fresh mandate in the May 10 elections.

In a local caucus held Tuesday night at the Gulod Elementary School Covered Court in Barangay Gulod, Cabuyao, the President made known her top priority in her next six years in office.

The priority programs are the creation of jobs, livelihood, education, health care, essential services, and electricity, the President said.

In job creation, the President stressed her plans of sustaining the generation of 1.1 million new jobs a year in the next six years.

She said that in her short presidency, her government was able to provide P21 billion on soft loan assistance to small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The President said she is willing to triple it up to P63 billion for future SME entrepreneurs and also to cover those jobless Filipinos victimized by labor disputes.

To complement the recently launched “Isang Iskolar sa Bawat Mahirap na Pamilya” program in University of Perpetual Help (UPH) in Biñan, Laguna under the “education for all” project, President Macapagal-Arroyo also promised the construction of more school buildings to solve the shortage in classrooms.

She added that in the past three years, the Macapagal-Arroyo administration has distributed some 20,000 computer units to different schools nationwide and would provide one computer per school in her next administration.

The Chief Executive mentioned that for the first time majority of poor families have been enrolled on Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) that will provide them free hospitalization.

Her next target is to continue providing medicines at half the price for indigent families.

And for the basic service, President Macapagal-Arroyo will continue to provide water to waterless areas in country.

Presently, she said, around four million households are now receiving potable water in Metro Manila, Quezon City and nearby provinces of Rizal and Cavite under her “Patubig ni Gloria” program.

Lastly, President Macapagal-Arroyo will lower the cost of electricity in the country to make it the cheapest in Asia.

She said that upon assuming power in 2001, the price of electricity in the Philippines was the second most expensive in the region but she lowered it to sixth in the past three years.

“We will continue our electric reform that I have started to achieve our goal to make the price of electricity in the Philippines the cheapest in Asia,” said the President.

With the President during the caucus were her running mate Senator Noli “Kabayan” de Castro and Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan para sa Kinabukasan (K-4) senatorial bet Pia Cayetano.

President Macapagal-Arroyo was welcomed here by K-4 provincial candidates led by Laguna Governor Teresita Lazaro, vice gubernatorial bet Edwin Olivarez and Calamba City Mayor Severino Lajara, who is running for congress in the 2nd District of Laguna.

Steps taken to cope with possible water lack

The government has taken the necessary measures to cope with the impending water shortage well before it surfaces, Malacañang said today.

It has implemented water conservation and has taken to cloud seeding to induce rain, Presidential Deputy Spokesman Ricardo Saludo said in a radio interview this morning.

And to make up for the reduced water flow to rice lands in parts of Bulacan and Pampanga, the government has resorted to dig shallow tube wells.

The government has set aside an emergency fund of P10 million to P50 million to dig the shallow tube wells and has implemented new techniques in planting to insure a bountiful harvest, Saludo said.

The water level at the Angat Dam in Bulacan, dipped below the critical level of 180 meters to 179.92 meters Tuesday.

During the water crisis that hit Metro Manila and Luzon in May 1998, the water level at Angat Dam dipped to as low as 158 meters.

Angat Dam supplies 97 percent of Metro Manila's potable water requirements and water for irrigation in Bulacan and Pampanga.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) then said it had already identified deep well sources of ground water, each of which can be tapped for 2,800 cubic meters in addition to the desalination plant in Sucat which can produce 4,000 cubic meters daily to lessen the dependence on Angat Dam for water supply in Metro Manila.

Besides the continuous call to conserve water, the DENR also has been looking for measures to lessen non-revenue or unaccounted water. The area covered by Maynilad Water, Inc. loses about 71 percent of its water or about 1.6 million cubic liters a day. In the Manila Water Company, Inc. coverage the losses are 51 percent or 770,238 cubic meters a day.

Palace: Surge in GMA rating stops further fall of the peso

Malacañang today said that the result of recent survey showing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo gaining a significant lead in the presidential derby has somewhat calmed the market, resulting in the appreciation of the peso.

In an interview, Deputy Presidential Spokesman Ricardo Saludo quoted Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura as saying that the threat of political instability has subsided because of this development.

Buenaventura has said there was no more fear of a free fall in the peso less than a month before the country goes to the polls.

The peso Tuesday rallied to its highest level of 55.80 in nearly three months after the latest opinion polls showed the President, seeking a full term, surging into the lead over movie actor and opposition standard bearer Fernando Poe Jr.

Add to this, Saludo said, the fact that the country's international reserve has risen and breached the \$16 billion mark.

"Kaya naman ang merkado ay napanatag na at hindi tayo kukulangin sa dolyar sa mga darating na buwan (That is why the market has somewhat calmed as we have ample supply of dollar reserves)," he said.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its report on the Philippines the other day, said that efforts to destroy the economic competitiveness of the Philippines were the causes of the depreciation of the peso against the dollar, belying efforts by critics who said the President was to blame for the depreciation of the peso.

The IMF pointed out that under President Macapagal-Arroyo, gross reserves rose well above short-term debt due to her tight control over spending.

Saludo noted that investments approved by the Board of Investments has also risen 13-fold in the first quarter alone.

BOI figures showed that investments grew to P108 billion from only P7.5 billion in the same period last year.

“Ito ay nagpapahiwatig ng umaakyat na tiwala o confidence sa ating bansa sa taong ito (This only goes to show the growing investor confidence in our country this year),” he noted.

Palace explains mechanics of gov’t scholarship program

Two education-oriented programs of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration complement each other to ensure that indigent families can send at least one child each through college.

The two programs are the “Iskolar sa Bawat Mahirap na Pamilya” launched on Easter Sunday by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the Student Assistance Fund for Education for Strong Republic (SAFE 4 SR) which was set in motion earlier this year.

Deputy Presidential Spokesman Ricardo Saludo, in an interview this morning with radio station *DZRB*, explained that the scholarship program was designed to enable five million poor but deserving students to study for at least two years in any state college or university, or finish a two-year technical or vocational formal training.

On the other hand, the SAFE 4 SR, which is akin to the study-now pay-later scheme, advances funds to enable senior college students to settle obligations with their respective schools so that they could join the graduation ceremonies and receive their diplomas.

To avail themselves of the “Iskolar” program, the prospective family-beneficiaries need only to present their PhilHealth Family Card to the school administrators who will provide the funds to cover tuition and incidental expenses such as reference books and other materials.

Saludo explained that the scholarship funds would actually come from the national government, but coursed through the Commission on Higher Education.

Scholars who opt for technical or vocational training can enroll in schools accredited with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Saludo also said financial assistance obtained under the SAFE 4 SR is interest-free and payable from five to 10 years.

“Education for many is the key to rebirth and transformation. Today, I signed an executive order expanding access to secondary education through the “Isang Iskolar Para sa Mahirap na Pamilya Program,” the Chief Executive said at the launching rite for the “Iskolar” program.

“Now, any capable, diligent Filipino child can get a college or vocational diploma through our free public elementary and secondary schools in the Iskolar and SAFE 4 SR programs,” the President added.

The “Iskolar ng Pamilya” program covers the first two years of college education with the government shouldering P20,000 for the period for basic tuition, transportation and food allowance.

The President said the programs would make education accessible to all, especially to the poorest of the poor.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also noted that only 10 out of 100 pupils that enter grade school finish college. She said education is one sure way of pulling people out of poverty. A successful college or vocational graduate can help the rest of the family, she said.

Under the executive order implementing the “Iskolar” program, the CHED and TESDA were designated to spearhead implementation of the program in consultation with the Department of Education, the National Economic and Development Authority, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

GMA calls on business leaders to join her in securing the country’s future, bares 6-point agenda

Two days after the release of an opinion poll showing her gaining a significant lead in the presidential derby, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo asked the business community today to join her in securing the future of the country around a platform “that is pro-poor, fiscally responsible and forward thinking.”

In a speech at the joint general membership luncheon meeting hosted by the Makati Business Club (MBC) at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati City, the President outlined a pro-poor agenda for the next six years, vowing to lead the Philippines to a new era of unity and prosperity.

“Much is at stake in this election,” she said. “We must offer hope, not fear, sunlight not darkness. We must take the hopes and dreams for the poor seriously. The poor of this nation deserve no less. We ignore them at our own peril.”

The President told the “movers and shakers” of the country’s business community that the future is in their hands. “Let us secure that future together,” she said.

In the next six years, the President pledged to:

- Triple loans to self-employed and small business owners;
- Build 3,000 new schools, grant a college or vocational-technical scholarship to every qualified poor family and put a computer in every school;
- Bring electricity to 1,500 barangays a year and reduce the cost to become the lowest in the region;
- Bring clean water to all 45,000 barangays;
- Reduce by half the price of commonly-used medicine; and
- Create one million jobs every year.

“Through the reforms I have made – and will continue to make – I will continue to increase revenue collection, clamp down on tax cheats and cut waste, fraud and abuse in our government,” the President stressed.

The President also pledged to continue the fight for self-sufficiency in rice, more roads, bridges and highways, more property rights and more legal rights.

“Most importantly, I will fight for the people who have no voice,” she said.

The Chief Executive, seeking a full six-year term in next month’s polls, noted how she toiled hard in her first three years to develop a three-pronged economic strategy to make the free enterprise system work and undo the neglect of the previous administration.

First, she said, she increased investments that provided people with education and training they need to get high wage work, including more scholarships with English as the prime teaching language, and scores of other practical investments for equipping the people.

Second, she said, she strengthened international ties and regained the confidence of international investors resulting in a 26 percent increase in direct foreign investment that were directly responsible for millions of new jobs as a result of investments from companies like Intel, Toyota, Ford, P&G, Federal Express, and UPS, among others.

Third, she said, she provided a major increase in support for the self-employed and small and medium-sized businesses that are really the backbone of the economy.

Saying her plan for the next six years is not an idle promise, the President claimed that she has the experience to deliver on her pledges.

“We must invest in our nation and our people if we are to succeed,” she pointed out. “The hardworking Filipino is the central pillar of the nation. The working poor deserve the right to a rising standard of living, fair access to the courts, clean water, affordable energy, a good education, high wage jobs and economic incentives for our self-employed and entrepreneurial class.”

She proposed a new Philippine nationalism based on championing the country’s most valuable asset, “the people of the Philippines, who work hard and play by the rules every day.”

“I intend to lead the Philippines to a new era of unity and prosperity. I intend to make the hard decisions and to provide the new, specific ideas to mark the beginning of the end of poverty as we know it. I intend to unite the nation based on respect for rich and poor alike. We are all in this together and must sink or swim together,” the President said.

The President said that the business leaders have a clear choice. “You can vote for a six-point plan of action and a record of accomplishment; or vote for someone who has no plan for education, no plan for clean water, no plan for job creation, no plan for health care, no plan for energy, and no plan for international relations,” she said.

In these challenging times, the President said, the country has a clear choice between two candidates: to move forward with an experienced, hands-on leader who has a specific platform for change; or take a risk of an inexperienced actor who is too reliant on advisors to make important decisions.

Management Association of the Philippines president David Balangue introduced the President during the luncheon meeting while MBC chairman Ricardo J. Romulo gave the welcome remarks.

Bishops Businessman Conference national co-chairman Ricardo S. Pascua delivered the invocation while MBC executive director Guillermo Luz called the meeting to order.

An open forum followed the President’s speech, with Cesar E. A. Virata, president of the Bankers Association of the Philippines, Francisco Guerra III, member of the American Chamber of Commerce, and Menardo Matero, director of the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines as panelists.

Reject politics of silence, people urged

Apparently concerned that an academically ill-prepared, but immensely popular political neophyte might win the May 10 presidential race, the University of Sto. Tomas (UST), the oldest university in Asia, went out of their way and spent a great deal of money to voice out its apprehensions.

The prestigious school bought full page advertorials in major newspapers to publicize their appeal to “reject the politics of silence and cosmetics that perpetuates the spell on the people of the photogenic and the ignominious.”

The school’s statement, entitled “New Politics, New Hope,” urged the electorate to “condemn the calculated silence of some candidates and compel them to speak their mind.”

Without mentioning names, the school officials were obviously referring to opposition presidential bet movie actor Fernando Poe Jr., a high school dropout, who has steadfastly evaded challenges to a debate on national issues. Poe has also consistently side-stepped public clamor for him to elaborate on his platform of government.

“Campaign strategists have so exploited the characteristic spell exerted by celebrities and personalities of Filipinos so that they feel that their candidates, whom they surround with the patina of show business (if the aspirants are not show-biz folks themselves) can win the ballot by taking a vow of silence,” the statement said.

It said that such silence “disguises their dull minds while betraying their dark motives.”

“By not addressing the issues, they deprive the people of making an intelligent choice. Their silence means they are enemies of democracy,” the statement stressed.

The UST called on the people to vote those who would work for national solidarity. “The majority of our people are the victims of the depredations of clannish, unreformed traditional politicians, whether young or old, an over-regimented and battered bureaucracy, whether civilian or military, a vicious oligarchy, a mercenary entertainment complex, and profiteering businessmen.”

The school noted that Philippine democracy faces another test with the holding of local and national elections on May 10.

The institution also enjoined the people to “banish escapism and fight for the truth.”

GMA allays fears of post-election disturbance

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assured the nation today that she can deal with civil disturbance quickly even without bloodshed in the event it happens after the May 10 elections.

“I think I have already shown that in May 1, 2001 and Oakwood incidents,” she pointed out in an open forum that followed her speech in the President Candidates Series of ‘04 sponsored by the Makati Business Club during its Joint General Membership Meeting at the Hotel Inter-Continental in Makati City.

The President expressed the thought that the business community should have given her credits for having acquired the experience of dealing with such incidents.

The President, however, said that the business community should not be pessimistic. “While we are prepared for the work, we also prepare to go for the best, which is unity and reconciliation,” she said.

The President cited former President Fidel V. Ramos’ narrow victory in the 1992 presidential elections. “Yet he was very quickly able to unify the nation,” she said.

The Chief Executive stressed that she has been working on unifying the nation since her first day of her Presidency.

“But in a nation that was so divided, in EDSA II, in a nation when the gap between the rich and the poor was exploited in order to bring about the May 1 incident, we must continue to work for unity,” she said.

The President expressed the wish and intention that in her next administration, with a new electoral mandate, she will be able to fully unite the nation and truly bring about what is called by many as a government of national unity.

“It is something about healing and building the nation together,” she said.

RP now ‘net depositor’ of IMF, GMA says

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said the Philippines, if it wishes so, could stop borrowing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the country is now a “net depositor” in the funding agency.

“Right now, *kung gusto natin*. Technically, *puwede na tayong mag-graduate sa IMF* (Right now, if we want. Technically, we could be a graduate from the IMF lending program),” the President said.

The President made the statement during an open forum with some 300 members of the CODE-NGO (Caucus of Development NGO), a network of some 2,500 non-government organizations (NGOs) nationwide, at the Diosdado Macapagal Hall of the UP College of Economics in Diliman, Quezon City.

The President arrived 3:00 p.m and was welcomed by CODE-NGO national coordinator Joel Pagsanghan and chairperson Rory Tolentino.

Among those present were Housing Secretary Mike Defensor, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon “Dinky” Soliman, Professor Alex Magno, and moderator Sheila Coronel of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.

Under her administration, the President said the Philippines became a net depositor in the IMF.

“*Yung ating deposit doon bilang stockholder ay mas malaki nang konti sa ating utang sa kanila* (Our deposit as a stockholder is now a little bit higher than our debt to the IMF),” the President said.

If we really want to lessen our foreign debt, the President said, the country should lessen its foreign borrowings.

The President said she has canceled some borrowings during the last Donors’ Forum to stop the country’s debts from piling up.

The President said we should also lessen our budget deficit, hoping the country could have a balanced budget “sometime in the middle of my next term.”

The President said balancing the budget deficit is not that difficult since the country stayed in the ceiling in year 2001 and 2003 because of improved revenue collections and controlled government spending, and the renewed drive against graft and corruption.

GMA says RP would be a rice exporter in the next 6 years

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo reiterated today that the country would attain rice sufficiency this year, and eventually evolve into a rice exporter within the next six years.

In an open forum following her speech at the general membership meeting of the influential Makati Business Club held at the Hotel Inter-Continental in Makati City, the President said her administration spent an unprecedented P20 billion a year on agricultural modernization.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said the government was able to vigorously pursue agriculture modernization with record expenditures, yet stayed within the deficit ceiling.

The President also told the MBC that dramatic improvements in rice harvest under her administration reduced rice importation from one million metric tons to only 500,000 metric tons, representing a 50 percent growth.

This year, there has been no importation of rice yet, the Chief Executive said.

Citing a report by Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, the President said Japanese investors are interested in buying Gloria hybrid rice and seeds being produced in the country.

Lorenzo told the President that some Japanese businessmen who have tasted the Philippines' hybrid rice found it more delicious than the Jasmine rice of Thailand.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo has been promoting the high-yielding "Gloria Rice" among the farmers in her provincial sorties, saying it would definitely improve their income by 200 to 300 percent.

"Our farmers are now into hybrid seed growing as well. Once we have a stable supply of hybrid rice, our government can help the farmers shift to rice exportation," the President said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 14, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026142501/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr14.htm>

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Statement of the President: Re Iraq situation

Today, I have instructed the Department of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador Roy A. Cimatu to set up an Iraq Team to prepare contingency plans for the safety, relocation or evacuation of Filipinos in Iraq in view of the prevailing security situation in that country.

The Iraq Team is also tasked to identify and locate all our nationals and establish working relationships with appropriate peace and order authorities in Iraq, taking into particular consideration the fact that civil order and authority have not been fully restored.

In the meantime, our Philippine Humanitarian Contingent (PHC) will stay on in Iraq. The PHC Commander, Brigadier General Jovito S. Palparan, Jr., has determined that his area of operational responsibility is safe and secure.

However, as precautionary measure, members of the contingent will limit their activities to their camps for the time being. We will also hold further deployment of other members of the PHC.

Eight (8) PNP officials currently with the contingent will be assigned to our Embassy in Baghdad to form part of our Iraq Team.

These PNP officials will work directly with local authorities and will, among others, help the team address situations critical to the safety of our nationals. They will also coordinate with security forces of private contractors that employ Filipinos.

The rest of our contingent will form a reserve that will be on call by the Iraq Team, to provide manpower for the survey of Filipinos and for possible relocation/evacuation, among others. We have sufficient transportation and communication equipment and other logistics already on the ground. We will provide additional resources as may be necessary.

The DFA has set up a hotline for relatives of Filipinos in Iraq (DFA 24-Hour Action Center 834-4000, 834-3333).

I call on all Filipinos in Iraq to have themselves registered, even if their contracts did not pass through Philippine agencies, or do not comply with the minimum standards imposed by our government.

We will coordinate all our actions with our Coalition Partners and the leaders of Iraq. Protecting our nationals in Iraq presents certain unique challenges. We will face these challenges and do what is necessary to meet our objectives.

We stand together with our Coalition Partners in building a secure and democratic society in Iraq.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Janjalani

With our success in reducing the capability of the Abu Sayyaf through the neutralization of its key leaders, we are confident that the bandits' chieftain, Khadaffy Janjalani, would fall soon.

Janjalani is the only one holding the Abu Sayyaf bandits together so we are certain that his neutralization would spell doom to this band of criminals and terrorists.

GMA inaugurates P83-M Hall of Justice in Pasig City

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has inaugurated the P83.5-million Pasig City Hall of Justice that would serve as one-stop shop of legal services for convenience of the people in filing, hearing and settling of their criminal and civil cases.

The President motored to Pasig from her previous engagements in Makati City and University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City in time for the blessing of the Hall of Justice, officiated by Monsignor Rodolfo Gallardo. She cut the ceremonial ribbon to formally open the 8-storey building to the public.

The building will house 20 courtrooms of the Regional Trial Court and Metropolitan Trial Court, the City Prosecutor's Office, the Public Attorney's Office, Records Room, Parole and Probation Office, and other judicial offices.

In her speech, the President said that the new Hall of Justice exemplifies effective partnership of the national and city governments in strengthening the peace and justice program in the country.

"This Hall of Justice is a good contribution of Pasig to what I'd already said when I started as President, that there is a need for strengthening peace and justice in our country," she said.

The President lauded the leadership of Pasig City Mayor Soledad Cruz Eusebio for financing construction of the Hall of Justice building, as well as the continued success of her government in maintaining a climate conducive to both local and foreign investments in the city.

Earlier, Mayor Eusebio had told the President that the newly-constructed building is dedicated to the people of Pasig so that they can have easy access to judicial services.

Eusebio said that her administration believes in what Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo had stated in the first few months of her presidency, "that no person shall be deprived of his rights by reason of poverty."

"May this modern Hall of Justice be the site of perpetual disposition of legal matters or disputes to render everyman his due and be a by-word to all of the incomparable love for peace, equality and justice by Pasiguñeos," Mayor Eusebio said.

The building has a total floor area of 8,793 square meters, centralized air-conditioning system, narra parquet finish courtrooms, parking space and an elevator. The construction of the building started on June 7, 2003 and was completed April 1, 2004.

Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, former Trade Secretary and K-4 senatorial candidate Manuel Roxas III, Housing Secretary and Presidential Campaign Spokesman Michael Defensor, and Metro Manila Development Authority Chairman Bayani Fernando accompanied the President to the inauguration rites.

Aside from Pasig City Mayor Eusebio, her husband former Mayor Vicente Eusebio, Vice Mayor Lorna Bernardo, Congressman Toti Cariño, Atty. Roman Romulo (a son of Executive Secretary Romulo), Association of Barangay Captains president Gregorio Rupisan, Jr., and Pasig RTC executive judge Edwin Villasor welcome the President.

Malacañang denies role in Roco's leave from presidential campaign

There is no secret meeting or any kind of arrangement between Malacañang and *Alyansa ng Pag-asap* presidential candidate Raul Roco, who has withdrawn from campaigning for the May 10 elections purportedly to seek medical treatment in the United States.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye made the denial in an interview with *Radyo ng Bayan* this morning.

"Definitely, walang pagpupulong, walang arrangement," he responded when asked whether Malacañang had any role in former Senator Roco's leave from the political campaign.

Bunye said that, like what President Macapagal-Arroyo has been doing, the people should continue to pray for the early recovery of former Senator Roco.

In the interview, the Presidential Spokesman also noted an article of political analyst Jose Abueva, a professor of the University of the Philippines, naming Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo as "the candidate to beat" in the presidential derby.

According to Prof. Abueva, Bunye said, the Pulse Asia survey used a broader base of respondents and, therefore, there was a slim margin of error. Conducted from March 27 to April 4, 2004, Pulse Asia gave the President a 3 percent edge over her closest rival, *Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino* presidential bet Fernando Poe, Jr.

Bunye said that the "3 percent lead, net of margin of error, will translate to (an edge) of about 500,000 to 600,000 votes" in favor of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Iniinterpret din niya itong latest moves in the camp of presidentiable Roco at ang analysis niya'y makakapabor sa Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (He also interpreted the latest moves in the camp of presidential Roco and his conclusion was that they would favor the President," he said.

GMA orders setting up of Iraq team to safeguard Filipinos in Iraq

LUCENA CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today instructed the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and Ambassador Roy Cimatu of the Middle East Preparedness Team to set up an Iraq Team to ensure the safety and possible relocation or evacuation of Filipinos working in the strife-torn country.

In a press conference at the West I Elementary School in Barangay Iyam here, the President said the Iraq Team is tasked to identify and locate all Filipino nationals and establish working relationships with appropriate peace and order authorities in Iraq.

"I have instructed the Department of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador Roy Cimatu to set up an Iraq Team to prepare contingency plans for the safety, relocation or evacuation of Filipinos in Iraq in view of the prevailing security situation in that country," she said.

The President arrived 10:15 a.m. here and was welcomed by Mayor Ramon Talaga, 2nd District Rep. Lyn Punzalan, 1st District Rep. Raffy Nantes, and Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM) Commanding General Maj. Gen. Alfonso Dagudag.

The President was accompanied by Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Housing Secretary and Campaign Spokesman Michael Defensor and Press Secretary Milton Alingod.

The President said the Iraq team was activated because civil order and authority have not been fully restored in Iraq.

The President said although the Philippine Humanitarian Contingent (PHC) will stay on in the meantime in Iraq, there will be no further deployment of other PHC members to the area.

But as precautionary measure, the President said members of the contingent would limit their activities to their camps for the time being.

“The PHC Commander, Brigadier General Jovito S. Palparan, Jr., has determined that his area of operational responsibility is safe and secure,” the President said.

The President said eight Philippine National Police (PNP) officials currently with the PHC would be assigned to the Philippine embassy in Baghdad to form part of the Iraq Team.

“These PNP officials will work directly with local authorities and will, among others, help the team address situations critical to the safety of our nationals. They will also coordinate with the security forces of private contractors that employ Filipinos,” the President said.

The President said the rest of the PHC contingent would form a reserve that would be on call by the Iraq Team, to provide manpower for the survey of Filipinos and for possible relocation/evacuation, among others.

“We have sufficient transportation and communication equipment and other logistics already on the ground. We will provide additional resources as may be necessary,” the President said.

The President said the DFA has already set up a hotline for relatives of Filipinos in Iraq. This is the DFA 24-Hour Action Center with telephone numbers 834-4000 and 834-3333.

“I call on all Filipinos in Iraq to have themselves registered, even if their contracts did not pass through Philippine agencies or do not comply with the minimum standards imposed by our government,” the President said.

The President said the PHC and the Iraq Team would coordinate all their actions with the coalition partners and the leaders of Iraq in building a secure and democratic society in Iraq.

“Protecting our nationals in Iraq present certain unique challenges. We will face these challenges and do what is necessary to meet our objectives,” the President said.

GMA assured of a clean sweep by K-4 in Cainta, Rizal

CAINTA, Rizal – A sweep by the administration’s senatorial candidates deserves another.

So goes the thinking of Cainta Mayor Nicanor Felix as he predicted last night another clean sweep by the administration’s senatorial line-up and a win for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in his town.

Felix delivered a 13-0 sweep for the administration in the 2001 senatorial elections and hopes to duplicate that this time with a 12-0 show for the Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan (K-4).

“Though it will be tough, we are assuring President Macapagal-Arroyo that we will work hard again to deliver another sweep for the K-4 ticket, including the President and Sen. Noli de Castro,” Felix said in a chance interview here.

He stressed he has been pushing for block voting during his campaign sorties in a determined effort to achieve the sweep.

The President now enjoys support of the majority of Cainta’s 142,000 voters, said Felix who is going all-out for an overwhelming victory for her next month.

“A vote for me is a vote for President Macapagal-Arroyo,” said Felix.

Earlier in a rally here, the President praised Felix for the 13-0 sweep he delivered to the People’s Power Coalition in the 2001 polls.

Guardian International presents manifesto of support for GMA

LUCENA CITY — Some 200 officers and chapter leaders of the Guardians International Inc. today presented President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo with a manifesto of support for her bid for a six-year term in the May 10 elections.

Guardians International chairman retired Gen. Nestorio Gualberto and Banahaw Chapter “Supremo” ret. Gen. Edgardo Abenina handed the manifesto to the President during a rally at the West I Elementary School in Barangay Iyam here.

In supporting the President, the Guardians noted the “strong gains” the country has achieved under her administration.

They also expressed hope that the President and her entire *Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan (K-4)* would continue to enjoy good health and sound mind and lead the country on the road to a strong Republic.

The President thanked the Guardians International for the expression of support and unity and for being an active partner of the government in providing better service to the people.

The President also thanked the group for calling on the people to unite behind her administration to achieve the reforms that every Filipino wants.

GMA acts to provide water to Cainta & Taytay, Rizal

CAINTA, Rizal — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the rehabilitation of an old pipeline in Ortigas Avenue Wednesday night to solve the 30-year-old problem of lack of water in parts of the towns of Cainta and Taytay.

Speaking at the launching of “*Patubig ni Gloria*” program in Sitio Upper and Lower Quatro in Valley Golf Subdivision, Barangay San Juan, Cainta, the President announced the joint rehabilitation project through the initiatives of Cainta Mayor Nicanor Felix and Taytay Mayor June Zapanta, together with the Manila Water Services, Inc.

“Tonight, the Manila Water Services, with the assistance of Mayor Felix of Cainta and Mayor Zapanta of Taytay, will start the construction and rehabilitation project of the water pipeline in Ortigas Avenue to bring clean drinking water to Cainta and Taytay,” she said amidst applause of some 5,000 residents who attended the ceremony.

President Macapagal-Arroyo promised that the rehabilitation project would be completed at the end of June. By July this year, the waterless residents of Cainta and Taytay would have clean water, a part of the basic services program of her next administration.

The Chief Executive has already directed 10 water tanks of potable water delivered to the residents of Barangay San Juan, here in Sitio Quatro, three times daily.

The daily rationing of clean drinking water would benefit some 6,000 households or 23,000 individuals in the barangay.

The President stressed that these 23,000 Cainta residents are only part of the four million people who have been receiving potable water since she initiated her *Patubig ni Gloria* program on December 31, 2003 in Barangay Payatas, Quezon City.

Present during the program were Mayor Felix, Barangay San Juan chairman Gilberto Intenga, Philippines Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) managing head Ram Agoncillo, Manila Water Services president Antonio Aquino, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) administrator Orlando Hondrade and former Energy Regulatory Commission Chairman Manuel Sanchez.

Gov't, NDF panels score breakthrough in peace talks

The formal peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF) has reached an important breakthrough with the secretariats of both parties naming their nominees for the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC).

The JMC will be the primary body to oversee the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

CARHRIHL is an important cornerstone in the GRP-NDF peace process. Although it was signed in August 1998, it was only in February and March this year that the GRP and NDF organized the JMC during the two rounds of peace talks at Oslo, Norway.

In a joint statement, GRP and NDF called the “formation, operationalization and organizational meeting of the JMC” an “important breakthrough” in the formal talks between them.

The JMC will be the primary body for the airing and receiving of complaints and reports of human rights violations and violations of the international humanitarian law between the GRP and NDF.

The JMC will be co-chaired by Prof. Carlos P. Medina, Jr., (GRP) and Fidel V. Agcaoili (NDF). Other members of the JMC are Atty. Edgardo B. Gayos and Atty. Robert I. Larga (GRP) and Coni K. Ledesma and Danilo F. Borjal (NDF).

Sitting as NDF independent observers to the JMC are Supreme Bishop Tomas A. Millema and Maria Hilao-Enriquez. On the GRP side are Mercedes Contreras Danenberg and Mary Aileen Bacalso.

Making up the JMC Secretariat are Executive Director Ma. Carla Munsayac-Villarta, Fe A. Oaing, Linda N. Cañete, Sandra L. Garcia and Atty. Ma. Ngina Teresa Chan-Gonzaga of the GRP and legal consultant Atty. Edre U. Olalia, Marissa P. Dumanjug-Palo, Irvin. M. Cuasay, Rosie N. Tumbagahon and Lovie C. Ebio of the NDF.

Ambassador Paul Moe of the Norwegian government, which is acting as third party facilitator to the peace talks, graced the occasion held at the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) compound in Manila as did Medina and Agcaoili who briefed the press on the importance of the breakthrough.

GMA cites gov't efforts in raising the price of copra

TAYABAS, Quezon – Three years ago, when President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assumed the presidency, the price of copra in the countryside was a measly P2.50.

Today, after she worked hard to improve the plight of the coconut farmers, the price of copra in the market has gone up to as much as P22.50, a feat which the President herself is proud to tell.

“Umangat ang buhay ng magniniyog, umangat ang buhay ng Quezon (The life of the coco farmers improved, the standard of living in Quezon also improved),” intoned the President during a speech that followed the mass-oath taking of *Kaibigan ni Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo* members here.

The President cited several reasons for the unprecedented increase in the price of copra during her short term in office.

She said she worked hard to expand the market of copra while making negotiations for the lifting of the copra ban in several countries.

“Tayo ay naghanap ng bagong bansang bibili ng ating produkto. Tayo ay gumawa ng negosasyon para pigilin iyong mga nagba-ban ng ating kopra sa ibang bansa (We looked for new markets which will buy our product. We negotiated to prevent the banning of our copra in other countries),” the President said.

She said the country developed coco diesel 2T oil through setting up of coconut oil mills in various parts of the country. Other oil mills were rehabilitated, she added.

“Tayo ang naghanap ng mga bagong gamit sa ating kopra (We were the ones who looked for new uses for our copra),” the President said.

She then called on the support of the coco farmers in the province to allow her to continue what she had started by giving her a fresh mandate in next month's polls.

“Siguro kung yan ang simpleng mensahe na ibibigay sa ating mga kapatid sa Quezon, palagay ko, kung ganoon lumaki ang kita ng ating magniniyog, sapat na dahilan na dapat bumoto sila kay Pangulong Gloria at sa ating mga kandidato ng K4 (If that is the simple message we want to convey to our brothers here in Quezon, that would be reason enough for them to vote for me and the entire K4 ticket),” she said.

The President then reiterated her six-point agenda if given the chance to serve another six years.

She pledged to:

- Triple loans to self-employed and small business owners;
- Build 3,000 new schools, grant a college or vocational-technical scholarship to every qualified poor family and put a computer in every school;
- Bring electricity to 1,500 barangays a year and reduce the cost to become the lowest in the Asian region;
- Bring clean water to all 45,000 barangays;
- Reduce by half the price of commonly-used medicine; and
- Create one million jobs every year.

Business leaders agree GMA's lead in Pulse Asia survey strengthened the peso

Business leaders have affirmed that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's surge in a poll survey has restored investor confidence in the local market and triggered the recovery of the peso against the dollar.

“I believe that there was a direct relationship in what happened (peso rally). I’m convinced that the business community is far more optimistic now based on what has transpired,” business executive Roberto Romulo told reporters at a forum of the influential Makati Business Club (MBC) in Makati City on Wednesday.

MBC Executive director Guillermo Luz and other prominent members of the club agreed with Romulo, saying President Macapagal-Arroyo’s significant lead in the latest Pulse Asia survey was a major factor in the peso gain at the foreign exchange market.

“I am sure that may have contributed to the rally (of the peso) in the sense that the market reacts to this type of news very quickly. But let’s look at it from a broader perspective. I think the peso has dropped in value artificially mainly because of political anxiety and nervousness ahead of the elections,” Luz said.

“The price that you see on the peso at P56 (to \$1) really was in anticipation of problems during the elections. But I think that if people will step away and not get into an exaggerated scenario, you will see the peso gain in value. In fact, I predict that after the elections, the peso will gain,” Luz added.

David Balangue, president of the Management Association of the Philippines, shared the observations of Romulo and Luz. “I think it did help, because there were no other developments that would pull the exchange rate other than that one (President Macapagal-Arroyo’s lead in the survey).”

Balangue pointed out that “there were no external developments that would cause the peso to strengthen other than the survey results.”

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Gov. Rafael Buenaventura said earlier the threat of political stability subsided following the President’s strong performance in the survey.

Buenaventura said anxieties that the peso would fall further has dissipated.

The peso rallied on Tuesday to its highest level of P55.80 to \$1 in nearly three months.

During the same forum, Luz commended the President for setting clear targets of her administration if given a fresh six-year mandate by the people.

“We like to see people set specific targets because you can measure them by those targets. And we’d like to see actually all candidates including the senators, the congressmen, and the mayors and governors set targets for their specific work areas,” Luz said.

He cited Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo for setting high targets including having the lowest electricity rate in Asia, but added that the President has to do a lot of reforms to attain her goals.

“Unless the voters get specific targets and a specific pledge from the politician, we cannot measure them and measurement is very important,” Luz stressed.

President Macapagal-Arroyo was the last presidential candidate to face the MBC in a series of forums organized by the group to enable the candidates to elaborate on their respective platforms.

In her speech, the President identified six objectives of her administration. These are wider access to financial assistance by the self-employed and small businessmen, build 3,000 additional schools, grant of college education or vocational-technical scholarship to every qualified family, energize 1,500 barangays every year, deliver clean water to all 45,000 barangays, reduce by 50 percent the price of common medicines, and create one million jobs every year.

Exodus to GMA camp continues

PANDI, Bulacan—It looks like there's no stopping the exodus to the administration camp.

Barely had the euphoria of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's surge to a significant lead in the presidential derby had died down, when a fresh wave of erstwhile opposition stalwarts from two towns of this province shifted their support to the President and her entire K-4 coalition ticket.

The new administration allies –former Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino mayoralty bet in Norzagaray, Bulacan Amado T. Pascual and his vice-mayoralty running mate Lauro Castillo along with eight councilors in their tickets – were welcomed by the President's son, Pampanga Vice Governor Mikey Arroyo.

Arroyo expressed elation over their pledge of support to her mother, President Arroyo, and thanked them for joining her camp. He said that her mother has always extended her hand to anyone who believes in her vision and governance.

"I would like to welcome you to our team and your offer of support to my mom and support to her government," he told the supporters during the brief welcoming rites held here Wednesday.

Pascual, for his part, told the Governor of their full support to the presidency of her mother. "*Kaming lahat ay sumusuporta kay President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo dahil mukhang malalampaso ang oposisyon sa darating na halalan,*" he said.

The Norzagaray mayoralty candidate added that he has yet to see any program of government from the KNP that will address the problems faced by local governments like Norzagaray.

Eighteen opposition groups and supporters also joined the exodus to President Arroyo's camp led by Jerry Esquivel, president of the confederation of Norzagaray Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association (TODA) with 2,000 members.

Esquivel said in an interview that their group realized that the President has a clear vision for good governance. Their previous presidential candidate, Fernando Poe Jr., he said, has no clear platform of government.

The other groups that also bolted from the opposition camp and shifted their support to the President included Eduardo Santos, president of the Immaculate Concepcion Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association (TODA) with 500 members.

Reelectionist Pandi Mayor Oliver "Ike" Andres likewise expressed full support to President Arroyo's presidential bid and to her senatorial candidates along with his line-up of eight councilor candidates.

The President has been reaping the fruits of her untiring efforts to reach out to the people with an outpouring of support to her quest for a full six-year term, notably from local political leaders, including defectors from the floundering opposition parties KNP and the Alyansa ng Pag-asa.

The bandwagon syndrome had already resulted in the clinching of the Bicol Region and the vote-rich provinces of Tarlac and Laguna, and of late, Mountain Province in Northern Luzon which the President visited on Easter Sunday.

The President has also received bipartisan support from leaders of vote-rich Cebu and Pangasinan provinces, as well as in most parts of Mindanao.

Early this month, Rep. Gilbert Teodoro (1st Dist. Tarlac), a ranking NPC member, also pledged full support to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Teodoro, a nephew of business tycoon Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, NPC founder and chairman emeritus, vowed to "exert all efforts so that the President would win overwhelmingly in Tarlac."

Earlier, in Capas and Concepcion towns, also in Tarlac, the President also received the assurance of support from Congressmen Benigno “Noy” Aquino III and Rep. Jesli Lapus (3rd Dist. Tarlac).

Rep. Faustino Dy III of Isabela, NPC chairman, said some 33 of his colleagues in the House are now supporting Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo.

The President and the K-4 coalition have also welcomed into the K-4 fold a team of top local officials from the camp of presidential candidate Raul Roco. The group was led by former Alyansa ng Pag-asa Eastern Visayas regional coordinator Emil Ong.

Ong’s departure from the Roco camp is seen as ominous of the impending collapse of Roco’s political machinery in Eastern Visayas.

A week before Ong’s defection, President Macapagal-Arroyo also received an overwhelming declaration of support from Bicolandia leaders led by Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Villafuerte, his Vice Governor Imelda Papin, Camarines Norte Gov. Jesus Typoco, Albay Gov. Al Francis Bichara, Sorsogon Gov. Raul Lee and Masbate Gov. Antonio Kho.

In Laguna, incumbent Gov. Teresita “Ningning” Lazaro, previously a supporter of deposed President Joseph Estrada, orchestrated a mass oath-taking of 609 municipal and barangay coordinators as members of the *Kaibigan ni Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo* (KGMA).

Palace denies internal survey; accuses KNP of self-delusion

Malacañang today vehemently denied conducting an alleged internal survey showing opposition standard-bearer Fernando Poe, Jr. with a commanding lead over President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Secretary Gabriel Claudio, campaign manager of the Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan (K-4), said that with the series of setbacks it has suffered, the opposition is now experiencing “an extreme case of self-delusion.”

Claudio charged that the opposition is now in a “state of denial” because all surveys conducted by credible and prestigious organizations have shown that the President is pulling away while Poe, despite his much-vaunted popularity, is fast sliding down.

Claudio said that the recent Pulse Asia survey that showed the President ahead over FPJ by a statistically significant 3 percent and the massive defection of its members to K-4, not to mention its internal squabbling, could have made a toll on Sen. Edgardo Angara, president of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP).

The Palace official also said the pressure on Angara must have prompted him to issue an incredible claim that FPJ is leading by 20 percent over the President in an unpublished internal survey purportedly commissioned by Malacañang itself.

“No such survey exists,” Claudio stressed. “This could only have existed in the mind of Senator Angara.”

At a Makati Business Club (MBC) forum on Wednesday, business leaders roundly applauded the President’s 6-point plan of action for the next six years.

MBC chairman Ricardo Romulo recalled the 47.6 percent rating given by the group members to Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, while Poe got zero.

Claudio also cited a Business World-Roper Consumer Confidence index showing 42.6 percent of the respondents virtually endorsing the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Even the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey, once-preferred by the opposition, graphically showed Poe's decline from 36.3 percent in January this year to 32.0 percent last March, a drop of 4.3 percent in just one quarter, or 1.33 percent per month. With a voting population of 37 million, that means 492,000 Filipinos changed their minds every month.

As to Poe's withdrawal from the race, Claudio said that the K-4 does not want to comment on the opposition's internal dynamics, but so-called sources from the many fronts in the opposition have pointed to this direction.

Claudio said that with the de facto withdrawal of presidential candidate Raul Roco, the President Arroyo's bid for a full six-year term is expected to get another major boost.

In fact, he said, a number of *Alyansa ng Pag-asa* stalwarts, have already defected to K-4 even before the announcement of Roco's ailment, Claudio said.

Construction of Marikina-Infanta road to start next week — GMA

LUCBAN, Quezon—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced here today that construction of the Marikina-Infanta road would formally start next week to speed up the transport of goods and services between Metro Manila and Quezon.

The President said the road project would enable Quezon to catch up with other provinces in the CALABARZON (Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon) economic zone in development.

“Para sa inyong kinabukasan kailangang simulan natin iyang Marikina-Infanta road na iyan para madaling magbiyahe iyong mga magtatayo ng puhunan (We need to start construction of the Marikina-Infanta road to speed up travel, particularly for the investors),” the President said in her keynote address at the 22nd commencement exercises of the Southern Luzon Polytechnic College (SLPC) here.

The President said she would revisit Quezon on Tuesday (April 20) for the groundbreaking rite for the route considered crucial to Quezon province's development to keep pace with the rapid progress in the CALABARZON.

The President said she initiated the opening up of the route in 1989 when she was still at the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The President lamented that until now, Quezon remains wanting of economic development, while the other CALABARZON provinces have been booming with the entry of more and more factories and industries.

“That's why I will be back in Quezon on April 20 to groundbreak the Marikina-Infanta road,” the President said.

The Marikina-Infanta road is also viewed as a part of the development of Mega Manila.

Earlier, the President led the oath-taking of some 5,000 members of the *Kaibigan ni Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo* (KGMA) Tayabas chapter at the Tayabas municipal stadium.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio Bunye: On PCSO Chairman Ma. Livia S. De Leon

The President joins her family and friends in praying for her speedy recovery.

*Source: **Office of the Press Secretary***

The President's Day: April 16, 2004

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- **GMA orders creation of task force to go after “kotong” cops**

Statement of the President: Re Iraq situation

We want a “zero-casualty” goal for Filipino civilians and peacekeepers as tension continuously escalates in Iraq.

All government agencies and the public should support this aim.

We will stand by our international commitments and we will make sure our nationals are safe.

I admire the courage of our peacekeepers and workers but they should take care, keep together and keep in close contact with the Iraq Team.

For lack of platforms, anti-GMA forces now resort to mudslinging, black propaganda

The forces against President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo have no platforms, thus they resort to mudslinging and black propaganda, Malacañang said today.

“In the absence of a clear, specific platform and program, they are resorting to mudslinging. I feel this will backfire on them because the people want concrete programs and not character assassination,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said this morning in a radio interview.

In contrast, the President has clearly spelled out her six-point program for the next six years, Bunye said.

The President vowed to triple the loans for the self-employed and owners of small and medium business enterprises.

She will build 3,000 new school buildings, provide more scholarships and provide each school with a computer.

She will lower the cost of electricity and provide 1,500 barangays with electricity yearly.

She will provide potable water for all 45,000 barangays.

She will reduce by half the prices of commonly used medicines.

She will create one million jobs a year.

The business community liked it when the President enumerated these six targets when she addressed them in a general membership luncheon meeting at the Makati Business Club Wednesday because they are specific and

measurable, Bunye stressed as he pointed out that the opposition groups come out only with very general and motherhood statements.

Because they are to the point, there is no doubt that the President will be able to accomplish her targets, Bunye said.

In the first year of her administration, the President built 550 new schools, and based on this track record, the building of 3,000 new schools over the next six years is no empty promise, Bunye said.

The President has already reduced the cost of medicines, and one million jobs a year is easily achievable because of the number of small and medium business enterprises the government has set up, Bunye said.

P4-B mega dike to solve perennial flooding in CAMANAVA — GMA

MALABON, Metro Manila — The ongoing construction of the P4-billion mega dike project of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the CAMANAVA (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela) zone is expected to solve the perennial flooding in the area, especially in Navotas and Malabon.

During a “Pulong Bayan” and the distribution of Certificates of Entitlement to Lot Allotment (CELA) held at in the Plaza Rodriguez Amphitheater here Thursday night, the President and running mate Senator Noli “Kabayan” de Castro discussed the government’s action to solve the almost daily flooding of some parts of Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela due to high tide.

“In resolving the almost daily flooding in CAMANAVA, particularly in Navotas and Malabon areas, the construction of the P4-billion mega dike was started during my administration,” said the President to the applause of some 8,000 people who trooped to the amphitheater to show their support for her bid in the May 10 elections.

Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) chairman Amado Bagatsing, National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation (NHMFC) president Angelico Salud and Malabon Officer-in-Charge Mark Allan Jay Yambao witnessed the awarding of CELAs and Community Mortgage Program Certificates of Awards (CMPCA) to some community organizations.

The President handed to Rufino Guinte, president of the Samahan ng Pagkakaisa ng Dumpsite, Catmon Homeowners Association, Inc., a community mortgage certificate worth P8,406,340 for some 4,203.17 square meters.

This will benefit a total of 159 informal settlers, each of whom will get 20 to 30 square meters homelot worth P52,870 each.

The People’s Coalition for Housing Rights Homeowners Association, Inc., represented by its president Gregory Arada, also received 3,119.58 square meters worth P6,239,160. About a hundred members are expected to benefit from it.

The President distributed CELAs to 419 beneficiaries in Flordeliz Village Homeowners Phase I (196) and II (223).

Earlier, the President and Senator de Castro led in the distribution of CELAs and PhilHealth cards to some 4,000 indigent families at the Valenzuela Astrodome.

Around 117 members of the Riverside–Ugong–Malaya Homeowners Association, Inc. in La Mesa Street, Ugong, Valenzuela were among the CELA beneficiaries.

GMA welcomes former opposition supporters to K-4

MALOLOS CITY, Bulacan – The mass exodus of opposition candidates and supporters to the administration's Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan (K-4) continues with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo swearing in today 700 volunteers for the GMA Movement.

The President led the mass oath-taking of the Norzagaray Volunteers for GMA at the Hiyas Convention Center here this morning.

In the oath-taking, the volunteers promised to lend their capabilities and talents for the success of the vision and the mission of the GMA Movement.

They further dedicated their services to the country as a whole in their commitment to the Chief Executive.

“Ito, bilang pagtanggap sa hamon ng kasalukuyang panahon na itaguyod ang ating dakilang bayan sa bagong yugto ng dakilang kasaysayan tungo sa isang matatag na Republika (This is in accepting the challenge of the present time to uphold our great country in the new chapter of history towards a strong Republic),” the volunteers swore.

The President acknowledged their full support for her government and her presidential bid in the May 10 polls.

She also extended her appreciation to Bulacan Governor Josie Dela Cruz, Congressman Willie Villarama, Congresswomen Lorna Silverio and Neneng Nicolas and Bulacan Vice Governor Rely Plamenco for their efforts in bringing the volunteers to the GMA Movement.

Other officials present included Malolos Mayor Danny Domingo and Mrs. Gina de Venecia, wife of Speaker Jose De Venecia, Jr.

“Kayong mga taga-Norzagaray, maraming salamat sa inyong tulong, Kailangan ko po ang tulong ninyo (Thank you people of Norzagaray for your help),” the President told the volunteers.

She said that with their help it would be easier for her to explain her six-point program for the next six years which includes to triple the loans for the self-employed and owners of small and medium business enterprises; build 3,000 new school buildings, provide more scholarships and provide each school with a computer; lower the cost of electricity and provide 1,500 barangays with electricity yearly; provide potable water for all 45,000 barangays; reduce by half the prices of commonly used medicines and create one million jobs a year.

Early this morning, the President promised to provide the 10,000 resident families of the town soon with a new water system that will bring them clean, potable water when she and her party inspected the water system at the North Hill Village in Barangay Tigbe, Norzagaray, Bulacan.

She said she was able to get assistance from Germany thru the Asian Development Bank for the laying of water pipelines in Norzagaray.

“Magdadala tayo ng malinis na tubig sa Norzagaray pati na rin sa buong bansa (We will bring clean water to Norzagaray and to the whole country),” she said.

Palace: Nothing but compassion for Erap

Despite former President Joseph Estrada's recent rhetoric against President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Malacañang said today it has nothing but compassion for the deposed leader and would like to wish him the best on his birthday on Monday, particularly a speedy recovery from his knee ailment.

But Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye told a radio interview this morning that it would be impossible for Estrada to realize his birthday wish of having a new president on June 30.

“It’s wishful thinking,” Bunye said. “*Pero palagay ko hindi matutupad ang kanyang birthday wish* (His wish for a new President will not be realized).”

Published reports quoted Estrada, who is in jail for plunder charges, as saying that his birthday wish is to see his bosom friend, opposition standard-bearer Fernando Poe Jr., win in next month’s presidential polls.

Bunye said that with barely three weeks left in the campaign period, the President is pulling away, as shown by the latest Pulse Asia survey result where the President surged ahead by a statistically significant three-point lead over Poe after being locked in a tie in the previous surveys.

A March 20-25 survey conducted by New York-based NOP World Asia Pacific (formerly Roper ASW Asia Pacific) among Metro Manila consumer-voters showed the President also leading over her rivals by 35 percent.

This means two in every five consumer-voters in Metro Manila, which is traditionally an opposition bailiwick, would vote for the President if elections were held today.

Surprisingly in the NOP survey, Poe was poor fourth, with 11.4 percent, having been overtaken by Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who was second with 16.1 percent and former Senator Raul Roco, third, with 12 percent.

The Makati Business Club, also in a survey conducted among members in late January, gave the President a resounding 47 percent lead over her rivals, while Poe got zero.

Compounding Poe’s woes is the reported internal squabbling in his camp and the recent exodus of erstwhile opposition stalwarts to the administration camp, citing organizational flaws in the opposition’s Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

The President has been reaping the fruits of her untiring efforts to reach out to the people with an outpouring of support to her quest for a full six-year term, notably from local political leaders, including defectors from the floundering opposition parties KNP and the Alyansa ng Pag-asa.

The bandwagon syndrome had already resulted in the clinching of the Bicol Region and the vote-rich provinces of Tarlac and Laguna, and of late, Mountain Province in Northern Luzon, which the President visited on Easter Sunday.

The President has also received bipartisan support from leaders of vote-rich Cebu and Pangasinan provinces, as well as in most parts of Mindanao.

GMA cites need to privatize NAPOCOR; eyes lowest power rate in Asia

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo underscored today the importance of privatizing the National Power Corp. (NAPOCOR) and the Transmission Corp. (TRANSCO) to attain her vision of a stable power supply and the lowest electricity rate in Asia.

The President issued the statement during an interview with the Masbate-based radio station DYME. The program host informed Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo that electricity rates in their province remained high despite the fact that the government-run National Electrification Administration (NEA) has written off a huge debt of the local power distributor Masbate Electric Cooperative (MASELCO).

Asked about her long-term solution to the country’s energy problems, the President replied that electrification of the 45,000 barangays nationwide is one of the six major priorities of her administration if given a new six-year mandate by the people in the May 10 elections.

“Dadalhin natin ang kuryente sa lahat ng barangay ng Pilipinas at gagawin natin na pinakamababa sa buong rehiyon (We will bring electricity to all barangays nationwide and we will make it the cheapest in the region),” President Macapagal-Arroyo said.

The President recalled that when she took over the presidency in January 2001, the Philippines had the second most expensive electricity in Asia. At present, the Philippines now ranks No. 6 in the list, she added.

“Pero siyempre, hindi pa tayo kuntento diyan. Ang importante dito ay i-privatize natin iyong ating industriya dahil ang gobyerno ay dumadanak na ang dugo sa NAPOCOR at sa TRANSCO (But of course, we are not yet contented with that. What is important is to privatize our power industry because the government has been hemorrhaging on NAPOCOR and TRANSCO),” the President pointed out.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also emphasized the need for structural reforms in the energy sector through the construction of new power plants to cope with increasing demand.

The President noted that the basic problem in Masbate is the inefficient transmission system of MASELCO, hence its operations remain deficient despite the debt relief granted by NEA.

The President also explained that NAPOCOR spends P6 to generate one kilowatt hour of electricity in Masbate, but sells this at the subsidized rate of only P3.70 to MASELCO.

GMA eyes wider access to funds for SMEs

NORZAGARAY, Bulacan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo vowed here today to spur Filipino entrepreneurship by providing wider access to financial assistance for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The President made the pledge during an interaction with residents of this town where she inspected her project to deliver potable water to the North Hill Village.

“We will triple loans for entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises,” the President said. She added that last year alone, her administration lent out P21 billion to SMEs compared to only P6 billion registered by the failed Estrada administration.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also called on her supporters to help disseminate information regarding the six top priorities of her administration if given a fresh mandate in the May 10 elections.

“Kailangan ko po ang tulong ninyo para ipaliwanag ang anim na pinaka-importanteng punto sa aking plataporma (I need your help to explain the six most important points of my platform),” the President said.

The Chief Executive, who is standard-bearer of the ruling Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan (K-4), reiterated that creation of one million jobs every year remained her primary objective. Along this line, she underscored the significance of attracting more investments into the domestic market that would generate additional employment opportunities.

The President cited Norzagaray’s cement industry as a potential attraction to investors.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo identified delivery of clean water to the people as the third major concern of her platform of government. *“We will bring clean water to all barangays,”* she said, citing her *“Patubig ni Gloria”* project that has been bringing clean water to blighted communities in Metro Manila and the suburbs, including Northeast Village.

The President revealed that a more permanent water project would be set up in Norzagaray with the assistance of the German government.

The fourth priority of an extended Macapagal-Arroyo administration is electrification of all barangays nationwide, targetting 1,500 barangays every year. Corollary to this, the President said she intends to make power rates in the country the cheapest in Asia.

Her fifth priority, President Macapagal-Arroyo said, is to institute reforms in the education system. This includes construction of 3,000 new school buildings across the country, granting scholarship to one child each of five million poor families, and providing a computer in each public school.

The President's sixth primary objective is to cut the cost of common medicines by 50 percent.

"Six promises for the next six years. Help me bring this message to the people," the President told the Norzagaray residents.

GMA awards certificates, cash to health workers, towns in anti-measles campaign

GUIGUINTO, Bulacan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the awarding of certificates and cash incentives to the four outstanding towns and barangay health workers of this province as part of its measles elimination campaign.

More than a thousand barangay health workers participated in the campaign also dubbed as "Ligtas-Tigdas."

The President led the awarding rites. She was assisted by Senator Francis Pangilinan, Bulacan Governor Josie Dela Cruz, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, Congressman Willie Villarama, Bulacan Vice Governor Aurelio Plamenco, Guiguinto Mayor Ambrosio Cruz and Regional Health Director Ethelyn Nieto.

The town awardees were District 1 of the municipality of Bulacan represented by its Mayor Anacleto Meneses and municipal health officer Dr. Elisa Villanueva; District 2 from the municipality of Pandi represented by Mayor Oliver Andres and municipal health officer Dr. Imelda Atal; District 3 of Angat represented by Mayor Leonardo De Leon and health officer Dr. Guillermo Bartolome; and District 4 of Obando represented by municipal health officer Onesmo Joaquin.

The outstanding town awardees along with their outstanding barangay health workers will receive P500,000 worth of construction materials and P100,000 cash incentives donated by the Bulacan provincial government.

The President, in her short message, hailed the barangay health workers (BHW) for being role models in eliminating the killer measles disease.

"Ang gagaling ng mga BHW at ako ay natutuwa sa inyong pag-appreciate, sa inyong malasakit at nawa'y magkaroon kayo ng mas magandang buhay (The BHW are all good and I appreciate your concern)," she told the BHWs at the Provincial Engineer's Office Covered Court here.

She said the BHWs should be given priority in registering with the Philippine Health Insurance (PhilHealth) since they are the ones who provide the fast health care delivery system in the country.

She instructed Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit to give importance to the BHWs in the issuance of PhilHealth cards.

GMA orders creation of task force to go after "kotong" cops

MALOLOS CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today directed the Department of Transportation and Communication to create a task force that will go after unscrupulous policemen preying on hapless jeepney drivers.

The President issued the order to Transportation and Communication Assistant Secretary Reynaldo Berroya during a multi-sectoral dialogue at the provincial capitol's gym here attended by some 500 Bulakeños supporting her candidacy for a full six-year term in the May 10 elections.

Jun Pereda, president of the Bulacan Alliance of Transport Associations (BATAS), read a list of grievances to the President.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo vowed to take immediate steps to address their concerns, among them the so-called "kotong cops" or mulcting policemen.

Pereda also cited their clamor for fare hikes, as well as problems with sanctions for traffic violations.

Reacting to Pereda's concerns, the President instructed the regional DOTC officials to immediately address the jeepney sector's complaints.

The President also assured the mass transport industry stakeholders that there would be regular consultations spearheaded by the regional transportation officials tentatively scheduled to start on Tuesday next week.

As part of good governance, President Macapagal-Arroyo gave assurances that her administration would vigorously pursue socio-economic upliftment amid a peaceful and orderly environment.

The President thanked leaders of the other sectors, notably commerce and industry, agriculture and fisheries, overseas Filipino workers and the senior citizens, for attending the meeting.

She hailed the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) for their \$8-billion remittances which has propped up the national economy.

During the interaction, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo elaborated on her six-point platform of government if given a fresh six-year mandate.

The President told the members of the Bulacan Chamber of Commerce and Industry led by Pedrito Calalang as chairman, that she intends to triple the loans for the small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

"Mahigit P21 bilyon ang napautang sa mga SMEs, gagawin natin itong triple sa susunod na anim na taon para makatulong lalo sa inyong maliliit na negosyante (We have already loaned out over P21 billion to SMEs. We will triple that over the next six years to speed up the growth of the small businessmen," the President said.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also vowed to strengthen the senior citizens sector by increasing their benefits.

Other sectoral leaders present included Hector de los Santos, chairman of the Municipal Agricultural and Fisheries Council of Malolos; OFW representative Eric Raul, and Ranulfo David, representing the senior citizens.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 16, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028003528/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr16.htm>

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The Good News: Hefty growth in investments, tax collection reported to Malacañang

Approved investments in the first quarter grew by a hefty 1,334 percent while tax collection improved by 10.1 percent in the latest figures released by the Board of Investments and the Bureau of Internal Revenue respectively.

In a report to Malacañang, Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima said BOI-registered investments rose to P108 billion from only P7.5 billion in the first quarter last year.

Of these, he said, 99 percent of the amount (P106.8 billion) represented the cost of "one-time" projects approved, meaning these are capital-intensive projects that are not expected to be generated yearly. These include infrastructure, build-operate-transfer and telecom projects.

"This manifests the renewed business confidence of foreign investors in our economy despite election anxieties," Purisima said.

While the bulk of capital investments (97.52 billion) were foreign sources, Purisima said local investors, for their part, committed to finance projects worth P10.74 billion.

In terms of sectors, manufacturing accounts for P794 million in investments while information technology represents P276 million.

Thirty four projects were approved in the first quarter which are expected to create some 5,100 jobs once they are fully operational.

"The growth in our first quarter investments right in the middle of the election season shows that we are on the right track in our investments strategy. This belies the opinion of some businessmen of a wait-and-see mode of investments," Purisima said.

For the first three months of the year, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), the government's main collection agency, yielded P98.774 billion, a growth of P10.1 percent from a year ago.

Revenue collection for the month of March alone, reached P33.6 billion, surpassing the BIR's revenue goal for the period by P1.4 billion.

The March collection, representing 17.3 percent or P4.95 billion growth from month-ago level, trimmed the BIR's shortfall for the first quarter to P2.11 billion from P3.52 billion as of February.

"The bureau remains bullish that it can sustain its strong monthly collections vis-à-vis this coming April and May," the BIR said.

GMA vows to eliminate 'termites' in judiciary system

Stressing that "justice is a bedrock of democracy," President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has vowed that, if elected to a full six-year term in the May 10 polls, she will sweep clean the judiciary and use her influence to provide equal justice to all Filipinos, whether they be rich or poor.

Speaking before the Philippine Bar Association (PBA), which observed its 113th foundation at the Manila Peninsula Hotel in Makati City Friday night, the President said that, under her new administration, she "will clean up the judiciary, the courts and people working like termites in and out of the judicial system."

The Chief Executive warned violators of the law that they will be pursued, arrested and jailed.

"Lilipulin nating iyong mga sinasabi ng ating mga kasapi ng Diplomatic Corps at tinatawag nilang hoodlums in robes, na sila ang nagiging sagabal sa investments na pumupunta rito (We will eradicate what members of the Diplomatic Corps call hoodlums in robes, who are obstacles to the flow of investments here)."

President Macapagal-Arroyo also stressed that, under her new administration, there would be "a government of true national unity."

She invited the opposition to forget politics and to send their brightest representatives to the government where positions of responsibility would await them.

"Ang aking pamahalaan ay magiging isang tunay na pamilya ng lahi. Kasama rito ang mga kintawan ng kabataan, kababaihan, cultural communities, senior citizens, partido ng oposisyon (My government will be a family of the race. It will bring together representatives of the youth, women, cultural communities, senior citizens and the opposition)," the President said.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo envisioned her new government like a mirror that once raised up, it will reflect the overall picture of the country.

After calling for detoxification of the country's political system, she said, "it is time we employ the blessings of civility to heal a wounded society. Civility is the glue that will bind Filipinos together.

The President appealed to all Filipinos for help so that, together, they can build the force of "new unity."

"Mabubuhay muli ang puwersa, ang disiplina sa batas kung mangingibabaw ang pambansang interes sa sariling kapakanan (The force of discipline under the law will prevail once national interest overcomes selfish motives)," she said.

Before her speech, the President presented Awards of Recognition to Associate Justices Santiago J. Rañada Jr., Celia C. Librea-Leagogo, Estela M. Perlas-Bernabe, Arturo Tayag, Vicente Yap, Edgardo A. Camello and Magdangal M. de Leon of the Court of Appeals; Commissioner Manuel A. Barcelona Jr. of the Commission on Elections; and Commissioner Ronald Olivar Solis of the National Telecommunications Commission.

Statement of the President: Re Opposition

I look forward to the unification of the opposition because this will limit the contest to two camps and sharpen the contrast between the two protagonists: an administration that has engaged in a civilized, decent and platform-based campaign, and an opposition that has largely spewed negativism, mudslinging, harangues and threats.

I also aim to unify the nation and the opposition as part of my plan.

There are some bright lights in the opposition but they have not been allowed to shine.

They are welcome to the national unification effort that will consolidate the nation behind the fight for change for the average Filipino.

In my mind, this campaign is about unifying the whole nation and not simply about unifying the opposition or the administration.

Statement of the President: Re Election related violence

The PNP must conduct a close watch over armed groups and preempt poll related violence.

I condemn all forms of attacks against political candidates as an attack against the democratic process.

The PNP must leave no stone unturned in the investigation of the Masbate incident in order to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Statement of the Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Former President Estrada

We respect the Sandiganbayan's decision and it will be done.

The PNP will set up the attendant security requirements.

High satisfaction rating enhances GMA's chances in May 10 election

The remarkable increase in President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's public satisfaction ratings from -3 percent in November 2003 to 30 percent in March 2004, based on a survey by the Social Weather Stations (SWS), bolsters her chances in the May 10 elections.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye made that statement in a radio interview with RMN Network this morning. "*Iyan ay very welcome development at talagang iyan ay magpapalakas lalo ng chance ng ating Pangulo* (That's a very welcome development and that will really enhance the President's chances)," he said.

Bunye said that the people now appreciate the value of the basic services being rendered to them by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, he said, has made herself highly visible by going to places only a few presidents before her had ever visited.

"Ito siguro ang (ilan) sa mga dahilan kung bakit ang kanyang approval rating ay tumaas from -3 percent to 30 percent at malaking jump ito. (These are among the reasons why the President's ratings have jumped from -3 percent to 30 percent). This is a big jump," he said.

According to the SWS survey, conducted March 21 to 29, 55 percent of the 1,400 respondents nationwide, who were all registered voters, expressed satisfaction with President Macapagal-Arroyo's performance in office.

Join me in my next administration, GMA calls on opposition

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo called on the opposition anew today to join her in the quest for unity in her next administration.

“There are some bright lights in the opposition but they have not been allowed to shine. They are welcome to the national unification effort that will consolidate the nation behind the fight for change for the average Filipino,” the President said in a statement.

Part of the President’s plan is to unify the nation and the opposition to bring about a “government of true national unity” under her new administration.

The President also said she welcomes the efforts of the opposition to unify, saying the “unification of the opposition will limit the contest to two camps and sharpen the contrast between the two protagonists.”

But the President also said that the campaign is about unifying the whole nation and not simply about unifying the opposition or administration.

In addressing the Philippine Bar Association (PBA) Friday night during its 113th foundation program at the Manila Peninsula, the President also asked the opposition to forget politics and send their brightest representatives to the government where positions of responsibility would await them in her full six-year term.

She also said it is time then to employ the blessings of civility to heal a wounded society as civility is the glue that will bind Filipinos together.

The President appealed to all Filipinos for help so that “together, we can build the force of a new unity.”

GMA cites Iglesia Filipina Independiente as ‘inspiration’ for her pro-poor agenda

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today lauded the Iglesia Filipina Independiente for helping the poor and working for peace that have, in part, been the source of inspiration for her pro-poor agenda.

The President spoke before the First National Congress of Laymen of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, held this morning at the Plenary Hall of the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City. Theme of the meeting was “Keep Alert, Stand Firm in Your Faith, Be Courageous, Be Strong.”

Before the meeting opened, 18 laymen of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente coming from different provinces, cities and municipalities presented to the President a manifesto expressing their full support for her bid for a full six-year term in the coming elections. The laymen were led by Pepito M. Pico as national president.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said that Iglesia Filipina Independiente has been known in Philippine history as a symbol of love of God and country. She noted the church’s work for the poor, particularly the laborers.

“Kayong mga miyembro ng Iglesia Filipina ay nangunguna sa serbisyo sa mga mahihirap, kayo’y nangunguna sa paghahanap ng kapayapaan, kaya kasama ninyo ako (Members of Iglesia Filipina lead in serving the poor, you also lead in the search for peace; so, I am with you,” the President said.

“Kayo ay bahagi ng inspirasyon para sa akin ding sariling pro-poor agenda (You are part of the inspiration of my pro-poor agenda,” she told some 2,000 Iglesia Filipina Independiente members who attended the meeting.

The President reiterated her six promises, if given a mandate by the people in the May 10 elections, that would uplift the living standards as well as promoting peace and unity among the Filipino people.

She said that the first goal of her new administration is to create one million jobs annually in the next six years. She has already gained experience in creating 1.1 million jobs during the short period of her presidency.

She said that she would triple the loans for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In 2003 alone, her administration lent P21 billion to SMEs entrepreneurs.

She said that all barangays throughout the country would be provided with clean water. As of now, the administration has been supplying clean water to four million people in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

She said that 1,500 barangays would be energized each year. In the brief period of her presidency, her administration has brought electricity to some 2,000 barangays per year. The target number of barangays is reduced to 1,500, because this aspect of the electrification program will be spread out for six years.

She said that her administration would build 3,000 schoolhouses each year and would supply a computer to each school in the country. It would also provide one academic or vocational scholarship to every poor family.

She said that as part of the health program, her administration would provide poor families with medicines at half their usual prices.

GMA tops mock polls among lawyers in Eastern and Western Visayas

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo handily topped a mock election held Friday in Cebu City among more than 300 members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) from Eastern and Western Visayas.

The President got 148 votes, more than double the 63 votes garnered by second placer Raul Roco who flew to the United States early this week to undergo medical tests.

Surprisingly, Eddie Gil, who has consistently been the tail-ender in the Social Weather Stations and Pulse Asia surveys and only recently reinstated by the Supreme Court as a candidate, got 45 votes over Fernando Poe, Jr. and Brother Eddie Villanueva who were tied with 39 votes each.

The mock polls were held amidst reports in Cebu City that former Cebu Governor Lito Osmeña, head of Promdi Party, would shift support for the President in the wake of Roco's departure for the US.

Some IBP members, however, expressed the view that the votes for Gil were made as a sign of exasperation for the lopsided contest, in favor of the President. Some lawyers even wrote "Eddie Hell" on their ballots.

In the mock polls, K-4 vice presidential bet Sen. Noli "Kabayan" de Castro and Sen. Loren Legarda had 109 votes each.

The mock elections were held during a convention of the IBP Cebu Chapter on the eve of the President's visit to Cebu City to address the golden anniversary of the Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines.

In a related development, four Cebuano representatives affiliated with the Nationalist People's Coalition reiterated their support for the President.

They are Rep. Simeon Kintanar (2nd District), Rep. Antonio Yapha (3rd District), Rep. Ace Durano (5th District) and Rep. Nerrisa Soon-Ruiz (6th District).

The four were among the 33 NPC congressmen from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao who called on the President in Malacañang early this week.

There are 63 NPC congressmen nationwide, but according to Durano, only around 45 were supporting the candidacy of the President.

The three gubernatorial aspirants in Cebu, Vice Governor John Gregory Osmeña, former Agriculture Undersecretary Celestino Martinez, Jr. and Capitol Consultant Gwendolyn Garcia, are all supporting the President's bid for a fresh six-year term.

GMA approves P800 daily travel allowance for gov't personnel

Travel allowances of government personnel regardless of rank and destination anywhere in the country have been increased to P800 per day to cover hotel and lodging, meals and incidental expenses.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo approved the new rate through Executive Order 298 which prescribes rules and regulations and new rates of allowances for official local and foreign travels of government personnel.

In case officials and employees who travel abroad are not provided transport money by the host country or sponsoring organization or agency, they will be entitled to the Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) provided under the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Index which can be secured from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

When the country of destination is not listed in the Index, the DSA for the nearest country shall be adopted.

Unless otherwise stated in the UNDP Index, the DSA shall be apportioned as follows: a) fifty percent for hotel/lodging; b) thirty percent for meals; and c) 20 percent for incidental expenses.

Local travel allowances will also be apportioned in this manner.

Payment of expenses for travel that are less than 30 days will have to be approved by the head of office/bureau or equivalent. Travels that will last for 30 days or more and payment of travel expenses therefore shall be approved by the department secretary or his equivalent.

In approving the new EO, the President cited the need to rationalize the travel allowances in view of the increasing cost of goods and services.

The new rates were based on the recommendation of the Travel Rates Committee.

The new EO states that claims for reimbursement of actual travel expenses in excess of the travel expenses authorized may be allowed upon certification by the head of agency concerned as absolutely necessary in the performance of an assignment and presentation of bills and receipts.

EO 298 was signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo on March 23, 2004 and took effect immediately.

GMA pays tribute to teachers, parents

DAGUPAN CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today paid tribute to both teachers and parents in molding the character of students, saying they are the ones who will guide the students in life after graduating from college.

In a speech early this afternoon at the 82nd Commencement Exercises of the University of Pangasinan here, the President lauded the teachers for the time they spend in imparting knowledge to the students and paid tribute to the parents for their sacrifices.

“Tandaan ninyo na ang inyong mga teachers at moderators ang gumasta ng panahon para mamahagi ng kaalaman at magandang mga asal. (Remember your teachers and moderators who spend time to impart knowledge and good manners),” she said.

“Your teachers, your mentors are the ones who go out of their way to recognize your talents. Ito ang maaari ninyong puntahan para sa payo, for your homework problems (they are the ones who could give you advice and help you in your homework),” she added.

The President told the students that their teachers are people they can trust and who bring out the best in them. *“They are the ones, who inspire you to be better persons to the end,”* she said.

In paying tribute to parents, the Chief Executive said they have nothing in mind but the best for their children.

“Naghirap sila kasama ninyo at humangad ng inyong tagumpay (They sacrificed along with you and wished nothing but your success). They forced you to do your best,” she said.

Saying that she’s also a parent, the President said parents are silent martyrs hoping that their children would have a better life than they themselves had.

“Sa aking sariling buhay, ang aking mga magulang ang tumulak sa akin upang maging magaling dahil naniniwala sila na ang edukasyon ang magbubukas sa atin sa mundo ng mga pagkakataon (In my own life, my parents were the ones who pushed me to be the best because they believe that education will open the windows of opportunity),” she said.

The President told the students that in the short time that she served as president, she created this opportunity for more jobs and promised to produce one million more a year if given the chance to serve another six years.

TUCP vows all-out support for GMA candidacy

CEBU CITY—The 1.2 million strong Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) pledged here this afternoon its unqualified support to the candidacy of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who is seeking a fresh six-year mandate in the May 10 elections.

The expression of support was conveyed to the President by lawyer Cecilio Seno, national executive vice president of the union, to highlight the observance of the 50th founding anniversary of the Association of Labor Union – TUCP at the Waterfront Hotel in Lahug this city.

In rallying behind Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, the organization cited her “genuine concern for the welfare of workers and their families.”

The union leaders, who came from all over the country for their convention here, also expressed their confidence “that a continuation of the policies of the (Macapagal-Arroyo) administration is imperative in preserving the current investment climate, business confidence and, subsequently the job security of the millions of workers.”

“Therefore, (the ALU-TUCP) give their support squarely behind the candidacy of Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her bid for a full six-year term,” the manifesto stated.

The document, entitled “Manifesto of Solidarity with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo,” also cited their concern about the “great challenges the country is facing and the need for steady, experienced and credible leadership,” as well as their aspiration for an honest, orderly and peaceful national elections.

The labor leaders also manifested their gratitude to the President who, they said, continuously consulted with them about her major labor policy decisions even as she was still a senator and a vice president of the country.

For his part, TUCP president Democrito Mendoza urged their members to show to the country that there is such a thing as labor vote.

“We must vote as one. We must ensure that we support only those who listen to us. Let us vote for the President who is always with us,” Mendoza stressed in endorsing Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo’s candidacy.

GMA launches 3 agri-related projects in Pangasinan

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo launched here today three project for the farmers in line with her administration’s Hunger-Free Philippines program.

The projects, are the National Rice Festival under the Unlad-Ani Program of the Department of Agriculture, the Hunger Free Philippines Program under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Abot Kaya Feeds Program also of the DA.

In a speech at the Narciso Ramos Sports Complex Gym here, the President said the Hunger-Free Philippines is part of her administration’s program where the Philippines and the President won the CZeres award as an outstanding female leader in the fight against poverty and hunger.

“This is just like an Oscar award, and it a great honor that the Philippines and I was given this award,” the President said.

She said that farmers of the nation were instrumental in planting and fishing, and reaping the food for every table of each Filipino, the reason why she was given the award.

Under the Unlad Ani Program, the President awarded representatives of provinces and towns which have achieved high level of productivity in hybrid rice (Gloria Rice) production.

The President, assisted by Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, Jr., awarded P500,000 worth of rice-related agricultural projects per province and P150,000 per municipality.

The President noted that before, one hectare of riceland yields only 80 cavans of palay. The harvest of those who are using hybrid rice, she said, has doubled. The topnotcher in this field of competition, she said, harvested 270 cavans a hectare.

The President disclosed that the Department of Agriculture is preparing for the wet season by providing seed support for 200,000 has. of hybrid rice and 350,000 has. for certified seeds. Next year, she claimed, the country will be self-sufficient in rice, there will be no more importation if she remains President.

“If I am no more President, we do not know the programs of others who want to be President,” she said.

The President stressed that because of the government’s support for the rice farmers, the National Food Administration is buying hybrid rice at P10 pesos per kilo.

On farmers who use the hybrid rice seeds for planting, the President displayed a “discount card” which farmers can use for their planting needs.

“Those farmers who avail of this discount card will have P1,200 for hybrid rice seeds and P345.00 for certified seeds,” the President said.

The President revealed that she was able to irrigate 600,000 hectares of the two million irrigable hectares in the country in her short term as President. "In the next six years, we can easily irrigate the 1.4 million hectares," she said.

On fish and pork which the ordinary Filipino usually eats, the President said that he government is propagating "tilapia" which is more nutritious than the "galunggong" as the national fish of the country.

On pork, the President that she will have subsidy on the propagation of "biik" or piglets to increase the supply of pork in the market.

The President reiterated her six-point program in the next six years as follows:

1. One million jobs a year, including agricultural jobs;
2. Triple the loans to the small businessmen and self-employed, including the small entrepreneurs or farmers who have their own businesses.
3. Clean water for all barangays of the Philippines;
4. For the irrigation pumps to work, electricity will be brought to 1,500 barangays; and the reforms in the energy sector will bring down cost of electricity, to be the cheapest in the entire Asian region.
5. To provide a computer in every school, and a scholar for every poor family.
6. Expansion of PhilHealth cards and expansion of the half-priced medicines being bought by ordinary Filipino and the farmers.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 17, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028003629/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr17.htm>

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- **GMA presides over groundbreaking rites for Sorsogon satellite city project**
- **GMA unveils plans to transform Samar into 'rice granary' of Region 8**
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- **GMA says she will push Cha-Cha, other reforms**

The Good News: Foreign banks optimistic on peso recovery after May 10 polls

Foreign banks were even more optimistic in declaring a more dramatic recovery of the peso after the May polls, saying it could bounce back to its early 2003 level of P52 to the dollar.

This was after the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas had earlier predicted a recovery of P54 to the dollar level in the aftermath of the election which is expected to be tightly-fought between incumbent President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and opposition standard bearer Fernando Poe Jr.

"It's not far-fetched, we see that as a possibility," said John McGowan, treasury chief of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp. (HSBC) Philippines.

According to McGowan, the market, however, would be watching the appointment of new officials to key positions on the fiscal and monetary departments.

"A hundred day honeymoon is usual while everyone is watching out who will be appointed into the economic team," McGowan said. "It doesn't really matter who will win, the important factor is the removal of the uncertainty."

He said foreign banks have no expectations of who will win the presidency, but he admitted that in a close fight, the incumbent with political machinery would win.

The peso began recovering this week, appreciating to as high as P55.66 to the dollar for the first time since January after results of opinion polls showing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo surging to a significant three-percentage lead over actor Fernando Poe Jr. were released.

"Exactly how far this recovery will go and for how long, we don't know," McGowan said, adding that the first decisions of the new administration would be critical in sustaining the market.

Palace reiterates GMA welcomes formation of a 'united opposition'

Malacañang today reiterated President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's belief that a one-on-one presidential contest between the administration and the opposition in the May 10 polls would enable the electorate to make a better choice.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye welcomed, in a radio interview with the RMN Network this morning, a possible united opposition that could emerge from the “make or break” talks between presidential candidates Fernando Poe Jr. and Senator Panfilo “Ping” Lacson, scheduled for tomorrow (Monday).

“Ang nasabi ng ating Pangulong Gloria, siguro ay mas maganda kung magkasama na sila para maginging talagang one-on-one race ito (What President Gloria (Macapagal-Arroyo) has said it might be better if they (Poe and Lacson) unite so that this would be a one-on-one race),” he said.

Bunye explained that, in a one-on-one contest, the voters would see the difference in both platforms of government offered and conduct of the political campaign being waged by the administration and the opposition.

On the part of the President, he said, she could demonstrate how her political campaign is conducted “at a high plane and in a civilized manner.” This is in marked contrast with the mudslinging campaign style by the opposition, he added.

“Maipapakita rin niya iyong contrast noong maliwanag at specific programs haming doon sa programa ng kabila na very general, motherhood statements at walang maliwanag na patutunguhan (She would also be able to show her clear and specific programs compared with those of the opposition, which are very general, motherhood statements and without clear goals),” he said.

Bunye said, *“Kaya, iyan ang reaction ng ating Pangulo, na siguro ay mas mabuti ng magkaroon ng united opposition (This is why the President’s reaction is that it would be better to have a united opposition).”*

Malacañang mum on possible Roco withdrawal from presidential race

Malacañang refuses to comment on the possibility of former Senator and Education Secretary Raul Roco withdrawing from the presidential race for health reasons.

“We won’t enter into any speculations on this matter,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said this morning in a radio interview.

If Roco can’t really go through with his candidacy for health reasons, his supporters are all mature and know what is best for them, Bunye said.

“Maybe they are now thinking whom they will choose. We leave it to them. They know what will be best for our country,” Bunye offered.

Bunye admitted President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo talked with Roco through the phone before the *Alyansa ng Pag-Asa*’s standard bearer left for the United States early last week.

But that was only to express her concern for his health and wish him a speedy recovery. After that, Bunye said he knows of no other communications between the President and Roco.

Roco has admitted he may withdraw from the presidential race if his health fails. However, he feels he can go on.

“If I find out that I would no longer be able to serve the Filipino people efficiently, I would tell them not to vote for me. But so far what the doctors are telling me is that I can still engage anyone in a debate the moment I return, even without sleep,” Roco was quoted as saying from Houston, Texas where he is undergoing tests at an undetermined hospital to determine what really is his ailment.

“The fight is on and I will try to be there before the end of the month,” Roco also said from Houston.

Roco went through an operation for prostate cancer in 1996, his campaign manager and spokesman Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan admitted. Speculations are that it is the same sickness bothering him now. However, his doctors in Houston, who have been subjecting him to exhaustive checks, have yet to issue any definitive statements on his condition.

Required logistics for May 10 elections released, says Presidential Spokesman

All its obligations have been fulfilled in releasing the required logistics for the May 10 elections, Malacañang stressed today.

Citing Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said all the necessary funds have been forwarded to the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) except for the honoraria of public school teachers who will man the precincts.

The funds for the teachers' poll duty pay, which have been increased and will be given them in advance, will be available on or before April 26 as scheduled, Bunye clarified.

On the part of Malacañang, everything that has to be done has been done, according to Bunye who stressed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's determination to have clean, honest, peaceful and credible elections.

Bunye also issued an appeal for the citizenry to stay calm, cast their votes and make sure their ballots are counted in the wake of disputes between the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) and the COMELEC.

COMELEC Chairman Benjamin Abalos gave assurances they are more than ready for the elections, contrary to the fears expressed by NAMFREL in the ABS-CBN television show "Impact 2004" which guested officials of COMELEC and NAMFREL.

GMA responds to plea for a barangay day care center building

BORONGAN, Eastern Samar – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered Education Secretary Edilberto De Jesus today to ask the DepEd provincial director to provide a lot in the vicinity of the Eastern Samar National Comprehensive High School (ESNCHS) for a Day Care Center building.

The President issued the directive during the *Pulong Bayan* held at the ESNCHS gymnasium in response to the need of Barangay-C residents for a site for a Day Care Center building.

She also ordered the DepEd to fast track studies to improve the quality of teaching in the day care centers.

The President told a crowd of 5,000 from multi-sectoral groups who attended the *Pulong Bayan*, part of the plan of her ongoing Bridge School program is to develop and improve the teaching system in the Day Care Centers.

And to uplift the lives of residents, the President told them she has tasked the Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA) to put up quality hostel facilities in Guiwan town.

Known for its white sands, Guiwan can be developed like the world famous Boracay island beach resort to attract local and foreign tourists, the President observed.

If Guiwan is developed as a tourist spot, it would provide jobs to residents here, the President said.

The President also said she provided financial assistance for an irrigation project in Dolores Valley, the second biggest town in Eastern Samar.

She also ordered the Department of Energy to replace old electric posts with steel ones and to put up a sub-power station to solve the province's power problem.

GMA bats for stronger partnership between government and labor

CEBU CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo batted here on Saturday for a stronger partnership between the government and the labor sector based on a continuing policy of consultation, friendship and cooperation.

In a speech delivered at a general assembly of the Association of Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP) at the Waterfront Hotel here marking their 50th anniversary, the President said she was so happy “to formalize our alliances.”

The presidential address came on the heels of the ALU-TUCP endorsement of Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo's candidacy in the May 10 elections.

The President said the manifesto of support has “made it very clear that ALU-TUCP is part of our coalition *Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan* (K-4).”

President Macapagal-Arroyo described the 1.2 million strong ALU-TUCP alliance as the “biggest labor federation in the country.”

In her speech, the Chief Executive also called on organized labor to help maintain industrial peace in the country by doing away “unreasonable wage demands.”

Democrito Mendoza and Cecilio Seno, national president and executive vice president, respectively, of the federation, presented the “Manifesto of Solidarity” with President Macapagal-Arroyo wherein they pledged unequivocal support to her candidacy.

The federation cited the President's contribution to the promotion of welfare of workers, particularly in health care, housing, labor relations and other concerns and expressed confidence that her leadership would continue preserving and promoting investment climate, business confidence and job security of workers.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also cited the support of Cebu's political bigwigs led by Mayor Tommy Osmeña, and Congressmen Raul del Mar and Antonio Cuenco.

GMA, road network connection Samar tons to hasten trade improvement, job creation

BORONGAN, Eastern Samar – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today disclosed plans to build a network of roads to connect all towns of Samar to hasten trade improvement and job creation on the island.

The President also said a six-point program that she intends to carry out nationwide in the next six years, if elected in the May 10 elections, would minimize poverty and unite the Filipino people.

The President discussed her program before some 5,000 representatives of multi-sectoral groups that attended a *Pulong Bayan* held at the gymnasium of the Eastern Samar National Comprehensive High School here Sunday morning.

“We have a clear platform of government, which will address the poverty and unite our country. The people of Samar islands are among the beneficiaries of our programs,” the President said.

The goals of her program are:

- 1) To create one million jobs every year, if she and her vice presidential running mate Senator Noli “Kabayan” De Castro are elected;
- 2) To triplicate the money to be channeled to livelihood projects and lent to small and medium enterprises;
- 3) To deliver clean and potable water to all waterless barangays in the country;
- 4) To rehabilitate the power lines, replace old wooden posts and replace them with steel posts, energize at least 1,500 barangays nationwide each year, and bring down power rates;
- 5) To build 3,000 new schoolhouses per year, provide a computer set in every school in each barangay, and provide a scholarship for a member of each poor family, and
- 6) To widen the program of selling medicines at half the ordinary price.

Earlier, the President had attended a holy mass officiated by Fr. Lope Lobredillio at the Our Lady of Nativity parish church in the town proper. The Presi*

* Incomplete as per original archived source.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: April 18, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028184421/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr18.htm>

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- **Six Bicol governors make show of support for GMA**
- **GMA: Coco and rice farmers obtain more benefits under her administration**
- **GMA wants parliamentary government for speedy delivery of services**
- **Bunye describes GMA as a 'leader with a vision'**
- **Taxi drivers and operators give GMA solid support**
- **Palace: A big chunk of Filipino-Chinese vote to go to GMA too**
- **Palace says GMA will be a healing president**

Statement of the President Re Wage Issue

I acknowledge the clamor of our workers for better pay and I believe ordinary Filipinos must not only be guaranteed jobs, but also be paid well enough to sustain their daily family needs.

This is being done in a way that is acceptable to both the employers and the workers, and determined by the market as well as social and humane considerations.

I am confident in the capacity of the tripartite wage boards to perform their tasks fairly and in a timely manner.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye Re Shell Incident

The incident is condemnable, although it is isolated and does not affect the stability of the overall security situation.

These acts of terrorism are clearly intended to influence public perceptions in the run up to the elections, to instill fear or to erode confidence.

The President has already ordered the intensification of security measures to thwart terrorist attacks.

These include stepped up public vigilance and cooperation to check criminality and terrorism.

GMA vows to fulfill her father's dream of extending train services to southern tip of Luzon

SORSOGON CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has vowed to fulfill a “dream project” of her late father, President Diosdado Macapagal, to extend the train services down to Matnog, Sorsogon.

At a *Pulong Bayan*, held Sunday afternoon at the Sorsogon City Gymnasium, the President said that providing railway services down to Matnog, at the southernmost tip of Luzon, is not a dream anymore under her watch.

“I would like to report to you that my administration has been able to find financial assistance for this project,” she said, adding that it signed early this year with the People's Republic of China a loan agreement for US\$ 900 million.

In the question and answer portion of the *Pulong*, President Macapagal-Arroyo and her vice presidential running mate Senator Noli de Castro both assured the people of Sorsogon City that the railway project was real and not a political gimmick.

The Chief Executive said the strong bilateral relations that her administration had forged with China helped clinch the loan agreement with the China National Technical Import Export Corporation (CNTIEC).

The CNTIEC had made a feasibility study on the Manila–Matnog rail route that was completed in November 2003, she said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said that the bidding for construction of the project will held after expiration of the election ban imposed by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC).

The President acknowledged the presence in the *Pulong Bayan* of Mrs. Gina de Venecia, wife of House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. She thanked Speaker de Venecia for his role in sealing the loan agreement with the CNTIEC.

Sorsogon Governor Raul Lee, Camarines Sur Governor Luis Villafuerte, Albay Governor Al Francis Bichara, Camarines Norte Governor Jesus Typoco, Catanduanes Governor Leandro Verceles and Masbate Governor Antonio Kho attended the *Pulong Bayan*. The provincial executives have pledged their support for President Macapagal-Arroyo's bid for a six-year term in the May 10 elections.

Also present in the Pulong Bayan were Sorsogon City Mayor Sally Lee and Irosin Mayor Lilia Gonzales.

Six Bicol governors make show of support for GMA

SORSOGON CITY – In a show of their unwavering support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 elections, six Bicolano governors joined her in barnstorming the regional bailiwick of *Alyansa ng Pag-asa* presidential bet Raul Roco.

Governor Raul Lee of Sorsogon, Governor Al Francis Bichara of Albay, Governor Luis Villafuerte of Camarines Sur, Governor Jesus Typoco Jr. of Camarines Norte, Governor Leandro Verceles Jr. of Catanduanes and Governor Antonio Kho of Masbate went out in force to welcome President Macapagal-Arroyo, who visited this city Sunday.

The Bicol provincial executives also expressed their support for Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo's vice presidential running mate Sen. Noli de Castro and the entire senatorial slate of the *Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan*.

The governors, along with their leaders and followers, noted that President Macapagal-Arroyo was able to solidify the Bicol votes ahead of next month presidential polls, making her the “candidate to beat” in the region.

In Sorsogon, 11 out of the 14 mayors had assured Governor Lee of their support for the Gloria-Kabayan team and the *K-4* senatorial bets.

Among the local executives, who attended the *Pulong Bayan* and the groundbreaking ceremony for a P219 million New Sorsogon City Hall project, were Sorsogon City Mayor Sally Lee, Irosin Mayor Ma. Lilia Gonzales and Juban Mayor Maria Teresa Fragata.

GMA: Coco and rice farmers obtain more benefits under her administration

SORSOGON CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo says that her government has provided coconut and rice farmers with more benefits than the previous administration.

Speaking at a *Pulong Bayan*, held Sunday afternoon at the Sorsogon City gymnasium, the President said that the price of copra has increased to P22.00 per kilo under her watch compared with only P2.00 during the term of former President Joseph Estrada.

President Macapagal-Arroyo told the *Pulong Bayan*, in which her vice presidential running mate Senator Noli de Castro acted as moderator, that the insurance of coco farmers also doubled to P10,000 during the short period of her presidency.

She also pointed that coco manufacturers now produce a variety of high value products out of coconut, like coco diesel, coco oil and coco ethanol.

Turning to rice farming, the President said that her administration makes available two kinds of cards to farmers who are participating in the propagation of the high-yielding Gloria rice variety.

Holders of one kind of card, according to the President, are guaranteed that their rice harvests would be purchased by the National Food Authority (NFA). The other card would entitle them to a P500 discount on fertilizers.

GMA wants parliamentary government for speedy delivery of services

To bring the government closer to the people and speed up the delivery of services to them, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo wants a shift from our current presidential form of government to a federal or parliamentary one, Malacañang said today.

There is also the desire to hasten the progress and development of the country for it to catch up with Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand, all of which are under a parliamentary or federal system.

Presidential Deputy Spokesman Ricardo Saludo said in a radio interview this morning that local governments have more autonomy under the federal system, thus they can respond faster to the needs of the people.

And if the people do not want their local officials, they can change them faster because they have a stronger hold on them in elections than those in the national government, Saludo added.

Local officials themselves will set policies to uplift the lives of the people who can exert greater pressure on them in elections under the federal system, Saludo further explained.

In the parliamentary system, the executive and legislative branches are merged for faster action in enacting laws for the development of the country, Saludo said.

He said the shift from the presidential to a federal or parliamentary form of government requires a constitutional amendment but how this amendment is realized, via a constituent assembly or a constitutional convention, is for Congress to decide, Saludo said.

Bunye describes GMA as a 'leader with a vision'

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye revealed today that he enjoys his job even as he has been having difficulty keeping in pace with an indefatigable President who, he described, is a leader with a vision.

Speaking at a CEO (chief executive officer) Leadership Breakfast Forum of the Standard Chartered Bank at the Manila Peninsula Hotel in Makati City, Bunye said he does not mind working "long and odd" hours because President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo works longer than he does.

Bunye said he has been the President's mouthpiece for almost two years now, which is longer than most of his predecessors, but the "wear and tear of the work do not seem to show (on my person)."

The reason for his "comparative longevity," Bunye said, was the fact that he enjoys working for the President. "I fully believe in her and I share in her vision."

“I have accompanied her on most of her foreign trips and I have seen how she worked in the plane long after most of the members of the delegation have fallen asleep,” the Malacañang official recalled.

He added that even presidential security people who are soldiers trained to endure hardships, sometimes find it difficult to keep pace with the President.

Bunye asserted that Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo is full of energy because she is “driven by a very clear vision” for the country and its people.

“She is fighting for change. Change for the people of this country. Change to lift them up from poverty,” Bunye stressed.

To achieve the reforms, Bunye said the President has so much to do in so little time.

He added that President Macapagal-Arroyo is struggling to bring about fundamental changes in the people’s way of life, in policy-making, in the country’s political system and in the delivery of basic government services to the people.

“President Gloria knows she needs to put our economy and our country in good shape if we want to catch up with our neighbors.” Bunye told the bank executives.

He also said the President was able to turn things around in a little over three years, indicating that it was a dramatic accomplishment considering that she inherited an unstable government and a basket-case economy.

He proceeded to recite a litany of accomplishments of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration. “But that is not enough. President Gloria has got to do more,” Bunye added.

Batting for wider support for the President’s bid for a full six-year term in the May 10 elections, Bunye said she must be given a fresh mandate to continue chasing her visions.

“Now, she needs your mandate to change, your mandate to get the job done, your mandate to take us the rest of the way,” Bunye said.

Taxi drivers and operators give GMA solid support

Some 4,000 drivers and owners of major taxi companies operating in Metro Manila have expressed solid support to the candidacy of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who, they said, was the first Chief Executive to champion their cause and improve their plight.

The *Pinag-Isang Lakas ng Taksi Drayber at Operator ng Pilipinas (PILTOP) Inc.*, through their officers led by Edwin Revilla, chairman; Demetrio Santos, executive vice chairman; and Alexander Macabata, secretary-general, made the commitment to First Gentleman Jose Miguel T. Arroyo during an oathtaking ceremony in Malacañang last Sunday.

Revilla, a taxi driver of Saigon Transport, pointed out that the organization’s leadership and members were very much aware of the present administration’s sincerity in assisting them on their concerns and problems, particularly those pertaining to their safety while on the streets.

These problems were provided with appropriate attention and solutions, he said, citing for one the provision of free P10,000 accident insurance which was very beneficial to PILTOP members, he said.

According to Revilla, some of their members who met accidents and the families of those who died had benefited from the accident insurance.

He revealed that the First Gentleman personally provided the money out of his own pocket if the beneficiaries failed to receive the benefit within three days of the accident.

Aside from accident insurance, the group's members have been extended free medical, financial and burial aid and referral to government agencies, Revilla said.

The PILTOP chairman said they would always treasure the moments they occasionally shared with the First Gentleman, like eating "balut" together during informal fellowship-dialogues in the wee hours of the night in Manila.

In a letter to the President, the group expressed its support for her candidacy in the coming May 10 elections.

"Naniniwala kami na tanging si Presidente Arroyo lamang ang makatutulong na mapaunlad ang bansa(We firmly believe that it is only President Arroyo among other presidential candidates who can lead the country to progress)," Revilla said.

The group's members, as well as their families and relatives, would vote and campaign for the President to ensure her victory and that of her ticket, Revilla assured.

Among the PILTOP officers who signed the letter were Gumercindo Paduga, 1st vice chairman; Gerardo Getopa, 2nd vice chairman; Joseph Tupil, assistant secretary-general; Gerardo Cruz, national treasurer; Rudy Salvador, national auditor; and the 19 members of the board of directors.

In appreciation of her vital role in supporting and promoting their welfare, PILTOP also gave the President a certificate of recognition.

Elizabeth Oviado, wife of Baltazar, a Saigon taxi driver who suffered a heart attack and died in Manila October of last year, took Sunday's occasion to thank the President and Mr. Arroyo for the accident insurance benefit. She said their family received the P10,000 immediately after her husband died.

Members of PILTOP also thanked the First Couple for giving them the opportunity to enter and see Malacañang.

Still in awe over this rare chance, Alfredo Roca, 58, of Ken Taxi, said he could hardly believe that after more than 25 years of being a taxi driver he, together with other drivers, was able to enter the Palace.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," he said. (PNA)

Palace: A big chunk of Filipino-Chinese vote to go to GMA too

The Filipino-Chinese community will not deliver a solid vote to a single candidate in the May 10 elections as claimed by the opposition camp, a Filipino-Chinese businessman said.

In a press briefing presided by Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye this afternoon at the Emperor Villa in Binondo, Manila, Chinese General Hospital (CGH) president Dr. James Dy said that despite claims to the contrary, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has a strong following in the Chinese community.

Dy rebuffed the reported survey that indicates Filipino-Chinese businessmen have thrown their support to opposition standard-bearer actor Fernando Poe Jr.

“I think the Filipino-Chinese community is divided. Filipino-Chinese are rooting for different candidates in the coming presidential polls, some go to Ping Lacson, others are supporting FPJ but there is strong support for President Arroyo. There is no such thing as solid support to one candidate,” the businessman said.

Secretary Bunye supported the statement made by Dy, saying the government is hearing a different tune in the survey conducted by a group of Filipino-Chinese businessmen.

Bunye stressed that the best proof of the wide support of the Chinese community to President Macapagal-Arroyo in the next elections would be reflected by the result on the May 10 polls.

“I hear otherwise and I think the best proof of this will be in the election itself,” Bunye said.

A number of influential leaders of the Filipino-Chinese community, among them Teresita Ang See of the Citizens Action Against Crime (CAAC), had expressed support for the President after her government had shown a no-nonsense anti-kidnapping campaign.

Palace says GMA will be a healing president

Malacañang today indicated that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would be a healing leader if given a new mandate in the May 10 elections.

“In the six-year term, she would ensure that this would be a government united or a people united,” Presidential Chief of Staff Rigoberto Tiglao said in a press briefing this afternoon in Malacañang.

Tiglao admitted that it is still too early to talk about the details, but added that the President “would strive to unite all the political forces in her next administration.”

Addressing the Philippine Bar Association Friday evening at the Manila Peninsula Hotel in Makati City, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said she intends to put up a government of national unity consisting of the “best and brightest” minds available, regardless of political affiliation.

To attain her objective, the Chief Executive said she would initiate unification and reconciliation talks with all opposition leaders immediately after the elections.

“I also intend to share political powers as broadly as possible,” the President said. “I would invite the political opposition, even my enemies, to forget politics and send their most excellent representative to our government.”

Tiglao expressed confidence that unlike in the past, the President would succeed in her next attempt at national unification because the forthcoming polls would give her a solid mandate.

He stressed that President Macapagal-Arroyo has smarted from her previous attempt at unification immediately after the May 1, 2001 siege of Malacañang by Estrada loyalists.

“*Alam na niya kung papaano gawin ito* (She already knows how to do this),” Tiglao pointed out.

Source: Office of the Press Secretary

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 19, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026142534/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr19.htm>

The President's Day: April 20, 2004

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- **GMA favors salary hike for all workers and revamp of gov't machinery**
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- **GMA leads groundbreaking of P821-M Marikina-Infanta road system**
- **Erap can expect a fair trial if she is elected, says GMA**
- **GMA promises coco mill, ferry service to people of northeastern Quezon**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye Re CalPERS Investments in RP**
- **Gov't to expand 'Botika sa Barangay' program**
- **GMA says peace and progress are her priorities in Mindanao**
- **GMA distributes lot titles to 100 squatter families in San Pedro, Laguna**
- **GMA ignores unification bid between Ping, Poe**

Malacañang working on 'two fronts' to hike workers' income

As the observance of Labor Day on May 1 approaches, Malacañang "is working on two fronts" to help workers increase their income, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said today.

Bunye said, in an interview with *Radyo ng Bayan* this morning, that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration is looking "for wiser means to increase their non-wage benefits" and for possible adjustment of the salary scales through the Regional Wage Boards (RWBs).

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo acknowledged Monday the clamor of workers for better pay to sustain their daily family needs. She expressed confidence in the "capacity of the tripartite wage boards to perform their tasks fairly and in a timely manner."

As for the non-wage benefits, Bunye said that the administration could consider ways to grant them to workers.

"Ito ang mas acceptable sa lahat ng sektor hindi lamang doon sa ating mga manggagawa kundi pati sa ating mga employers (Granting non-wage benefits is acceptable to both workers and employers)," he said.

Bunye said that Malacañang would ask Secretary Patricia Santo Tomas of the Department of Labor and Employment for specific plans on the package of non-wage benefits to be given the workers.

The administration, he said, has so far given discounted diesel fuel to drivers of public utility vehicles in Metro Manila and the nearby provinces, and discounted palay seedlings to farmers.

He said that the health insurance being provided poor families under the PhilHealth program and the scholarship to be given each member of the qualified family could also be considered as non-wage benefit.

Hold me accountable for my pledges, GMA tells Filipino people

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today asked the Filipino people to hold her accountable for the six-point agenda that she promised to accomplish after the May 10 elections even as she challenged the other candidates to bare their programs of government if elected.

In an interview with prominent broadcaster Joe Taruc this morning, the President said that next month's election is not about personalities but about issues. "*Ang pagpapatakbo ng kampanya ay sa isyu hindi sa personalidad* (The campaign should revolve around issues not personalities)," the President said.

According to the President, the election is about how to resolve the problems confronting the country and the people, and since she has clearly bared the six basic goals that she envisioned if elected, she should be answerable to the people if these pledges would not be realized.

"*Nanawagan ako sa inyong lahat* (I call on all of you) to hold me accountable for my pledges," the President said in her parting statement during the interview.

The President enumerated the six objectives as 1) create 1 million jobs a year; 2) provide electricity to 1,500 barangays per year and to lower the cost of electricity nationwide; 3) build 3,000 new schools a year, provide one computer for each school, and grant college scholarship for one member of a poor family; 4) triplicate the funds for small and medium enterprises; 5) provide clean and potable water to all the 45,000 barangays; and 6) expand the program of selling medicines at half the ordinary price.

Apparently buoyed by the results of latest opinion polls showing her pulling away from her rivals, the President said that her new administration would be a government of national unity and healing.

"*Dapat magsama-sama tayo bilang isang bansa at sirain natin itong psyche of cynicism at pulitika* (We should work together as a single nation and put a stop to the psyche of cynicism and politics)," the President said, but added that this is not going to be easy.

She said that in order to achieve this goal, the gap between the rich and the poor should be narrowed and everybody should understand that the key to accomplish this objective is by being united. "*Tayo ay lulubog o lalangoy nang sabay-sabay* (We either swim or sink together)," the President said.

The President also said that she wished the opposition could unite and present a single presidential candidate so that, according to her, the two sides could provide the electorate with an intelligent choice: one whose campaign is based on a clear vision and platform of government, while the other based on negativism, mudslinging and threats.

GMA favors salary hike for all workers and revamp of gov't machinery

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that she favors not only salary increases for state and private sector workers but also a reengineering of the government machinery to provide efficient service to the people.

In an interview with broadcast journalist Joe Taruc of *DZRH* this morning, the President outlined her reorganization plan that would include removal of "redundant employees" by providing them with an "attractive early retirement package."

She said that these employees would be offered early retirement gratuity equivalent to one and a half month pay for every year of service so they could raise enough seed money for their own livelihood projects.

According to the President, the gratuity would be sourced from a fund to be obtained from the World Bank. Thus, the expenditure for retiring state personnel would not be part of the government's budget deficit.

"*Ngayon, makaka-save tayo taun-taon sa payroll, at iyong savings magagamit natin para itaas ang suweldo ng mga nalalabing manggagawa* (Now, we will be able to save from the payroll to be used for salary increases of the employees who would be retained in the service)," she said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said that although the military and police salary scales have just been aligned with that of the teachers, the soldiers and policemen would be included in the projected salary adjustments. "*Kung anuman*

ang makuha na suweldo ng mga teachers, ganoon din iyong sundalo at saka iyong pulis (Whatever salary increase the teachers would receive, it is also what the soldiers and policemen would get),” she said.

The President, who has acknowledged the clamor of workers for better pay, said that petitions by labor unions for salary increases are reviewed — and, if found justifiable, approved — by the regional wage boards.

“Ang gusto kong minimum wage ay hindi region by region kundi industry by industry (What I want is a minimum wage based not on the principle of region by region but on industry by industry),” she said.

The President explained that some industries, like call centers, can afford to pay higher wages, while others are dying, like the garment industry.

CalPERS keeps its investments in RP, GMA announces

The Philippines is back on the radar screen of investors.

In a move that could shore up market confidence in the country, America’s largest pension fund, CalPERS (California Public Employees Retirement System), has decided to keep its investments in the Philippines, rating the country highly in recognition of the economic reforms being undertaken by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The President, in a radio interview this morning, broke the good news after receiving word from the CalPERS board that it is retaining its \$80 million investments in pension funds.

“Binigyan nila ang Pilipinas ng pinakamataas na rating at kino-konsider nila ang Pilipinas na isa sa mga very attractive investments dahil naniniwala sila sa ating reporma (They gave the Philippines a high rating and consider the country one of the most attractive investments because of the reforms that we are initiating),” the President said.

The CalPERS panel gave the Philippines on Monday a score of 2.12 for the assessment period, higher than the minimum 2.0 which an assessed country must score to qualify in CalPERS list.

The CalPERS investment committee unanimously voted to retain the Philippines in its list of “permissible emerging markets” after giving the government a two-month grace period within which to sharpen merits of the country’s case.

Philippine Ambassador to Washington Albert del Rosario said the decision reaffirms CalPERS’ confidence on the Philippines as a viable location for foreign investments.

“It is also a recognition of the economic reforms being undertaken by the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo,” del Rosario said.

Many foreign investors in Manila had been awaiting the CalPERS decision as a signal on viability of the Philippines as an investment destination.

According to del Rosario, some 600 members of the Filipino-American community who had turned up to hear the proceedings greeted the decision with a roaring standing ovation.

“A delisting would have been a setback for the Philippines,” said Del Rosario, who had been coordinating with Manila to press the country’s case with CalPERS.

Voluminous evidence of Philippine reforms was provided by the Philippine government to back its case, he said.

GMA leads groundbreaking of P821-M Marikina-Infanta road system

GEN. NAKAR, Quezon – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today presided over the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the P821.40 million Marikina-Infanta Road System that would connect the provinces of Quezon and Rizal to Metro Manila.

The President lowered the capsule containing a copy of the plan for the 109.30-kilometer infrastructure project.

She was assisted by *Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4)* vice presidential bet Senator Noli “Kabayan” de Castro, Gen. Nakar Mayor Leovigildo Ruzol, Infanta Mayor Filipina Grace America, Quezon 1st District Representative Rafael Nantes, Bishop Julio Labayen, and DPWH Region 4-A Director Bonifacio Seguit.

The Chief Executive said that the M*

* Incomplete as per original archived source.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: April 20, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028184220/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr20.htm>

The President's Day: April 21, 2004

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- **The Good News: January-March foreign investments soar to P118B from P6B**
- **Statement of the President: Re CalPERS**
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- **Statement of the President: Re NPA abductions**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Anti-jueteng drive**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Street crimes**
- **Foreign investor confidence buoyed up by economic reforms, prospect of continuity**
- **RP workers had the highest pay hike in Asia over the past three years**
- **Palace restates hands-off policy in SMC board election**
- **Palace confident majority of K-4 senate bets to win in the May 10 polls**
- **GMA launching Coco Diesel program**

The Good News: January-March foreign investments soar to P118B from P6B

Foreign investments accounted for the lion's share of the P130 billion combined figures of the Board of Investments (BOI) and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) for the first three months of the year.

Foreign capital inflow was a hefty P118 billion, a 1,827 percent increase from the previous year's P6.123 billion.

The combined P130 billion BOI and PEZA figures also represented a 1,072 percent growth from the measly P11.09 billion recorded in the same period last year.

Local investments grew by nearly 140 percent from P5 billion in 2003 to P12 billion this year.

The BOI said electricity, gas and water supply sectors accounted for P107 billion of the total.

The manufacturing sector got P19.5 billion or a 371 percent increase from the P4.1 billion last year.

Information technology rose by 45 percent to P2.88 billion in the first quarter from P1.98 billion a year ago.

Bataan received the single biggest investment with the construction of GNPowder's liquefied natural gas combined cycle power plant.

Export earnings from the Subic Freeport reached \$211 million or 17 percent better than the P180 million recorded in 2003.

Better computer and other electronic products accounted for the improved performance of the export sector, according to the One-Stop Export Documentation Center-Subic (OSED) of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA).

Leading the pack was computer manufacturer Wistron Infocomm with \$125 million worth of shipments.

Sanyo Deki, an electric machinery and appliances manufacturer ranked second with \$13.4 million worth of exports followed by automated teller machine (ATM) parts manufacturer Omron Corp. with \$10.7 million.

Juken Sangyo Philippines, a Japanese wood processing firm, registered earnings of \$6.7 million to rank fourth.

Statement of the President: Re CalPERS

The basis for such decisions as CalPERS' is confidence, confidence in the solidity of economic reforms despite transitory constraints, confidence in law and order despite isolated pockets of lawlessness and most of all, confidence in the prospect of continuity and permanence in good governance.

We are thankful for this development, which is a vote of confidence in the will and capacity of the average Filipino to fight for change and rise above challenges.

Statement of the President: Re Abu Sayyaf

The Abu Sayyaf is a spent force and it can no longer resuscitate itself under other guises or names.

Its remaining leaders and members are constantly on the run.

Ordinary people have pointed to their lairs and movements to the authorities.

The terrorist group has lost whatever mass support it once enjoyed, leaving it open to government surveillance and operations.

We will crush this group of bandits and terrorists in due time.

The countdown has already begun.

Statement of the President: Re NPA abductions

These abductions of local candidates by the NPA are condemnable.

They are acts of terrorism that shall be dealt with accordingly.

I am directing the AFP to back up the PNP in securing local candidates under threat and to see to it that this travesty of democracy does not go unpunished.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Anti-jueteng drive

The government has conducted a massive anti-jueteng drive nationwide.

The President need not sign a pact against "jueteng" because the intensified campaign against illegal gambling speaks volumes of her stand against the illegal gambling issue.

What is proven in action need not be belabored in words.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Street crimes

We are not discounting the validity of the survey but we are doing something about the situation.

Poverty is the main cause of these crimes and we are not only fighting poverty but bearing down hard on street crimes through various police and barangay programs such as foot patrols and training of tanods.

Foreign investor confidence buoyed up by economic reforms, prospect of continuity

Foreign investor confidence in the Philippines has taken an upswing, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today, citing the unanimous decision of CALPERS (California Public Employees Retirement System) Investment Committee to retain the Philippines in its list of “permissible emerging markets.”

“The basis for such decisions as CALPERS’ is confidence, confidence in the solidity of economic reforms despite transitory constraints, confidence in law and order despite isolated pockets of lawlessness and most of all, confidence in the prospect of continuity and permanence in good governance,” the President said in an official statement.

The President welcomed the development as “a vote of confidence in the will and capacity of the average Filipino to fight for change and rise above challenges.”

Philippine Ambassador to the United States Albert del Rosario relayed the good news to Malacañang.

“We view this development as an endorsement of the economic reforms initiated by the President and a positive statement that the Philippines remains an important investment destination,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said yesterday after receiving the news.

“The decision of CALPERS reinforced the important relationship which CALPERS and the Philippines are building. It is a recognition of the economic reforms being undertaken by the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and reflect the continuing confidence in the Philippines as an attractive investment destination,” del Rosario told the CALPERS Board who asked him to comment on their announcement.

Only 17 out of 27 countries evaluated by the Investment Committee were listed as eligible for investment, Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong said, stressing the Philippines passed the benchmark of two points with a rating of 2.12 from 1.87 in February.

In Asia, only the Philippines, India, Malaysia, South Korea and Taiwan have so far qualified.

Even before CALPERS’ decision came out, foreign investor confidence in the Philippines had already soared as reflected by a big upsurge in investments from January to March this year.

Foreign capital inflow accounted for the bulk of the P130 billion in total investments for the period, according to figures from the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority.

Foreign investments totaled P118 billion compared to only P6.123 billion for the same period last year.

RP workers had the highest pay hike in Asia over the past three years

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said that the Philippines registered the highest salary increase in the whole of Asia at 29 percent over the past three years.

In an interview Tuesday night with television host Korina Sanchez of ABS-CBN Channel 2, the President also said that in 2002, the various regional tripartite wage boards have granted increases in the minimum wage.

The President said that although she favors a wage increase, the issue should better be left to the discretion of the regional tripartite wage boards.

In the same interview, the President noted the emergence of new job opportunities offering high salary rates, citing as examples the call centers, the car manufacturing industry, and the shipbuilding industry.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also cited the airlines' service centers and other high-tech industries as potential providers of high-paying jobs.

For his part, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the President prefers that wage increases should be based on industry standards instead of by regions.

"Industry standards are different so we cannot compare," Bunye said in a radio interview this morning.

The President has earlier noted that some profitable industries like call centers can afford to pay higher salaries, unlike the moribund garment industry.

The President has also said she favors not only salary increases for state and private sector workers, but also a retooling of the government machinery to enhance efficient service to the people.

This could be done, she said, by granting a higher gratuity of one and a half months for every year of service to state employees who would want to avail of the an early retirement scheme so that they can use the money to invest in a profitable business or livelihood project.

She said that although the salaries of soldiers and policemen have been adjusted to the level of the teachers, those in the uniformed service would still be included in the projected salary hikes.

Palace restates hands-off policy in SMC board election

Malacañang today called on the public not to give any political color to the result of the recent annual stockholders meeting of giant conglomerate San Miguel Corporation where businessman Eduardo 'Danding' Cojuangco retained the chairmanship of the board.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye, in a press briefing this afternoon, reiterated President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's hands off policy in the SMC board election.

"I think its best that we leave politics out of the situation," Bunye said. "We know that PCGG is out to protect the interest of the government. They did what they believe is necessary but after the election, the outcome is accepted."

Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) Chairperson Haydee Yorac had also earlier asked the public to respect the outcome of the SMC board election.

Bunye said the government is acknowledging the works done by the present SMC leadership as reflected in their records of expansion, growth and profitability.

"The general guideline is to make sure that the conglomerate continues on its course of being profitable, of seeking opportunities for expansion which would eventually be beneficial not only to the stockholders but also to our economy," explained Bunye.

Palace confident majority of K-4 senate bets to win in the May 10 polls

Malacañang expressed confidence today that majority of the senatorial slate of the administration's Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4) would win in the May 10 national elections.

In a press briefing this afternoon, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye allayed fears raised by administration Senator Joker Arroyo that the government could lose its grip on the Senate after next month's polls.

“I think it’s a question of perception but the reality is that the support that can be given to all the candidates is being given,” he said, reacting to alleged complaints of some K-4 senatorial bets that they are not being given full support by Malacañang.

Bunye stressed that the administration is giving all the necessary help and attention to the 12 senatorial candidates.

He added that for a wider coverage in the country, the K-4 bets all agreed, even before the start of campaign season, that they could not all be together in one rally all the time.

This was made clear to everybody, he said, to have a better chance of spreading the K-4 platform in a wider scale in the country.

Bunye said he respects the prerogative of K-4 senatorial bet Miriam Defensor-Santiago in raising a question with the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) on alleged violations by fellow senatorial candidates on the time limits set on airing of political ads.

“I believe she is well within her prerogative to raise questions but we’re also saying that we have monitored the COMELEC chairman himself who said that that based on COMELEC resolution, the time allotment has not been fully used by any particular candidate at this point,” he added.

He also denied any crack on the ruling administration ticket and stresses that the “Gloria-Kabayan” tandem, along with the 12 senatorial candidates, remain solid and united now that they are on the homestretch of the campaign period.

GMA launching Coco Diesel program

SAN PABLO CITY—The government today shifted to high gear its coco diesel development program in a bid to reduce the country’s dependence on imported fuel and create a new market for coconut farmers.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo formally launched here the Coco Bio-Diesel Program which forms part of her administration’s economic and social reform agenda designed to promote the use of environment-friendly alternative fuel and improve the coconut farmers’ standard of living.

Addressing some 5,000 coconut industry stakeholders gathered at the Doña Leonila Park here, the President revealed that positive results of various technical tests conducted by the Department of Energy indicated that the use of coconut methyl ester (CME), also known as coco diesel, is most effective in abating atmospheric pollution.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said coco diesel can be used on vehicles without engine modification. She said a switch to CME could also help bring down the cost of energy in the country.

The President expressed gratitude to RI Chemicals, Senbel Fine Chemicals and Chemrez for heeding her call to develop the coco bio-diesel technology.

Experts said coco bio-diesel is a mixture of diesel fuel and CME “at a certain proportion volume.”

In most countries like the United States, bio-diesel is a mixture of diesel fuel and ester derived from corn, soya, rapeseed or palm utilizing five percent to 20 percent blend.

It has a density, kinematic viscosity and other properties similar to diesel fuel.

CME can be used as an alternative or substitute to petroleum diesel, or as an enhancer and additive.

Meneleo Carlos, president of RI Chemical which produces CME, said they have been using coco diesel in their vehicles and noted a dramatic reduction of smoke emission by at least 70 percent.

Former singer Claire de la Fuente, president of the Integrated Metropolitan Bus Operators Association (IMBOA), agreed with Carlos' observation that coco diesel brought down emission of their buses by 50 percent.

De la Fuente said IMBOA was the first mass transport group in Metro Manila to use coco diesel.

Energy Secretary Vince Perez, Press Secretary Milton Alingod, Philippine Coconut Authority Administrator Danny Coronacion, and Energy Undersecretary Edgardo Mañalac accompanied the President in her visit to this city.

Among the local officials present during the launching were Laguna Governor Teresita Lazaro, San Pablo City Mayor Florante Aquino, and Nenette Alcantara, president of the Pederasyon ng Magsasaka at Magniniyog ng Lungsod ng San Pablo.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 21, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071025213149/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr21.htm>

The President's Day: April 22, 2004

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- **Statement of the President Re Iraq Situation**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye Re Peace Talks**
- **GMA asks OFWs in Middle East to be cautious in wake of bombings in Baghdad, Riyadh**
- **Business, labor groups express full support for GMA policies, virtually endorse her candidacy**
- **CBCP urges people to vote for candidate with leadership experience**
- **GMA asks business, labor leaders to lead the people in making "right choice" in May 10 polls**
- **Palace unfazed by planned May 1 rally**
- **GMA orders scrapping of shoe inspection at NAIA**
- **GMA invades Marcos country**
- **GMA making inroads in the so-called Solid North as Ablan, other leaders express support**

Statement of the President Re Iraq Situation

I call on all Filipinos abroad who are vulnerable to terrorist attack to be on the alert and take precautionary measures under the guidelines of, and in cooperation with, their host governments.

We condemn the latest bombing attacks in Iraq and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and express our sympathy to the families of the victims.

These attacks only strengthen our commitment and resolve to the global fight against terrorism.

I acknowledge the concerns of our people with regard to the safety of our nationals in Iraq.

We shall do our best to ensure their safety and well-being while at the same time, stand fast in our international commitments.

Our peacekeepers have been redeployed to safer ground and our Iraq team is taking stock of all options.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye Re Peace Talks

The deferment of the GRP-NDF peace talks is because of the election period.

We assure the public that the peace negotiation with the NDF is a top priority that will soon push forward.

GMA asks OFWs in Middle East to be cautious in wake of bombings in Baghdad, Riyadh

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Wednesday called on Filipinos abroad, particularly those in the Middle East where terrorists sow death and destruction, to exercise utmost care in the wake of deadly, coordinated terrorist attacks in Iraq and Saudi Arabia that killed and wounded scores of people.

"I call on all Filipinos abroad who are vulnerable to terrorist attacks to be on the alert and take precautionary measures under the guidelines of, and in cooperation with, their host governments," the President said in a statement.

The President acknowledged "the concerns of our people with regard to the safety of our nationals in Iraq" and vowed to "do our best to ensure their safety and well-being while at the same time, stand fast in our international commitments."

The attacks only strengthen our commitment and resolve to the global fight against terrorism, the President said as she condemned the latest bombings in Baghdad and Riyadh.

On April 15, the President ordered the Department of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador Roy Cimatu of the Middle East Preparedness Team to set up an Iraq Team to ensure the safety and possible relocation or evacuation of Filipinos working there.

The Iraq Team is tasked to identify and locate all Filipino nationals and establish working relationships with appropriate peace and order authorities in the country.

The President gave the assurance that there is sufficient transportation and communication equipment and other logistics already on the ground with additional resources to be provided as may be necessary.

The President then called on Filipinos in Iraq to register themselves with the Philippine mission in Baghdad even if they went there on their own without going through the proper procedures.

Business, labor groups express full support for GMA policies, virtually endorse her candidacy

The country's top business and labor leaders today virtually endorsed the candidacy of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 elections as they expressed their full support for her policies, particularly in building a strong Republic and in creating an environment that is friendly to domestic and foreign investments.

During the 25th National Conference of Employers held this morning at the Westin Philippine Plaza in Pasay City, Miguel Varela, chairman of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), presented to the President a social covenant for full employment declaring their commitment to job creation, economic recovery and industrial harmony.

In what was seen as an outpouring of support for her presidency, the declaration embodies six objectives in the spirit of genuine social partnership.

In his brief remarks, Varela told the President that what he was presenting to her was just a draft of the covenant, adding that the final copy would be presented to her in Malacañang "after the elections because we have the gut feeling that you will continue to stay in office" after next month's election.

Also in his speech, ECOP president Rene Soriano said that the business community and the labor force are committed to support the President "in building a strong Republic by strengthening the competitiveness of the local industry and by forging the necessary business partnership with other sectors of society."

In making the covenant, the leaders of business and labor organizations committed themselves to respect, support, and help build the public and private institutions, including workers groups necessary to bring about their goals and objectives.

They expressed recognition of the opportunities for business and workers in the global economy, noting that they are the key in achieving the goals of sustained economic growth, full and decent employment and eradication of poverty.

They also shared the objective of strengthening the policy environment for investments, employment preservation and employment creation. Towards this end, they committed themselves to make mutual efforts to improve the business environment, sustain business viability, uplift conditions of work, and promote harmonious labor-management relations.

The six objectives of the covenant are:

1. to help create a policy environment that is friendly to domestic and foreign investments;
2. to continuously build the economy by reducing the costs of doing business, particularly by reducing red tape and intensifying anti-corruption campaigns, maintaining peace and order, improving revenue collection, and guaranteeing greater transparency in the enforcement of government policies affecting business;
3. to support the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and their workers including rural industries and village enterprises and livelihood programs through appropriate access to credit, technology and training, in the process strengthening forward-backward and formal-informal sector linkages and linking SMEs to markets;
4. to support efforts at expanding access to productive resources such as capital, technology and entrepreneurial skills to informal sector workers, women, out-of-school youth and other marginalized sectors of society;
5. to share responsibility in promoting industrial peace and enhancing constructive and harmonious relations between workers and employers, consistent with democratic principles; and
6. to seek the support of the National Tripartite Advisory Council and the Tripartite Industrial Peace Council within 60 days from the signing of the covenant in designing the action agenda and monitoring mechanism to implement the agreements therein.

Signing the covenant for the workers were Avelino Valerio of the Kilusan Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), Victorino Balais of the Philippine Transport and General Workers Organization-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (PTGWO-TUCP), Dominador Tuvera of the TUCP, Ramon Bajar of the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) and Vladimir Tupaz of the Trade Unions of the Philippines and Allied Services (TUPAS).

Signing for the employers were Rene Soriano of the ECOP, Donald Dee of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), Sergio Ortiz Luis Jr. of the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc., Miguel Varela of Philippines, Inc., Francis Chua of the Chamber of Commerce Foundation of the Philippines, Robin Sy of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Meneleo Carlos Jr. of the Federation of Philippine Industries, Inc., Feliciano Torres of the Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturers Association of the Philippines, Vishnu Hathiramani of the Filipino-Indian Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, Manolito Madrasto of the Philippine Constructors Association, Inc., George Sy of the Confederation of Garment Exporters of the Philippines, Grace Abella-Zata of the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines and Ernesto Santiago of the Semi-Conductor Electronics Industry in the Philippines.

The document was attested to by Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas and Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima.

CBCP urges people to vote for candidate with leadership experience

The Catholic Church today urged the electorate to vote for candidates who meet three basic criteria, the first of which is competence in terms of leadership experience, professional qualifications and a track record of governance.

A pastoral letter, issued by the influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), also enjoined the voters to choose candidates “of conscience, i.e., with personal integrity, transparency, accountability and respect for human rights.”

The pastoral letter, signed by CBCP president Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla, said the people should entrust their ballots to the candidate who is a person with “commitment to a vision and program of action on key issues such as family and life, environment, illegal drugs and gambling, justice, peace and order, poverty alleviation, education, etc.”

The CBCP said it is the right and duty of the voters to discern and select the candidates based on these three criteria.

“Beyond elections, there is the greater challenge for all citizens to continue monitoring winning candidates in order to ensure transparency, accountability and people empowerment for good governance,” the CBCP stressed.

“We have been praying for clean elections; we continue to pray and work for reconciliation and the solidarity that is essential to nation-building,” it added.

The CBCP underscored that elections are crucial in the continuing task of nation-building. “They are a timely opportunity to transform society by electing wise, capable and upright leaders.”

The CBCP also called on the people to be vigilant and work together to ensure the conduct of honest, orderly and peaceful elections.

GMA asks business, labor leaders to lead the people in making “right choice” in May 10 polls

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today urged business and labor leaders to lead the Filipino people in making the right and the responsible choice in the May 10 elections to consolidate the gains that her administration has achieved during the past three years.

“The crucial choice we face today is a choice between moving forward to stability and prosperity, or making a U-turn to the crony capitalism and the midnight kitchenomics of the past,” the President told the 25th National Conference of Employers at the Westin Philippine Plaza in Pasay City this morning.

The President was referring to opposition candidate Fernando Poe, Jr., a close friend of former President Joseph Estrada, who was known to indulge in midnight drinking bouts in Malacañang together with his cronies.

She said the question now is whether to simply throw the gains that the government has achieved “by gambling on an inexperienced and untested leadership in the May elections.”

“I trust that you will lead our people in making the right and responsible choice, and I thank you all for your support,” the President said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also said that minimum wages increased by 11.2 percent above inflation, while foreign investments surged by 26 percent in the “strong start” of her short presidency.

She traced to the improvement of the economy to employers’ “commitment to a social partnership,” which, in turn, helped foster a prolonged industrial peace.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said that the average mining and non-agricultural wages went up by 29.2 percent to P271 per day under her watch compared with only P210 daily under the administration of former President Joseph Estrada. The average daily agricultural wages went up by 19.6 percent to P238 from P199.

“If we talk about average wages, it would be even more because the new jobs created by the new investments under my administration have been the higher paying jobs,” she added.

As a result of the social partnership between government and the private sector, the President said, “we have made a strong start in a short time.”

“Working together we stabilized the mess we inherited. Together in our social partnership, we have low inflation and high growth. We have huge new foreign investments. Foreign investments have surged by 26 percent,” she said.

She said that the number of strikes under her administration has been cut by half, or the lowest in two decades.

With an unprecedented expenditure of P20 billion a year on agricultural modernization, the Chief Executive said her administration expanded the farms covered by irrigation, introduced hybrid crops and improved transport system.

“Our agriculture has grown by leaps and bounds,” she said, adding that farm incomes have improved dramatically. “Copra was P2.50 per kilo when I inherited the presidency, now it is P22.50 per kilo,” she said.

“As a result, too, we will be self-sufficient again in rice within two years,” the President said.

She then pledged that, if elected in the May 10 polls, she would carry out a six-point pro-poor agenda that, hopefully, would end poverty and unite the nation.

Her pro-poor program consists of six pledges to be fulfilled during her new term of office. First is to create a million new jobs each year.

To protect jobs, she said that tariffs of some 1,000 items would be adjusted upwards to give local manufacturers a fighting chance against imports.

Last September, she recalled that the Philippines was among the 21 developing countries that said “No” to a new World Trade Organization agreement until the developed countries reform their system of subsidies for agriculture.

Second is to bring clean water to all 45,00 barangays. Third is to energize 1,500 barangays a year.

“I am prepared to consider industry-government cooperation in addressing some concerns about the power sector and the water issue. There will never be a power crisis nor a water crisis under the Gloria administration,” she said.*

* Incomplete as per original archived source.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: April 22, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028184939/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr22.htm>

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Statement of the President: Re Poll trend

The nation is strongly unifying in the fight for change for the average Filipino.

The poll trend shows the people moving behind a single voice and a single vision of stability and prosperity—winning over stagnation and poverty, over the dark past.

We shall deliver on the rising expectations and hopes of the people—by bringing more jobs, more college scholarships, clean water and health needs.

We shall wield their mandate to shore up confidence in our economy and our political stability.

We will have the clean and credible elections befitting our best democratic traditions.

This election is about the people and the victory shall be theirs.

Statement of the President: Re May 1 celebration

We shall celebrate May 1 in solidarity with Philippine Labor, in an event that signifies the dignity of the Filipino worker.

I appeal to our people to mark this day in its proper spirit, and not use it for cheap politicking and character assassination.

Labor Day is a day of hope and not desperation, it should be a celebration of the excellence of our workers and not the noise of partisan attacks.

Statement of the President: Re Filipinos in Iraq

The deployment of all Filipino workers in Iraq is now being accounted for by our Iraq team.

They shall be identified, organized and briefed on pertinent contingency measures.

Once more, I appeal to all Filipinos, regardless of their documentation, to touch base and cooperate with the Iraq team.

We are determined to ensure their safety and to keep them out of harm's way in the events of any crisis or emergency.

Statement of the President: Re PAGCOR

I direct PAGCOR to deal with this issue with full transparency.

Records must be made available for public scrutiny and officials must be ready to answer questions before the proper fora.

I welcome the help of Archbishop Cruz in any inquiry into these matters and his concern over the proper use of public funds.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re IMF economic forecast

The IMF economic forecast is not as alarming compared to the threat of leaving the country's fate to inexperienced and incompetent leaders.

It is actually an upgrade of a previous outlook and things will look brighter after the President gets a solid mandate in the polls.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Terror threats

Effective security measures are in place and we assure the public that we are ready to face and thwart terrorist attacks in the country, particularly in Metro Manila and other key urban areas.

The intelligence community is monitoring all threats and is not discounting any reports from allies.

GMA: Poll trend shows Filipinos unifying behind a vision of stability and prosperity

Buoyed by the latest survey giving her a significant 4.5 percent lead over opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. in the May 10 elections, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said today that "the nation is strongly unifying in the fight for change for the average Filipino."

In a statement released by Malacañang this morning, the President said, "the poll trend shows the people moving behind a single voice and a single vision of stability and prosperity – winning over stagnation and poverty, over the dark past."

According to the survey, conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) on April 10-17, 35.3 percent of 1,400 respondents, who were "likely voters" chosen nationwide, picked President Macapagal-Arroyo, leaving behind all her rivals in the presidential derby.

The respondents' other choices were Poe of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP), 30.5 percent; Panfilo Lacson of Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP), 10.6 percent; Raul Roco of Alyansa ng Pag-Asa, 8.4 percent; Eddie Villanueva of Bangon Pilipino, 4.0 percent; and Eddie Gil, Independent .05 percent.

The President's lead of 4.5 percent over her closest rival, Poe of KNP, in latest SWS survey, commissioned by Manila Standard, ABS-CBN and Polistrat International, is the biggest she has so far scored since the start of the election campaign last February 10. The survey had a 3 percent margin of error.

The favorable SWS survey result came out ahead of the endorsement of Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo's bid for a full six-year term in the May 10 polls by business and labor leaders during the 25th National Conference of Employers at the Westin Philippine Plaza in Pasay City on Thursday.

Deputy Presidential Spokesman Ricardo Saludo noted, in a radio interview this morning, that the President's lead could still increase. She was behind the KNP bet in the January 2004 survey, but has slowly but steadily bounced back since then in opinion polls of both SWS and Pulse Asia, he said.

"At dito sa pinakahuling survey ng SWS, maliwanag na talagang sumususug ng malakas sa Pangulo ang suporta at dito hindi na malayo na magkaroon na nga nitong bandwagon na ito (It is clear in the latest SWS survey that the President is gaining strong support, and a bandwagon could soon be expected)," he added.

Saludo also stressed the importance of support pledged to President Macapagal-Arroyo by the business and labor sectors.

"Kung saan sumuporta ang negosyo, ibig sahihin kung ito ang mananalo mas magkakaroon sila ng kumpiyansa sa ekonomiya at sa bansa, at kung lumakas ang kanila kumpiyansa ay lalakas din ang kanilang investment at pagpapalawak ng negosyo at pabrika ng trabaho (When business supports a candidate, a win by that bet will inspire confidence in the economy. Strong confidence will translate to investments that will create more jobs for the people)," he said.

In her statement, President Macapagal-Arroyo said, "we shall deliver on the rising expectations and hopes of the people – by bringing more jobs, more college scholarships, clean water and health needs."

She also promised to wield the people's mandate, in the upcoming elections, "to shore up confidence in our economy and our political stability."

The President assured the people that the elections will be "clean, credible (and) befitting our best democratic traditions."

"This election is about the people and the victory shall be theirs," she said.

South Cotabato governor supports GMA

South Cotabato Gov. Daisy Fuentes, a known oppositionist, has announced in Koronadal City, that she is not only supporting President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's candidacy, but would also campaign hard for her to ensure that she wins in the May 10 presidential elections.

"And when I threw my support for Arroyo, this means I carry 100 percent of my people. I will campaign hard for her victory. This is, indeed, an exciting day and a shock for all of you, especially the press," Fuentes told the local reporters during a press conference at the Marvella Plaza in Koronadal.

Fuentes made a similar announcement in a speech at a convention of the Kasangga ni Gloria Movement in the same hotel.

"I'll do whatever I can to help President Arroyo win in South Cotabato, a known opposition bailiwick," Fuentes said.

The decision by Fuentes, who belongs to the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC), to cross party lines and help push the Macapagal-Arroyo candidacy, completes the list of Central Mindanao governors endorsing the President's quest for a fresh mandate.

The other pro-Arroyo political leaders in the region are Governors Manny Pinol of North Cotabato, Pax Mangudadatu of Sultan Kudarat, Mike Escobar of Sarangani and Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema.

The lady governor clarified that she would remain with the NPC since party chairman emeritus business tycoon Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco has not endorsed a particular presidential candidate.

Some 45 congressmen, who belong to the NPC, led by Isabela's Faustino Dy III, NPC chairman, have pledged support for the President.

GMA stresses need for teamwork in nation-building

VILLASIS, Pangasinan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo underscored here today the importance of teamwork in nation-building and ensuring a bright future for the youth.

The President also emphasized the relevance of sports particularly basketball in creating a healthy citizenry.

Addressing supporters during an exhibition basketball game here where she made the ceremonial toss, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said a vote for her K-4 (Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan para sa Kinabukasan) team would ensure a good future for the youth.

The exhibition match, held at the Villasis Gymnasium here, featured the Gloria Team versus Strong Republic Team in apparent reference to the President and her "Strong Republic" slogan.

The President indicated that Pangasinan has a special place in her heart because her late mother, Evangeline Macaraeg Macapagal, hailed from Binalonan town.

Earlier today, President Macapagal-Arroyo attended mass at Rosales town, also in Pangasinan.

After barnstorming Villasis, the President proceeded to San Quintin town where she had a Pulong Bayan or dialogue with local residents.

The President assured the local folk that their problems and concerns would be given immediate attention by the government if she will be given a new mandate in the May 10 elections.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also revisited Lingayan where she launched last Saturday the "Hunger Free Philippines" program under the auspices of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

Today's interaction with the Lingayen people involved discussions with barangay health workers on the government's PhilHealth program.

With the President during her sorties here were K-4 vice presidential candidate Noli "Kabayan" de Castro, K-4 Campaign Spokesman Michael Defensor, Press Secretary Milton Alingod and K-4 Media Bureau Chief Cerge Remonde.

Agri modernization program paying off – GMA

BATAC, Ilocos Norte –President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said here Thursday night that the fight against poverty is slowly but surely being won due to the agriculture modernization program put in place by the government.

In a speech during a farmer's festival held at the Imelda Cultural Center here, the President noted that the "food for every table" goal of her administration is slowly being realized.

"That aspiration is nearing completion," she said, pointing out that the fight against poverty is gaining victory due to the agriculture modernization program of her government.

The President stressed she is the only President who spent P20 billion yearly for agriculture modernization.

"Now we can show the advances we made in this field," she said, expressing elation at the cooperation the farmers here are doing by engaging in progressive farming activities.

In two years, she said, the country will be self-sufficient in "palay" and "we will begin exporting rice".

The President cited the nine tractors that came from the P19 million fund which are the shares of the town of Batac in the R. A. 7171 (Tobacco Excise Tax Fund) for tobacco producing provinces in the North, namely Pangasinan, La Union, Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte.

She also said that she is the only President who paid in full what the government owed to the different tobacco producing provinces as provided for under R. A. 7171.

The President also said that the creation of one million job a year is one of the pro-poor agenda of her administration that will be implemented in the next six years with the help of the residents of Batac.

She enumerated the other pledges of her pro-poor agenda, namely:

- triple the loans extended to the small businessmen;
- provide clean water to all barangays of the country;
- provide electricity to 1,500 barangays every year;
- build 3,000 new classrooms, and provide one computer to each school and one scholarship for college education of one in every poor barangay; and
- reduce in half the price of medicines being bought by ordinary Filipinos.

During the birthday celebration of Cong. Roque Ablan in Fort Ilocandia, the President announced as her birthday gift the following:

- Instruction to Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin to release the 2003 R. A. 7171 funds allocated to each of the tobacco producing provinces; and
- Signing of a proclamation declaring Fort Ilocandia here in Laoag as Tourism Economic Zone.

This means that the five-star hotel casino complex here can start building additional 200 cottages, and allowing the entry of duty free equipment here.

The President was accompanied in her sorties here by vice presidential candidate Sen. Noli "Kabayan" de Castro and former Ilocos Sur Governor Chavit Singson.

NFA to buy Palay at no less than P10 per kilo even during harvest season, says GMA

SAN QUINTIN, Pangasinan – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assured rice farmers in this province today that the National Food Authority (NFA) will buy their palay harvest at no less than P10 per kilo at any time of the year.

The President, who flew here this morning, announced the NFA's guaranteed palay price at a *Pulong Bayan* she presided over with her vice presidential running mate Senator Noli "Kabayan" de Castro.

A local farmers' cooperative official, Cirilo Ferrer, requested on behalf of his group for the President to set a higher price for their palay production. He noted that the palay price usually declines during the harvest season, when there is an oversupply of the staple.

The President responded that the NFA has been procuring palay from farmers at P10.00, plus an incentive of 10 to 30 centavos, per kilo since January 2004 "If private traders are buying palay below the P10.00 per kilo price range, you should go to the NFA, which has a guaranteed price of P10.00 per kilo," she said.

She said that the NFA price was supposed not to be lower than P10.00 per kilo because her administration had raised the rice agency's procurement fund from P1 billion to P4 billion. The bigger procurement fund was precisely intended to influence the commercial price of rice, she explained.

The President noted that NFA has still P12 million for the procurement of palay from farmers in Eastern Pangasinan.

According to the President, her administration would release P1.35 million within this month for three irrigation projects in the towns of San Quintin, Umengan and Tayug, Eastern Pangasinan. Work on these projects include desiltation of the main irrigation canal and construction of shallow tube wells.

GMA posts biggest lead over FPJ in Visayas and Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo surged further ahead in the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey, with the biggest lead over closest rival Fernando Poe Jr. posted in the Visayas and Mindanao.

The SWS poll validated an independent survey conducted by equally prestigious Pulse Asia which earlier gave President Macapagal-Arroyo a "significant lead" at 34 percent against Poe's 31 percent.

The SWS pre-election survey conducted April 10 to 17, gave the President an acceptance rating of 35.3 percent against Poe's 30.8 percent.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, the first incumbent Chief Executive to seek a fresh mandate since 1986, improved by 3.9 percentage points from the 31.4 percent she got in the previous SWS survey conducted March 21 to 29.

Conversely, Poe, standard-bearer of the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP), suffered a setback of 1.2 percentage points, or from 32 percent in the March 21-29 survey to 30.8 percent in the latest SWS findings.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson overtook former Sen. Raul Roco to grab third place with 10.6 percent. Lacson, however, also suffered a slight decline of 0.6 percent compared to his previous rating of 11.2 percent.

Roco, who had to take time-out from the hustings to seek medical treatment for back pains in the United States, plunged to 8.4 percent from his previous acceptance rating of 15 percent to lose third place to Lacson.

Charismatic leader Eddie Villanueva remained a poor fifth in the overall standing with four percent, although he had an improvement of 1.2 percent over the previous SWS survey.

In the vice presidential race, the gap between front runners Sen. Noli "Kabayan" de Castro of the ruling Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan para sa Kinabukasan (K-4) and Sen. Loren Legarda of KNP slightly narrowed.

De Castro had a significant decline of 6.1 percentage points, or from 50 percent in the previous survey to only 43.9 percent in the latest survey.

President Macapagal-Arroyo was strongest in the Visayas and Mindanao which gave her 53 percent and 44 percent, respectively, against Poe's 23 percent and 37 percent, respectively.

In Metro Manila which is traditionally an opposition bailiwick, it was a statistical tie between Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo and Poe at 27 percent and 26 percent, respectively.

However, Poe had a slight advantage in Northern and Central Luzon regions which gave him 33 percent against the President's 31 percent. He was strongest in Southern Luzon with 32 percent compared to 20 percent for Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo.

On the voters' choice by social class, the President registered 35.3 percent nationwide against Poe's 30.8 percent. Class A, B, and C gave Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo an overwhelming 43 percent to Poe's 11 percent. Class D also gave her a slight edge at 34 percent to the actor's 31 percent.

Curiously, the two leading presidential candidates are tied in the Class E at 36 percent apiece, negating the claim by Poe's camp that he champions the masses.

The latest survey, the fourth in a series of five, covered 1,400 respondents using "face-to-face" interviews, with an error of margin of three percent.

GMA presents awards, incentives to barangay health workers

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan — It was the turn of the government's basic health services program to take the spotlight here today as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo attended the 4th Regional Barangay Health Workers (BHW) Congress at the Narciso Ramos Sports Complex.

The President, assisted by Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit and Pangasinan Governor Victor Agbayani, distributed P100,000 seed money to each of the four BHW federations in Region I composed of the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union and Pangasinan. Pangasinan Second District Congressman Amado Espino Jr. was also present at the BHW Congress.

Around 50,000 BHWs attended the annual gathering to witness the awarding of government incentives to their respective provincial health units for their exemplary contribution in providing basic health services in the northern part of the country.

Aside from the P100,000 seed money, host province Pangasinan was also presented with a plaque of appreciation along with a P2,500,120 check representing a P280 per head incentive for their BHWs.

The President also awarded a plaque of appreciation to La Union and a P981,680 check; P812,000 for Ilocos Sur and P1,004,360 to Ilocos Norte as their respective incentives for their active participation in bringing the health services to far-flung barangays in Region I.

She also cited seven barangays for having the Model Botika sa Barangay in the region and presented a plaque of recognition to Brgy. Abucay in Piddig, Ilocos Norte; Brgy. Aguing in Sinait; Brgy. Patong in Magsingal; and Brgy. Paing in Ilocos Sur; Brgy. San Vicente, San Fernando City, La Union; Brgy. Centro Toma in Bani; and Brgy. Camagsingalan in Sual, Pangasinan.

The Chief Executive presented to Dr. Nicolas Miguel, Chief of Bayambang District Hospital and Bayambang Mayor Leocadio de Vera, Jr., P5.4 million worth of hospital equipment.

In her visit here, the President was accompanied by her running mate Senator Noli "Kabayan" de Castro and was cheered by a huge crowd at the NRSC sports stadium.

In her speech, the President emphasized that in the three years of her presidency, she was able to distribute eight million PhilHealth cards compared to the 100,000 before she took over the reins of government in January 2001.

Palace hails Sandiganbayan ruling on PEA case

Malacañang today welcomed a decision by the Sandiganbayan junking a series of motions to dismiss graft charges lodged against some ranking officials of the Public Estate Authority (PEA) in connection with alleged overpricing in the construction of the President Diosdado Macapagal Blvd. (PDMB) at the reclamation area traversing the cities of Pasay and Parañaque.

In tossing out the petitions filed by the respondents, the anti-graft court upheld findings of the Office of the Ombudsman that there was probable cause to prosecute the respondents for “conspiring and giving unwarranted benefits” to the private contractor of the PDMB project.

Under Administrative Order No. 53, issued on Dec. 13, 2002, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has permanently barred seven PEA officials from holding public office upon recommendation of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC).

Given the penalty of perpetual disqualification from reemployment in the government service were Ernest Frederick Villareal, Benjamin Carino, Joemari Gerochi, Sulficio Tagud Jr., Martin Sanciego Jr., Rodolfo Tuazon and Angelito Villanueva.

Apart from Gerochi, Villareal, Sanciego and Villanueva, those denied of their motion to quash the charges filed by the Ombudsman were PEA officials Carlos Doble, Cristina Mortel, Ernesto Enrquez, Epifanio Pureza, Jose Capistrano, Carmelita de Leon-Chan, Elpidio Damaso, Theron Victor Lacson and the private contractor, Jesusito Legaspi.

In filing their motions to dismiss the suits, the respondents argued that the information did not conform with the prescribed form and that the charges did not constitute an offense. They also claimed that the Ombudsman did not conduct any preliminary investigation as required by law and that there was no basis for the conspiracy theory.

The Sandiganbayan upheld the Ombudsman ruling that there was sufficient evidence to prove that the accused granted unwarranted benefits to the tune of more than P532.9 million to the private contractor.

“Accordingly, the PEA officials have disregarded the procedures and requirements that were prescribed by law and regulations,” the Sandiganbayan ruling stated.

The PDMB is a 5.1-kilometer, eight-lane road from Pedro Gil to Pacific Ave., with three bridges.

Construction was undertaken by three private contractors—Shoemart Inc., R-I Consortium and JD Legaspi Construction (JDLC). Each contractor was assigned a portion of the road and a bridge to construct. Total cost of the project was placed at P1.1 billion.

However, JDLC allegedly overpriced its job at P262.1 million per kilometer, compared to SM’s P86.8 million and R-I’s P132.7 million per km.

SWS survey result shows people have continued trust in GMA — K-4

The latest survey of the Social Weather Stations (SWS) showing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo pulling way ahead of opposition presidential bets shows the continued trust and confidence of the people in the administration, secretary Gabriel Claudio, campaign manager of the Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4) said today.

“More than anything else the voters preference survey results is a clear indication of the growing maturity of the voters. They are no longer swayed by mere popularity but look into qualification and the performance of the contenders. They are also looking at the true character and personality of the candidates,” Claudio said.

Claudio was referring to the latest SWS survey which showed that 35.3% of the voters would give President Macapagal-Arroyo a mandate of her own, while only 30.8% would vote for her rival Fernando Poe Jr. This is a clear 4.5 % Arroyo lead despite a three percent survey margin of error.

The same survey showed Panfilio Lacson taking third place with 10.6 percent of the voters preference dislodging Raul Roco, who got only 8.4 percent, while four percent of the voters would vote for Bro. Eddie Villanueva.

“The survey clearly shows that the President has been steadily gaining at the polls rising from only 26.5 percent in the January survey while Poe’s popularity is on a tailspin down from 36.3 percent in that same survey to bare 30 percent,” Claudio said.

The President’s support consistently climbed by a cumulative total of about 10 percent from January, while FPJ lost as much as 6 percent.

Roco, who recently dropped out of the campaign from medical reasons, lost more than half of his base from 19.2 percent at the start to 8.4 percent today. Lacson’s loss at 0.6 percent was “marginal,” but his support in the 8 to 11 percent range is marginal, to begin with.

“There’s no gainsaying that the nation is strongly unifying and moving with one voice and vision towards stability and prosperity with determination to win over insecurity and poverty,” said the K-4 campaign manager.

Claudio further said that “this early, the President is already finalizing the blue print of her unity government designed to deliver the expectations of the people—more jobs, more college scholarships, clean water and health needs—with dispatch and dedication.”

“President Arroyo will win in a clean and credible election befitting our best democratic traditions and she is very determined to use the expected strong mandate in upholding economic and political stability,” he added.

“In anticipation of a massive loss at the polls, the opposition is raking up wild charges that this administration will cheat in the election. The figures is already showing us winning because of the long hours we put in and the hard work that went with it. Cheating will never be a substitute for diligence,” Claudio said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: April 23, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026061133/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr23.htm>

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The Good News: GMA eyes RP as world leader in geothermal energy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has predicted that the Philippines would evolve into a world leader in geothermal power generation. At present, the country is the world's second largest producer of geothermal energy.

The President said four geothermal resources are currently being developed to ultimately install the country as the "Number One geothermal power in the whole world."

In a speech at the launching of the coco bio-diesel program in San Pablo City Wednesday, the President said Laguna province was lucky to have rich deposits of geothermal and hydrothermal energy.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, who is seeking a full six-year term in the May 10 elections, said she needs a fresh mandate to "undertake the more strategic measures," among them implementation of a long-term energy development program designed to ensure efficient supply of electricity at reasonable cost for consumers.

According to the President, the Philippines and China have launched joint exploration for oil and natural gas at the disputed Spratly islands in the South China Sea.

"Kaysa nag-aaway tayo kung sino ang may-ari noon (Spratlys), ginamit natin ang ating foreign policy para magkaroon tayo ng joint exploration (Instead of quarreling over the territorial claims on Spratly, we used our foreign policy to launch joint exploration), President Macapagal-Arroyo said.

The President said any oil or natural gas discovered in the area would be shared by the two countries.

Apart from China, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo identified the other partners of the country in oil offshore oil exploration as Shell and the United Kingdom.

The President likewise vowed to push the privatization of the government-run National Power Corp. and its sister-company, the Transmission Corp. in a bid to improve power supply and bring down the cost of electricity.

Statement of the President: Re Call for clean, honest and peaceful elections

It is time for the entire nation to focus on the imperative of clean, honest and peaceful elections.

The opposition must shake off its negativism and join the people in meeting this mandate.

This is the least the opposition can do if it cannot forge a credible platform at this late hour.

The preservation of democracy is a non-partisan matter and a universal duty.

Confidence in our nation is rising and we must ride the crest by demonstrating our political maturity and our common quest of positive change and national transformation.

Statement of the President: Re May 1

Any mass actions will be met with the policy of maximum tolerance under the rule of law.

We will respect the rights of all quarters and even bend backwards to accommodate legitimate protest.

But we draw the line on the side of the public interest, which we will never allow to be violated with impunity.

18 Negros Occidental mayors sign covenant of support for GMA's presidential bid

BACOLOD CITY – Eighteen mayors and other leaders of Negros Occidental Friday night signed a covenant of unity expressing their unwavering support for the leadership and candidacy of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the forthcoming May 10 elections.

The mayors signed the manifesto Friday evening during a press conference at the Grand Ballroom of the Business Inn Hotel here.

“We stand by a leader whose vision of building a strong Republic has prospered into the forefront of a most difficult and thankless task. This challenge requires that the President harness the State as an enabling force while empowering our people, so that together we can become a strong Republic,” said Isabela Mayor Renato Malabor who read their manifesto of support.

Malabor said the President, an adopted daughter of Negros Occidental as First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo is from the province, has supported the province and its development through her various programs.

He said the President also gave her “unstinting support” to the sugar industry in consultation with the industry leaders.

The President, he added, is seeking the united support of all sectors of society “so the nation can move forward.”

But President Macapagal-Arroyo said getting elected is not just about the number of mayors or congressmen on each other's side. It is about winning the hearts, minds and confidence of the Filipino people.

“It is our people who in the end will vote and decide who leads this nation for the next six years. And it is the people to whom we leave our fate,” she said.

Three weeks ago, several provincial and municipal leaders in the province defected to the camp of another presidential candidate.

Among those who returned and again supported the President is Talisay City Mayor Anthony Lizares.

“I am most gratified that three weeks since the breakaway of a faction in the province, the people of Bacolod City and Negros Occidental have sent strong signals that they will not let this pass unchallenged,” the President said.

The President said she was informed that surveys conducted in this city and throughout the province showed that she and her running mate, Senator Noli de Castro, “enjoy commanding leads over our closest rivals.”

Signatories to the manifesto of support for the President’s candidacy included Silay City Mayor Carlo Gamban, Escalante City Mayor Enrique Barcelona, EB Magalona Mayor Alfonso Gamboa, Murcia Mayor Esteban Coscolluela, Pulupandan Mayor Antonio Suatengco, Hinigaran Mayor Harold Guanco, La Castellana Mayor Enrique Elumba, Moises Padilla Mayor Jose Garcia Jr., Don Salvador Benedicto Mayor Cynthia dela Cruz, Himamaylan Mayor Carmencita Bascon, Isabela Mayor Renato Malabor, Sipalay City Mayor Oscar Montilla, Victorias City Mayor Remedios Bantog, Talisay City Mayor Anthony Lizares, Calatrava Mayor Samuel Fabros, Bacolod City Mayor Luzviminda Valdez, San Carlos City Mayor Eugenio Jose Lacson, and Toboso Mayor Victor Bedonia Jr.

GMA witnesses signing of agreement on P3.1-B power plant

TALISAY CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) for the establishment of a P3.1-billion power plant here that would benefit residents and sugar farmers in Negros Occidental.

The MOA was signed by Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) president Thelmo Cunanan and Graham Stolwell, chairman of Bronzeoak Philippines, and a representative of the Talisay Bioenergy Inc. (TBI). Under the MOA, a pioneering 30-megawatt (MW) power plant would be built. It would use as power source bagasse from at the First Farmers Holding Corp. (FFHC) sugar mill in Barangay Dos Hermanas here.

The signing of MOA was made after the President unveiled this morning the bust of her late father President Diosdado Macapagal at the First Farmers Sugar Mill in Barangay Dos Hermanas here.

The President said her father was instrumental in the establishment of the First Farmers Sugar Mill some 40 years ago.

A book dedicated to the late President was also given to the President by author Nick Ledesma.

Under the MOA, TBI would freely supply FFHC up to 5 megawatts of electricity for its mill operations, while the surplus would be sold to the Central Negros Electric Cooperative Inc. (CENECO).

In turn, FFHC would supply TBI all the factory bagasse that it would produce through its mill operations.

Cunanan said the signing would ensure that Negros would no longer experience brownouts. Power lack had been forecast in 2007.

He said it would also lower the power generation cost of CENECO which is part of the President’s commitment to bring affordable electricity to the countryside.

Cunanan said the administration’s other project is the 40-MW geothermal project in Mailum, Bago City.

New RP-US cooperative mechanisms to provide Filipinos in U.S. \$500-M to \$1-B savings in remittance

Overseas Filipinos are expected to gain an increase in savings estimated at \$500 million to \$1 billion in their annual net remittances to the Philippines due to new Philippine-American cooperative mechanisms designed to lower transaction costs, according to Philippine Ambassador to Washington Albert del Rosario.

In a report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Ambassador del Rosario said these mechanisms include a project, supported with a \$3.7 million grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to establish a five-year Cooperative Development Program between the Philippines and the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU).

He said this program will connect Philippine credit unions to the international remittance network (IRNet) of WOCCU, adding that it will provide international remittances and shared branching and settlement services to their members.

Due to the wider outreach of credit unions in the Philippines, particularly in remote areas where there are no banks, large communities will now have access to alternative remittance channels, he said.

Del Rosario said the pool of funds that will be retained with the credit unions as savings will become available to the larger community for micro-financing and other productive and provident loans.

Other mechanisms cited by the envoy in his report to Malacañang, through Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, include the provision of new services and consumer education program.

He said that for new services, discussions are ongoing with the US Federal Reserve for the Philippines to be connected to direct payments links and international automated clearing house (ACH) services.

This will significantly lower the cost of electronic transfers from banks in the US for remittances and other payments to the Philippines, he said.

For consumer education, he said, the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) will organize literacy programs for the Filipino-American communities in the US that will enhance their knowledge on various remittance products and services available in the US.

The FDIC has also expressed its readiness to assist the Philippines in conducting pre-departure financial seminars for departing overseas Filipinos.

Expressing her appreciation to the US government for these latest forms of bilateral cooperation, President Macapagal-Arroyo said: "These initiatives under my administration will redound to the benefit of millions of our *kababayan* overseas, especially to our OFWs and their families here. Moreover, they will boost our economy, which, in turn, will enable us to pursue more national development programs especially in the countryside."

Ambassador del Rosario said: "These cooperative arrangements underscore the mutual benefit of our close partnership with the United States. They have a direct and positive impact on the economic well-being of our compatriots at home and abroad."

He added that these programs resulted from the Memorandum of Understanding between the Philippines and the United States on Strengthening Remittance Channels which was signed during President Macapagal-Arroyo's state visit to the US in May 2003.

According to a 2003 study by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) entitled "Worker Remittances As a Development Tool – Opportunities for the Philippines," almost half of about \$7 billion in remittances reported to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas in 2002 came from the US and Canada.

However, the ADB contends that with the total stock of overseas Filipinos (emigrants and OFWs) estimated at 7.5 million and a reasonable conservative estimate of an average remittance of \$200 ten times a year, these estimates would establish a range of \$14 billion to \$21 billion for total market size.

The ADB study also notes that the formal channels for the Philippine remittance market such as banks are highly competitive and reasonably priced by Latin American standards.

Philippine bank charges range from around \$5 to \$16 on the high end.

Estimated total end-to-end costs (fees and currency exchange costs) to send \$200 from the US through a Philippine bank average around 8 percent of the amount.

Discipline, unity, experience in athletic competitions can help students attain success in life, says GMA

BACOLOD CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has stressed that the discipline, training, unity and experience in athletic competitions could contribute to the success in life of college students.

The President spoke before more than 3,000 delegates, sports and school officials, and tertiary athletes from all regions of the country at the formal opening of the National Palaro 2004 of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), held Friday evening at the Panaad Sports and Recreational Park in Barangay Mansilingan.

CHED officer-in-charge Dr. Manuel Punzal, Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) Chairman Eric Buhain, Clark Development Corporation (CDC) and Philippine Sports Athletic Association (PSAA) president Emmanuel Angeles, and CHED Region 6 director Dr. Edgar delos Santos welcomed the President to the athletic tournament.

“Kung gusto nyo manalo hindi lang competitiveness ang kailangan, kailangan teamwork, discipline and unity. Kailangan disiplina at karanasan para magtagumpay (Aside from competitiveness, you need teamwork, discipline and unity to win. Discipline and experience will bring you success),” the President said

Noting that the young students would soon look for jobs in the near future, the President said that she is already implementing various programs “so you will have jobs upon graduation.”

For the poor students who lack tuition money, the President informed them of the Student’s Assistance Fund for Education for a Strong Republic (SAFE 4 SR), an interest-free loan assistance for 3rd and 4th year college students, to help them finish their college education.

In the next school year, the President said every poor family would be given a scholarship for a collegiate or a vocational-technological course “that will be the key to free you from the clutches of poverty.”

When the President arrived at the airport here at 5:00 P.M. Friday, she was welcomed by City Mayor Luzviminda Valdez, Rep. Monico Puentebella, and former Rep. John Orola.

After the games opening, the President had dinner with the leaders of the Chinese community at the Business Inn Hotel where she stayed overnight.

At 7:00 A.M. today (Saturday), the President unveiled the bust of her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, at the First Farmers Sugar Mill in nearby Talisay City.

The President left at 8:00 A.M. for Cagayan de Oro City.

Palace calls no-el plotters ‘enemies of democracy’

Malacañang today branded as enemies of democracy those who are hatching a no election (no-el) scenario as it stressed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s commitment to push through with the May 10 elections.

In an interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that those who plan to thwart next month's polls are doing a disservice to the country and to democracy. He appealed to them to work instead with the government in pushing for clean, honest and orderly polls.

"Ito ay napapalala lamang ng agam-agam ng ating mga kababayan at ito ay hindi nakakatulong sa ating demokrasya (This will only aggravate the doubts of our countrymen and would not help our democracy)," Bunye said.

In a statement, the President said that the opposition must shake off its negativism and join the people and the administration in pushing for the May 10 elections.

"This is the least the opposition can do if it cannot forge a credible platform at this late hour," the President said, adding that the preservation of democracy is a non-partisan matter and a universal duty.

Bunye said that local elections are held only every three years and the presidential elections every six years and yet some groups do not want these to be pushed through.

Surprisingly, it was presidential bet Sen. Panfilo Lacson who admitted that opposition groups were behind the no-el plot, with the scheduled May 1 rally at EDSA as the springboard of such a move.

Lacson has said that the grand plan was for all the presidential candidates, except President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, to withdraw before Election Day to create a crisis that would compel the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to step down.

On the planned May 1 rally, Bunye said that the government would maintain its policy of maximum tolerance under the rule of law.

Bunye, however, asked the organizers to police their own ranks to avoid violence.

"We will respect the rights of all quarters and even bend backwards to accommodate legitimate protest. But we draw the line on the side of the public interest, which we will never allow to be violated with impunity," Bunye said.

Palace not complacent despite surge in SWS, Pulse Asia survey results

Despite her surge in the Social Weather Stations (SWS) and Pulse Asia surveys that have left the opposition behind, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her *Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan* (K-4) are not being lulled into a sense of complacency, Malacañang emphasized today.

"Instead, they diligently continue to go to the people because many of them are still uncommitted," Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in a radio interview this morning.

This is an indication of the administration's desire for a truly conclusive decision in the May 10 elections, Bunye said.

"But we are glad many of those who have been on the sidelines are slowly expressing their support," Bunye added.

To press his point, Bunye cited the case of South Cotabato Governor Daisy Fuentes, a member of the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC), who has moved over to the side of the President and K-4.

"According to Fuentes, she is not only in favor of the President, she has gone out to personally campaign for her," Bunye said.

Fuentes beefs up the array of pro-Arroyo political bigwigs in Mindanao which boast of Governors Manny Piñol of North Cotabato, Max Pagudadatu of Sultan Kudarat, Mike Escobar of Sarangani and Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema.

Not only NPC members have joined the snowballing bandwagon of the President. Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) members like Lanao del Norte congressional bet Warlino Relova and Lanao del Sur board member Ahmare Lucman have also cast their lot with the President and expressed their total support for her.

According to Relova, the President will be unopposed in 16 of 22 towns of Lanao del Norte. That's because the KNP candidates for mayor in those 16 towns are Relova supporters who joined him in the move to the administration party.

The situation in Lanao del Sur is even more inspiring for the President and K-4. All the opposition's 20 mayoral candidates, led by Panny Datu Molok of the town of Binidayan, have crossed over to the President's coalition.

And in Misamis Occidental, KNP congressional bet Henry Oaminal has disengaged from the opposition and joined the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats which is the main party in K-4.

In vote-rich Pangasinan, Gov. Victor Agbayani, who is running for reelection virtually unopposed, emphasized his unflinching support for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Agbayani is a top leader of *Biskeg na Pangasinan*, a combine of the province's most influential political personalities which stands solid behind the President with 38 of Pangasinan's 44 mayors.

GMA inaugurates P7-B facilities of Mindanao container terminal, main port of entry in Southern Philippines

TAGOLOAN, Misamis Oriental – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today inaugurated the P7-billion facilities of the Mindanao Container Terminal (MCT), which is being developed as principal port of entry in Southern Philippines.

The President said the MCT does not only pump-prime the development of Mindanao, but also provides more jobs to the people.

The new facilities of MCT consist of two modern loading and unloading rolley-type quayside gantry cranes. The project cost comes from a \$1.3 billion loan provided to the PHIVIDEC Industrial Authority by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

The President noted that during the short period of her presidency, the country has moved forward economically.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, who grew up in Iligan City, reminisced that when she was still with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) she initiated formulation of the Cagayan-Iligan-Corregidor master plan. But, she noted lack of political will and lack of funds for government projects at that time.

“Sa maiksing panahon mahirap ang dinaanan ko hindi lang dito kung hindi sa buong Asya at buong mundo. Sasabihin ko sa inyo ang totoo naituwid natin ng matiwasay, matagumpay ang ating bansa. Sa maiksing panahon na ako ang Presidente naging mabilis ang development at nakapagbigay tayo ng trabaho (I encountered difficult problems not only at home but also in Asia and the whole world. In my short stint as President, I managed to hasten development and provide more jobs to our people),” she said.

She expressed her gratitude to the people of Misamis Oriental for supporting her administration and her bid for a full six-year term in the May 10 elections.

“Salamat sa inyong lahat hindi ko magagawa itong lahat kung wala kayo, kailangan ko kayo para marating natin ang ating mga pangarap. Para mabigyan proteksiyon ang ating mga anak. Kaya sa inyong lahat natupad na natin ang ating pangarap, ang Mindanao container port (Without your support, it is impossible for me to fulfill our dream to build a Mindanao container port),” she said.

The MCT now has four rubber-typed gantry cranes and 266 reefer van outlets. It’s port safety and security is ensured with the aid of a Vessel Traffic System, with a state-of-art radar equipment installed in the 38.10 meter-high Control Tower.

MCT also features six-lane entrance and exit tollgate with a One-Stop-Shop office for Customs, Coast Guard and Quarantine.

After the MCT inauguration, she paid a plant visit to the Pacific Activated Carbon Co. Inc., also in Tagoloan, which is owned by the family of her daughter-in law Angela Montenegro-Arroyo.

The President arrived here from a sortie to Bacolod City. She was welcomed at the Cagayan de Oro (CDO) Airport by City Mayor Vicente Emano, Presidential Adviser for Mindanao Affairs Jesus Dureza, Congressman Constantino Jaraullo, and Southern Command commander Gen. Roy Kyamko.

She was accompanied by her vice presidential running mate Senator Noli De Castro, Press Secretary Milton Alingod, Presidential Campaign Spokesperson Michael Defensor and Mrs. Gina De Venecia, wife of House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr.

The President, accompanied by her official entourage, left for Impasugong, Bukidnon, to preside over the groundbreaking ceremonies for a palm oil mill and plantation.

K-4 reports snowballing support for GMA

There is now snowballing of support for the bid of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for a full six-year term in the May 10 elections, prompting K-4 Spokesman Michael Defensor to say that the overall objective now is to have the President elected by majority of the electorate.

“It’s no longer a statistical tie. We now have a bandwagon of support for President Arroyo,” Defensor said after the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey showed her taking a significant lead over her main rival, movie actor Fernando Poe, Jr.

Defensor’s pronouncement reflects more conclusive developments that have gelled before the last SWS survey was taken – the defection of opposition candidates and supporters to the President and her *Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan* (K-4), the return of a sizeable number of “prodigals” to the K-4 fold and the continued show of unwavering support for the ruling coalition.

From the so-called Solid North in Ilocandia, to Pangasinan, to Bacolod City, to Mindanao, leaders of the main opposition group, the *Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino* (KNP), have shifted loyalty to the President and her K-4 slate.

Based on the latest SWS survey alone that gave President Macapagal-Arroyo a 4.5 point margin (35.3 against 30.8) over Poe, political analyst Joel Rocamora said: “All indications are that she’s going to win.”

Rocamora added that the increase in the President’s ratings is “close to perfect for her because she doesn’t want to peak too early.”

On Friday night, 18 mayors and other leaders of Negros Occidental signed a covenant of unity expressing unwavering support for the President. Among them was “prodigal” Talisay Mayor Anthony Lizares, who earlier expressed support for Poe.

The day before, while barnstorming in Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Norte Congressman Roque Ablan, chairman of Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (CMD) in Northern Luzon, assured the President that despite reports to the contrary, she would win in the so-called Solid North.

Ablan said that 27 out of the 29 congressmen from the Solid North are supporting the President and that she would get 60 percent of the 280,000 votes in Ilocos Norte alone.

A few days earlier, South Cotabato Governor Daisy Fuentes, an oppositionist and a member of the Nationalist People’s Coalition (NPC), also moved over to the side of the President and K-4.

Fuentes said she would do whatever it takes to help the President win in South Cotabato.

Fuentes support beefs up the array of pro-Arroyo political bigwigs in Mindanao which boast of Governors Manny Piñol of North Cotabato, Max Pagudadatu of Sultan Kudarat, Mike Escobar of Sarangani and Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema.

Earlier, a total of 45 congressmen belonging to the Nationalist People’s Coalition, led by its chairman, Isabela Congressman Faustino Dy III, have also pledged support for the President.

Not only NPC members have joined the snowballing bandwagon of the President. Erstwhile KNP leaders like Lanao del Norte congressional bet Warlino Relova and Lanao del Sur board member Ahmare Lucman have also cast their lot with the President and expressed their total support for her.

According to Relova, the President will be unopposed in 16 of 22 towns of Lanao del Norte. That’s because the KNP candidates for mayor in those 16 towns are his supporters who joined him in the move to the administration party.

The situation in Lanao del Sur is even more inspiring for the President and K-4. All the opposition’s 20 mayoral candidates, led by Panny Datu Molok of the town of Binidayan, have crossed over to President’s coalition.

And in Misamis Occidental, KNP congressional bet Henry Oaminal has disengaged from the opposition and joined the Lakas-CMD which is the main party in K-4.

In vote-rich Pangasinan, Gov. Victor Agbayani, who is running for reelection virtually unopposed, emphasized his unflinching support for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Agbayani is a top leader of *Biskeg na Pangasinan*, a combine of the province’s most influential political personalities which stands solid behind the President with 38 of Pangasinan’s 44 mayors.

And 34 congressmen, who had been supporting former senator and education secretary Raul Roco, have shifted their support to the President, according to former Ifugao Congressman Gualberto Lumauig.

Lumauig said that the group reaffirmed their support for the President during a meeting last Sunday at the Inter-Continental Hotel in Makati City.

GMA leads groundbreaking rites of P350-M Palm Oil Mill, plantation in Bukidnon

Impasugong, Bukidnon – In line with the administration’s commitment to improve the lives of the small farmers in the country especially in Northern Mindanao, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo led the groundbreaking today of the P350 million Palm Oil Mill and Plantation that would generate thousands of jobs for small farmers here.

The groundbreaking rites of one of the most important job opportunities projects of the President under her Self Reliant Teams (SRT) program is expected to generate an initial 7,000 jobs not only for the residents of Bukidnon but also to nearby provinces like Misamis Oriental and Cotabato.

In her brief impromptu remark, the President said that upon the completion of the project in 2006, some 10,000 jobs would have been created.

The President said more or less 4,000 farmers of Impasugong will be the direct beneficiaries of the Palm Oil Mill.

She stressed that the important investment project in Impasugong is a product of her successful visit in Malaysia last year and her administration’s existing good foreign policy.

The President got a warm welcome from the residents and local officials of Bukidnon led by Governor Jose Zubiri, Jr. upon her arrival here around 11:40 a.m. on board a presidential chopper from Cagayan De Oro city where she inaugurated the terminal facilities of the Mindanao Container Terminal in PHIVIDEC in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental.

Upon her arrival at the plantation area, the President was briefed by Impasugong Mayor Mario Okinlay and Dr. Walter Brown, president of the A. Brown Energy and Resources Development Incorporated (ABERDI) on the accomplishments and outputs of the palm oil mill project.

During the briefing, Mayor Okinlay reported that since the memorandum of agreement and purchase orders releases to SRTs last February 2004, the resolutions and ordinances supporting the oil palm project were issued by the municipality.

Mayor Okinlay also told the President that since April 15, 2004 at least 14 hectares of the total 4,000 hectares palm tree plantation were already planted in the idle, grasslands, and converted pasturelands in Barangays Dumalaguing, Guihean and Sayawan.

He added that the municipal government also approved the opening of a 30-kilometer pilot road from the oil mill and nursery site to the target areas of the plantation.

After the groundbreaking ceremony, the President motored to the gymnasium in front of the municipal hall wherein she received the pledge of commitment to support her candidacy and priority projects for the small farmers in Mindanao from Manuel Boniao, president of the Oil Palm Industry Association of Northern Mindanao (OPIANOM), and Greg Macabodbod of the National Agribusiness Development Center (NADC).

In her speech in front of some 5,000 farmers the President informed them that the national government is the major investor of the project since P300 million came from the Department of Agriculture while P50 million came from the private sector.

Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, Press Secretary Milton Alingod, Housing Secretary on-leave and Campaign Spokesman Michael Defensor, Administrator Arthur Yap of the National food Authority, Presidential Assistant for Northern Mindanao Secretary Jesus Dureza and Cagayan De Oro City Mayor Vicente Emano accompanied the President in visit in the cool, beautiful, progressive and peaceful municipality of Impasugong.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 24, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071027154238/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr24.htm>

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- **The Good News: FAO grants of \$3.48M boost RP agricultural modernization**
- **GMA urges 'two fisted approach' to fighting crime, terrorism**
- **GMA calls on Free Masons to help her build a strong republic**
- **Dollar remittances to cost less**
- **GMA lauded for renovation of P50-M district hospital**
- **GMA's anti-terrorism drive nets four Jemaah Islamiyah suspects**
- **GMA to make RP top exporter of coco oil**
- **Disillusioned opposition followers defect to K-4 camp**

The Good News: FAO grants of \$3.48M boost RP agricultural modernization

Grants from the Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) totaling \$3.48 million in the 1999-2003 period has boosted the Philippines' agricultural modernization program, and the aid will continue up to 2005.

In a report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Philippine Ambassador to Italy Philippe J. Lhuillier, concurrently RP Permanent Representative to FAO in the past five years, said the United Nations specialized agency has been fully supportive of the government's efforts to strengthen food security by modernizing service facilities in the agricultural sector.

The FAO has commended the Philippines for improving farm irrigation systems, distributing post-harvest machinery and building farming service facilities, constructing farm-to-market roads, and initiating the use of high-yielding rice variety.

According to records, the government spent P24.21 billion for agricultural and fisheries modernization in 2001; P24.36 billion in 2002; and P33 billion in 2003.

A FAO study indicates that hunger worldwide is worsened not by lack of food, but by lack of money to buy food, Lhuillier said. Agricultural jobs give rural folks money for food and other basic necessities, he said.

"It has been my focus as FAO representative to achieve these. The grants we have obtained might seem small, but they are a strategic push forward, as we try to regain the old glory of our agricultural sector," he said.

He said the Philippines, which was elected twice to the FAO Council (2001-2003 and 2003-2005), has obtained the following grants:

- "Assistance in Processing Analysis and Utilization of Farm Level Data" valued at \$144,000;
- "Strengthening BFAR's Capacity for HACCP-based Quality Assurance", \$193,000;
- "Emergency Supply of Agricultural Inputs in Flood-Affected Provinces of Region XI and XII (CARAGA)", \$357,500 for nine months;
- "Training for East and South East Countries on Uruguay Round Follow-up and Multilateral Trade Negotiations on Agriculture", \$179,000;
- "Strengthening the Devolved Agricultural Extension Services in Support of the Philippine Agriculture and Fishery Modernization Act" \$269,000;
- "Emergency Supply of Inputs in Conflict-affected Areas of Central Mindanao", \$199,000;
- "Regional Training in Meat Inspection in Asia", \$373,000;
- "National Demonstrations on the Lactoperoxidase System of Milk Preservation in Selected Southeastern Asian Countries", \$369,000;

- “Farm Income Diversification and Market Development in the Framework of the Special Programme for Food Security”, \$348,000;
- “Emergency Supply of Agricultural Inputs to Typhoon-Affected Farmers in Benguet Province”, \$246,000; and
- grant of \$400,000 for emergency assistance to support the rehabilitation of agricultural and fisheries areas in Central Luzon and Ilocos provinces hit by typhoon ‘Gloria’.”

GMA urges ‘two fisted approach’ to fighting crime, terrorism

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has urged a “two-fisted approach” to suppress crime and terrorism, as well as maintain peace and peace in the country.

Speaking at the 22nd National Convention of REACT Philippines, held Saturday evening at the Harbor Lights Hotel in Gusa, Cagayan de Oro City, the President said, “*Kung lalabanan natin ang mga terorista, mga komunista, mga rebelde, kailangan dalawang kamay ang ginagamit natin.* (If we are to fight the terrorists, the communists, the rebels, we must use a two-fisted approach). The left-hand approach and the right-hand approach.”

“The right hand is the pro-arm of the law. *Kasama doon ang strong intelligence, kagaya ng tinulong ninyo noon kay Vic* (Brig. Gen. Victor Corpuz of ISAFP). The left is the hand for reaching out... reaching out to the poor, reaching out for peace, reaching out to remove the root causes of insurgency and terrorism,” she said.

She attributed the concept of two-fisted approach to crime-fighting to Corpuz whom she cited for giving her the “right intelligence report” on the military adventurism at Oakwood Hotel in Makati City last July. Formerly chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP), Corpuz now heads the Civil Relations Services of the Armed Forces and is honorary chairman of REACT Philippines.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also lauded REACT Philippines for helping in the government’s peace and order drives, particularly in bringing down the rate of kidnappings to the lowest level in the last 11 years.

“*Tayo ay nagtulongan din para bumaba ang ating problema ng shabu. At marami sa mga nadakip na mga druglords o nakumpiska na mga shabu o nasarado ang mga factories ay dahil sa mga volunteers na nagsusumbong* (We worked together to reduce the drug menace. Many druglords were arrested; shabu supply, confiscated; and laboratories, shut down, because of information provided by volunteers).

The Regional Emergency Assistance Communications Team (REACT), with national headquarters located in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, emphasizes volunteerism and uses modern communications in its work.

The President said that REACT Philippines “is a true partnership of my administration, and I hope that after (the) May 10 (elections), I will still be your partner for the good of our people.”

GMA calls on Free Masons to help her build a strong republic

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has called on the brotherhood of free and accepted masons of the Philippines to join her administration in building a strong Republic for the 21st century.

The President spoke Saturday afternoon at the 88th Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines, held at the Limketkai Atrium in this city. She has expressed elation to the masons brotherhood in accepting her as a member of the mason family and for recognizing her as a granddaughter of a mason.

Recalling her maternal grandfather, Engr. Juan Macaraeg, was an active member of the masonry, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said, “I am familiar with your ritual and I find it as an important and wonderful part of the Philippine culture.”

She narrated that as a little girl, she opened her grandfather's desk drawer in their house at San Juan, Rizal, and saw a set of books about the free masonry movement. She learned from her mother, the late Dr. Evangeline Macaraeg Macapagal, about her grandfather's involvement and membership in the masonry movement in the 1920s.

"I learned what is the life of free masonry. I learned about their brotherhood. I learned about your dedication to the service of others – the characteristics which are very much needed in our country at this time," she said.

She expressed admiration for the mason's "sense of reaching out to your own brethren, but beyond that, about the need for a free mason to make a difference in your community."

As a public servant, President Macapagal-Arroyo said, "I find that it is important to carry out the nation's spirit of reaching out to our brethren, to carry out the need to make a difference in the life of the community."

She pointed out that masons have "lawful purpose and vision" to be significant part of the country's history.

"I am inspired by your values of reaching out, making a difference. I am calling on you to help me build our strong Republic together," she said. Noting that she is "a member of the free mason family," she addressed her appeal to "my brother masons (and) my cousin masons."

Dollar remittances to cost less

Remittances of overseas Filipinos are expected to cost less very soon.

This was the gist of a report submitted Saturday to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo by Ambassador to Washington Albert del Rosario thru Executive Secretary Alberto G. Romulo.

The savings in remittance costs, estimated at between US\$500 million to \$1 billion, is the direct result of the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Philippines and the United States on Strengthening Remittance Channels.

The MOU was signed during President Macapagal-Arroyo's state visit to the US in May 2003.

According to Del Rosario, pursuant to this MOU, the mechanism is now being put in place to connect Philippine credit unions to the international remittance network (IRNet) of the World Organization of Credit Cooperative Unions (WOCCU).

The system will provide international remittances and shared branching and settlement services to their members at lower costs.

Due to the wider outreach of credit unions in the Philippines, particularly in remote areas where there are no banks, large communities will now have access to alternative remittance channels.

This initiative is being supported by the US Aid for International Development (US AID) thru a five year grant totalling US 3.75 Million, Del Rosario said.

Discussions are also ongoing with the US Federal Reserve for the Philippines to be connected to direct payments links and international automated clearing house (ACH) services.

The above arrangements would significantly reduce door-to-door costs of remittances which presently average 8 percent of the amount remitted.

An ADB study indicated that almost half of close to \$8 billion in remittances reported to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas in 2002 came from the US and Canada.

Given conditions of faster and cheaper remittance, the potential remittance from Overseas Filipinos (both emigrees and overseas workers) would range from \$14 to \$21 billion.

GMA lauded for renovation of P50-M district hospital

CAUAYAN CITY, Isabela – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was lauded by the Provincial Health Officer for the renovation of the Cauayan District Hospital that she inaugurated today.

Provincial Health Officer Dr. Glenn Matthew Baggao credited the present administration for the renovation of the hospital at a cost of P50 million.

Before flying here, the President swore in former leaders and supporters of presidential rivals Fernando Poe, Jr., Sen. Panfilo Lacson and former Senator and Education Secretary Raul Roco at the University of Mindanao in Matina, Davao.

Baggao said Cauayan District Hospital officials made several representations for the release of funds for the renovation of the old buildings since 1982 but it was only during the partnership of Gov. Faustino Dy, Jr. and the President that concrete action was realized.

“Gov. Faustino Dy, Jr. envisioned these various innovations in the health section including the Provincial Health Care Program. Today marks the inauguration of the new building and the Cauayan District Hospital with Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as out guest of honor,” Baggao said.

After cutting the ribbon, the President inspected the facilities of the hospital that will service the increasing number of patients coming from 15 of the 37 towns of Isabela. It is one of four district hospital projects in the province worth P200 million. She was accompanied by her vice presidential running mate Senator Noli de Castro.

Prior to the rehabilitation program, the old buildings constructed in 1973 deteriorated due to damages brought about by typhoons that hit the area and it was only through the initiatives of Gov. Dy and Congressman Faustino Dy, with the help of the President, that the district hospital has been renovated.

Prominent among those attending the inauguration were Gov. Faustino Dy, Jr., Vice-Governor Santiago Respicio, 3rd District Representative Faustino Dy III, Cauayan City Mayor Cesar Dy, Department of Health Regional Director Purita Danga, Provincial Health Officer Rita Mariano and Baggao.

The President was met upon arrival at the Tactical Operations Group 2 here by Gov. Dy, Mayor Dy, Congressman Dy III, former Governor Benjamin Dy, Northern Luzon command commanding General Lt. Gen. Romeo Dominguez, and Police Regional Office II Director Jefferson Soriano.

GMA’s anti-terrorism drive nets four Jemaah Islamiyah suspects

DAVAO CITY – The government’s anti-terrorism drive has scored a major victory with the capture of four suspected members of a cell of the dreaded Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terror group operating in Southeast Asia.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presented to media today the suspected “hard target” terrorists at the Davao City International Airport before boarding the presidential plane bound for Cauayan City to barnstorm in Isabela.

The Chief Executive commended the officers and members of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) and the AFP Southern Command for the capture of the JI suspects who were apparently on a terrorist mission in Mindanao.

The suspected terrorists were identified as Sammy Abdulgani, alias Boy, team leader of the group; Datu Puti Ungka, alias Pot; Montasser Ismael, alias Raffy; and Barodin Dalungan, alias Badz.

Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko, SouthCom commander, told the President that the suspects were caught after a brief chase in Barangay Taviran, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao on April 23.

Kyamko said that the suspects were first monitored by intelligence operatives from the ISAFP after they had failed in an attempt to enter Davao City. They were not able to sneak into Davao City due to strict military and police security measures, particularly at the military checkpoints, he said.

Kyamko informed the President that Abdulgani and Ungka had been spotted by the intelligence agents roaming around Mindanao and that they tried to enter Davao City with intention to conduct terrorist activities in the metropolis.

The group of Abdulgani, according to Kyamko, was involved in the Awang Airport attack that used a car bomb on February 20, 2003.

They also found out during tactical interrogation that the group was responsible for the bombing of Parang gymnasium in Parang, Maguindanao, that killed five innocent civilians and wounded 36 others, including Mayor Vivencio Bataga.

The President made her congratulatory remarks to General Kyamko this morning right after she presented to media the four suspected members of the notorious JI international terrorist group.

She also lauded Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte for putting up effective security measures in the city.

GMA to make RP top exporter of coco oil

Davao City – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will do her best to make the Philippines the top exporter of coconut oil in Asia during her next administration, she promised the million coconut farmers in the country today.

The President issued the statement in her speech during the 1st Coconut Farmers Convention — “*Alay sa Bayaning Magniniyog: Programang Pangkaunlaran para sa Kinabukasan*” — at the University of Mindanao gym attended by some 10,000 farmers from the different provinces of Mindanao.

Leaders of the coconut farmers responded by reading their pledge of support for the President’s candidacy and assured her thousands of farmers in Mindanao will vote for her.

In her speech, the President assured them that under her leadership and the entire K-4 coalition the coconut industry would have a good future.

“*Makakasigurado kayo kay Pangulong Gloria at sa K-4 (Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan) coalition ng kasaganaan sa industriya ng niyog (You can be sure the coconut industry will prosper under President Gloria and K-4),*” the President said.

The President said her heart and wisdom will be on their side and she’s willing to go over with what she has already done to ensure that in the near future, the lives of the small farmers will be improved.

“If I am elected this coming election I will do my very best and continue what I have already done in my short presidency to further boost and improve the coconut industry,” the President said in Visayan.

To date, the Philippines' top export products to the United States, Japan and Europe are electronic supplies, garments come second and coconut oil is third.

She also said that because of her campaign to promote the coconut oil mill in the private sector, a big coco oil mill was established in Davao Del Sur last month.

The President informed them that as part of her campaign to promote the coconut industry and to ensure the stable price of copra, she launched the Coco Diesel Program in San Pablo, Laguna last Wednesday.

Disillusioned opposition followers defect to K-4 camp

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's legions of supporters nationwide swelled further as disillusioned followers of her rivals in the May 10 elections defect in Davao City, in a steady flow to her camp.

This morning, a large group of supporters of opposition presidentiables Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Panfilo Lacson switched loyalty and rallied behind the President who is seeking a full six-year term.

The new pro-Arroyo converts were admitted into the fold of the ruling *Koalisyon ng Karanasan at Katapatan sa Kinabukasan* (K-4) in simple rites held at the University of Mindanao gym in Matina, Davao City.

A leader of the group, Raymundo Matuginan, said he decided to shift political affiliation because of his utter disappointment over Poe's politics of silence.

"I have been waiting and longing to hear his platform of government which is of paramount importance. But until now, nothing has been said," Matuginan said.

He criticized Poe for treating his presidential candidacy "as if it were in the movies."

"We need to know at this time, that is why we are now looking for someone who will certainly support us, especially in our hardship and poverty. We have decided to shift our unified support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo," Matuginan stressed.

For his part, Helmer "Bong" Fabian revealed that he was an active supporter of Lacson, but decided to withdraw his support for fear that Lacson, if elected president, might declare martial law.

Fabian scored Lacson for talking about criminality and anomalies under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration "even without basis, hoping that this will make him famous."

President Macapagal-Arroyo reciprocated by promising her followers that she gives high priority to the needs of the masses.

The President reiterated that providing free education, particularly to children of impoverished families, is one of the key concerns of her six-point platform of government if given a new mandate by the people.

The snowballing support for Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to increase her lead in the pre-election surveys over Poe, her closest rival.

"It's no longer a statistical tie. We now have a bandwagon of support for President Arroyo," K-4 Campaign Spokesman Michael Defensor said.

Local political leaders from the so-called solid North in Ilocandia down to Mindanao have also been rallying behind the President, even pledging to work hard to ensure her victory.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 25, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029040934/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr25.htm>

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Statement of the President: Re Need for highest mandate

I need the highest mandate I can get under the most credible electoral process.

I ask the people to give me this mandate and to see to it that the voting is clean, honest and orderly.

If we can all demonstrate that we are fighting for change under a strong democratic system, we shall guarantee a great future for our people.

Let us leave behind all partisan bickering and go for the big one—a new era in Philippine political and economic stability, borne by the dreams of the average Filipino, the respect of the world and our common fight for change and transformation.

Statement of the President: Re JI suspects

I have directed the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the GRP-MILF peace panel to lay the evidence before the MILF regarding the arrest of the four suspected terrorists; and to avail of the ceasefire process to thresh out any controversies.

The peace process must go hand in hand with the anti-terrorism campaign to box out terrorists and deny them sanctuary.

Both the government and the MILF leadership are committed to fighting terrorism and we must not allow a wedge to divide this common stand.

Statement of the President: Re May 10 elections

I shall fight any attempt to derail the May 10 elections and the people are with me.

All enemies of democracy must be forewarned to stand down from violating the popular will.

We will not allow a few desperate power seekers to prevail against the tide of national unity, democracy and the fight for change in the lives of our people.

GMA's aim now: Clear, conclusive victory

A clean, clear, conclusive victory is what President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo now wants.

“I need the highest mandate I can get under the most credible election process. I ask the people to give me this mandate and to see to it that the voting is clean, honest and orderly,” the President said in a statement issued today.

The President also asked the people “to leave behind all partisan bickering and go for the big one – a new era in Philippine political and economic stability, borne by the dreams of the average Filipino, the respect of the world and our common fight for change and transformation.”

Based on the latest survey, the President has a big chance of getting what she wants. The President got 36.9 percent that gives her a comfortable lead over action star Fernando Poe, Jr. who managed only 26.4.

The 10.5 percentage margin more than doubled the 4.5 percent difference (35.3 to 30.8) in the April 10-17 results of the Social Weather Stations (SWS).

The latest survey (April 20-22) was taken by NFO Trends, the group that conducts the interviews for surveys designed by SWS and Pulse Asia. It was commissioned by the *Manila Standard*.

Clearly, NFO Trends results indicate the support for the President has started to snowball as Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan para sa Kinabukasan (K-4) spokesman Michael Defensor observed as early Friday when the SWS survey results came out. And indications are that there is no stopping it, much less reverse it.

“We now have a bandwagon of support for the President,” Defensor said.

Defensor also stressed the K-4 objective now is to get the President, who shot up from a “statistical tie” with Poe in less than a month, elected by a majority of the electorate.

Philippine Star political columnist Alex Magno said President Macapagal-Arroyo is now unbeatable even if Poe and Sen. Panfilo Lacson merge forces as that would be too late with the elections only two weeks away.

Magno also cited the difficulties of unifying the Poe and Lacson forces and recruiting new strategists and leaders with time fast running out.

Lacson moved up to third over former senator and education secretary Raul Roco who had to leave in a hurry early in the month for medical tests in Houston, Texas. Lacson garnered 13.2 percent to Roco’s 8.9 while Bro. Eddie Villanueva got 5.2 percent.

In the vice-presidential race, the President’s running mate Sen. Noli “Kabayan” de Castro continues to show the way over Sen. Loren Legarda with 47.6 percent against 35.5 or a margin of 12.1 percentage points.

Big transport group now backs GMA

“We don’t like FPJ anymore.”

Thus declared this morning a large group of mass transport drivers and operators as they withdrew support from movie actor Fernando Poe Jr., standard-bearer of the opposition *Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino* (KNP) and pledged to work for the victory of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 elections.

Ernesto de Guzman, chairman-president of the Tapat at Organisadong Drivers at Operators (TODO) para kay FPJ, said they were disheartened by the failure of Poe’s camp to deliver their promised support, including identification cards and other materials, as part of their efforts to help push the actor’s candidacy.

De Guzman’s federation now calls itself TODO na para kay GMA. He said TODO has some one million members nationwide, consisting of drivers and operators of tricycles, jeepneys, taxis and buses.

To dramatize their shift of political affiliation, leaders and key members of TODO tore down FPJ posters and streamers from their headquarters and its neighborhood, then replaced them with GMA campaign materials.

They also took off FPJ t-shirts and wore instead new GMA t-shirts provided by a group identified with the ruling *Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan para sa Kinabukasan (K-4)*.

In pledging support for President Macapagal-Arroyo, De Guzman said they believed that she can truly deliver on her promises to improve the people's quality of life, especially that of the marginal drivers and operators.

GMA: Isabela now a showcase of agri modernization

SAN MIGUEL, Isabela—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has said here that her administration has transformed Isabela into “a showcase of our agricultural modernization” that could be replicated in other regions of the country.

Speaking before a large crowd at the birthday celebration of Isabela Governor Faustino Dy Jr. in this town Sunday afternoon, the President said that Isabela is one of the provinces that has made good use of her administration's “unprecedented P20 billion a year” program for agricultural modernization.

She said: “Our most important project for Isabela is the modernization of agriculture. The price of palay is good. The price of corn is good. The seeds are modern. The facilities are modern and that's an example of what we like to do in the rest of the country.”

The President pointed out that Isabela has become “a showcase of our agricultural modernization” as a result of “perfect partnership between the national government and the local government in agricultural modernization.”

She said that the Department of Agriculture (DA) can only give the national policy but it is the local government units that really implement the policy.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo expressed hope that such partnership “will continue in the May 10 elections and in the years to come”.

The President, who barnstormed in Isabela with her vice presidential running mate Senator Noli “Kabayan” de Castro, noted that recovering quickly from the effects of a recent destructive typhoon, Isabela has produced bumper rice and corn, “two very important products for our country.”

She said that one of the centerpieces of her agricultural modernization program is the propagation of a high-yielding rice variety that she obtained from the People's Republic of China during her state visit to Beijing in 2001.

The hybrid rice, now known as “Gloria Rice,” was planted in some 35,000 hectares in 2002 and 100,000 hectares in 2003. “In 2004, we're planting 500,000 hectares all over the country,” she said. “The topnotcher is Isabela with 16,000 hectares.”

“We are also into modernizing our corn production,” she said, adding that “the price of corn has been going up for the good of our corn farmers.”

She expressed confidence that the price of corn will further increase with the improvement of the quality of corn through modern post harvest facilities. She has presided over a groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of one of the four integrated corn-processing post-harvest facilities, each of which will cost about P120 million.

“So the four will cost P480 million for the modernization of the corn industry of the province of Isabela,” she said.

No letup in efforts to get to the people, Palace says of GMA's reaction to latest poll results

She is relentless in her efforts to relate with the people and earn the highest mandate.

So says Malacañang of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo even as the latest poll survey showed her with a now hefty 10.5-point percentage margin over her closest rival Fernando Poe, Jr. in a big surge from the previous poll.

The three surveys jive, the trend for the President continues to rise while those of the opposition continue to fall, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye observed in a radio interview this morning.

“This is a welcome development for our President but she is not letting up any in her efforts to get to the people. She continues to explain her platform, she continues to implement programs to uplift the lives of the people,” Bunye said.

The survey, commissioned by the *Manila Standard*, has the President getting 36.9 percent of the vote against the 26.4 percent of Poe. It was conducted from April 20-22 by NFO Trends, the same group that does the same thing for the Social Weather Stations (SWS) and Pulse Asia.

In the last Pulse Asia survey (March 27-April 4), the President had 34 percent to Poe’s 31 percent. The SWS survey (April 10-17) had the President improving to a significant 35.3 to 30.8 percent margin.

Thus it was a very busy schedule for the President last week that took her on a whirlwind tour all over the islands – Quezon, Laguna, Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, Pangasinan, Negros Occidental, Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon, Davao and Isabela in that sequence.

She announced the expansion of her *Botika sa Barangay* in Lucban, Quezon; launched the Coco-Diesel Program in San Pablo, Laguna; laid the cornerstone for the Laoag (Ilocos Norte) International Airport; inaugurated a container terminal in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental; led in the groundbreaking of a P350 million Palm Oil Mill and Plantation in Impasugong, Bukidnon; dialogued with coconut growers in Davao City; and presided over the inauguration of the renovated district hospital in Cauayan, Isabela.

And everywhere the President goes, huge enthusiastic crowds, led by provincial, municipal and barangay officials, sector leaders, mass around her to listen to what she has in store for them and acknowledge what she has already done for them.

Sectoral groups back GMA and her call for clean, honest, and credible elections

Representatives of various sectoral groups banded together today in a show of support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s desire for a clean, honest and credible elections on May 10.

Eleven party list organizations likewise joined the growing bandwagon for the President and declared their support in her bid for a full six-year term in next month’s polls.

In their meeting with the President at the Malacañang’s Aguinaldo Room, the members of the civil society groups said they are basing their support on the President’s performance and platform, which they believe will be for the benefit of the majority of Filipinos.

“We saw that it’s only President Macapagal-Arroyo who is fighting terrorism while the other candidates are supported by terrorists,” declared Bobby Navida and Jun Alcover of the Alliance for Nationalism and Democracy (ANAD), a group composed mostly of former rebels.

Alyansa, a group made up mostly of fishermen, said they are supporting the President because “she’s the only one who issued an executive order giving us an opportunity to be represented at the Laguna Lake Development Authority.”

“She’s the only President who appointed the most women in her Cabinet, provided micro finance for women, gave them health care benefits and passed two landmark laws against trafficking of women and violence to women,” said Abanse Pinay representative Beth Yang.

The President thanked the sectoral representatives for their show of support and their commitment to clean, honest and credible elections.

“Thank you, thank you. Let us protect democracy together,” she said.

Laying fears of electoral harassments in several areas by communist insurgents, the President said: “I can assure you PTC (permit to campaign) is not allowed. I have instructed the generals in the field not to allow them.”

The sectoral representatives assured the President that their volunteers would watch the ballot not only for the sake of their groups but for the entire nation.

They said they would mobilize more watchers and report election-related violence in their respective turfs.

Among the party-list groups that declared their support for the President were Abanse-Pinay, Aksyon Sambayanan, TUCP, ABA-AKO, COOP-NATCCO, Butil, Buhay, Alyansa, ANAD, Akbayan and Elderly.

Joining them in the meeting were Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Official Development Assistance and Priority Projects Secretary Marita Jimenez, Special Concerns Undersecretary Abe Purugganan and Public Information Agency Undersecretary Renato Velasco.

GMA lead is insurmountable — K-4

Malacañang today described as “insurmountable” President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s lead in the pre-election surveys, adding it is also an indication of the growing maturity of the Filipino electorate.

In the latest survey results released by the NFO Trends, the President mustered 36.9 percent, representing a hefty 10.5 percent margin over second running opposition bet Fernando Poe Jr. who got 26.4 percent.

K-4 campaign manager Secretary Gabriel Claudio noted that the significant decrease in the number of undecided voters was almost equal to the growth in the President’s acceptance rating.

“This could mean that the undecided sector are finally waking up to the fact that a continuation of the present administration would be the best choice for the country,” Claudio said.

“Studies have shown that the people are now generally tired with bad news and negativism,” Claudio added.

Claudio cited independent researches made by the Institute of Public Culture of the Ateneo University as reported by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism which showed that “the poor know what kind of leader they want.”

“While President Arroyo is elated with her widening lead in the surveys, she knows she must work even harder for a decisive win and a clear mandate,” Claudio noted. He added that the President continues to gain support as more people “come to grips with the realities of governing the country.”

He said obtaining a majority vote would give the President “the high ground in calling for political and economic stability under a unity government.”

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye also welcomed the NFO Trends findings, saying the trend now is for Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo to keep increasing her lead in the presidential race while Poe was dropping further behind.

Bunye pointed out, however, that despite her advantage, the President was not taking things in stride as she picks up momentum on the campaign trail, untiringly explaining to the people her platform of government for the next six years.

On the allegation by the opposition camps that fraud attended the NFO Trends survey, Bunye said the Palace “is not in any way involved in the conduct of these surveys.”

He said Lacson’s allegation was just like any of his previous disclosures which were largely unsupported.

The latest survey, commissioned by the Manila Standard newspaper, covered 1,200 voters interviewed on April 20 to 22 by NFO Trends, the same group being used by the prestigious Pulse Asia and Social Weather Stations (SWS).

Previous surveys conducted by the SWS and Pulse Asia showed Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo either slightly ahead or in a statistical tie with the movie actor.

In the April 10-17 SWS survey, the President chalked up a 4.5 percent lead, at 35.3 percent against Poe’s 30.8 percent.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, came in a poor third with 13.2 percent while Sen. Raul Roco had 8.9 percent. Spiritual leader Bro. Eddie Villanueva picked up the rear with 5.2 percent.

In the vice presidential derby, Sen. Noli “Kabayan” de Castro maintained a comfortable margin over Sen. Loren Legarda, running mate of Poe. De Castro had 47.6 percent against Legarda’s 35.5 percent, for a 12.1 percent advantage.

Hermie Aquino, teammate of Roco, was a far third with 3.6 percent.

In social class preferences, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo garnered the highest number of votes from the Class C and D which gave her 39.3 percent and 39.8 percent, respectively. On the other hand, Poe got 17.6 percent from the Class C and 23.2 percent from Class D.

Class A and B were 28.8 percent for the President, and 12.7 percent for Poe.

In gender category, 40.9 percent of the women are for Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, while 23.1 percent are for Poe. More male voters also want the President to have a fresh six-year mandate as they gave her 32.8 percent against Poe’s 29.8 percent.

Curiously, more than half of the women-voters want De Castro as the next vice president by giving him 50.9 percent approval rating, compared to Legarda’s 32.7 percent. On the other hand, 44.3 percent of the males are for De Castro while 38.4 percent are for Legarda.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo gave her rivals a run for their money in Metro Manila, Central Luzon, Northern Luzon and in the Visayas, but lost to Poe in Southern Luzon and Mindanao.

However, the latest SWS survey released last week showed that the President was strongest in the Visayas and Mindanao where she garnered 53 percent and 44 percent, respectively, compared to Poe’s 23 percent and 37 percent, respectively.

*Source: **Office of the Press Secretary***

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: April 26, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028184013/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr26.htm>

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Statement of the President: Re Senator Raul Roco

I am glad that Raul Roco is coming home and is faring well.

I welcome him back to the campaign and wish him the best.

This election has ample space for those who like him who have waged an issues-oriented campaign.

Our prayers go with him.

Statement of the President: Re Anti-terrorist security precautions

The DFA shall continuously coordinate with various host countries on intensified security measures for our embassies and other Philippine establishments abroad to thwart any terrorist attempts.

Strong security measures are in place domestically, but we urge the citizenry to continue being vigilant to protect the gains that we have achieved in the anti-terrorism drive.

Normalcy and calm must go hand with alertness where Filipinos live and work.

Statement of the President: Re SARS

The public should not be unduly alarmed by the new SARS outbreak in China because all the measures that helped us fight the disease during its peak are still in place and are strictly being implemented.

Our vigilance will be unrelenting to keep SARS out and to strictly check cases coming in.

We have already proven our worth in fighting SARS and there is no reason that we could not combat the threat now.

Statement of the President: Re Clean, honest and peaceful elections

I ask all local candidates to take joint responsibility for the peace and order situation in the areas where they are running.

Even in the heat of the campaign, all candidates must see to it that clean, honest and peaceful elections prevail.

The future not only of their communities, but of the entire nation, is at stake.

Power bred by violence does not make a strong democratic system that will bring us the political and economic stability to create jobs, expand education or deliver on the health needs of our people.

The right of the people to choose freely must be inviolable and be fought for by all.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re PCIJ study

The PCIJ study underscores precisely the terms of the debate we have undertaken, and what we have found in our own surveys and focus groups — namely that the D and E voters are focused on issues which is why this election should not be based on personality.

It is about problems, solutions and experience and the fact that the people want to be treated with respect and seriousness.

We need to respect the intelligence of the voters.

The voters cannot be manipulated, but must be won over with ideas and results, not cheap talk and emotional appeals.

Palace confident arrest of Jemaah Islamiyah terror suspects won't derail GRP-MILF peace talks

Malacañang expressed confidence today that the arrest of four suspected members of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terror group who admitted training in the camp of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Mindanao, would not derail the forthcoming peace talks between the government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the MILF.

In an interview with *Radyo ng Bayan* this morning, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye stressed the GRP-MILF peace parley, tentatively scheduled after the May 10 elections, “is the key to the peace and progress of Mindanao.” Malaysia has been brokering the GRP-MILF peace talks in Kuala Lumpur.

“As a whole, *iyong MILF leadership ay laban din sa terorismo* (In general, the MILF leadership is also against terrorism),” he said.

However, he said it seems that “a breakaway group within the MILF has been coddling the JI cells.”

Bunye said that the issues involving the arrest of JI suspects — Sammy Abdulgani, team leader, Datu Puti Ungka, Montasser Ismael and Barodin Dalungan – and the seizure of explosives from them in Maguindanao last Friday (April 23), would be brought before the Joint Monitoring Committee by the GRP panel.

In a statement issued by Malacañang on Monday, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said that “the peace process must go hand in hand with the anti-terrorism campaign to box out terrorists and deny them sanctuary.”

He said that the President had already instructed Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Teresita Deles and members of the GRP-MILF panel to show the Joint Monitoring Committee evidence relating to the arrest of the suspected JI members.

Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko, commander of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Southern Command, informed President Macapagal-Arroyo during her visit to Davao City on Sunday (April 25) that the JI suspects appeared to be on a terror mission in Mindanao.

“Sana, itong pagkahuli dito sa mga JI suspects ay hindi maging sagabal doon sa ating patuloy na pag-uusap dahil napakaimportante na matuloy iyong GRP-MILF peace talks. (Hopefully, the arrest of JI suspects would not be an obstacle to the crucial GRP-MILF peace talks),” he said.

GMA lopsided victory forecast in Bohol

TAGBILARAN, Bohol – A province-wide survey shows that 53 percent of the Boholano electorate will vote for *Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan para sa Kinabukasan* (K-4) standard bearer President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 polls.

According to the Bohol Poll 2004, conducted March 28-April 12, 2004 by the Holy Name University (HNU) Research Center, the President enjoys a very comfortable lead over her rivals in the presidential race.

Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) presidential bet Fernando Poe Jr. lagged far behind the President with 14 percent; former Senator and Education Secretary Raul Roco was third with 11 percent; Senator Panfilo Lacson, 4 percent; and Bro. Eddie Villanueva, 3 percent. Fifteen percent of the Boholano voters were either undecided or did not participate in the survey.

In the vice presidential derby, the survey showed President Macapagal-Arroyo's running mate, Senator Noli "Kabayan" de Castro, was endorsed by 57 percent of the respondents, compared with only 20 percent for Senator Loren Legarda and 4 percent for Hermie Aquino.

The pollsters interviewed 400 respondents, 100 each from the three congressional districts and another 100 from Tagbilaran City. They were asked a wide range of economic, social and political issues, including their choices for national and local leaders in the coming polls.

Boholanos said that the President's active role in unifying Bohol's political leaders was responsible for her getting wide support in the island-province.

President Macapagal-Arroyo presided a unification meeting in October 2003 that was attended by former Senator Ernesto Herrera, Governor Erico Aumentado, Vice Governor Julius Herrera, and Congressmen Edgar Chatto, Roberto Cajés and Eladio Jala.

Later, the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* members, except Godofreda Tirol, joined the unification process in Bohol.

According to the HNU provincial survey, the margin of error for this poll was +/-10, and that final pre-election survey would be conducted April 22 to 30, 2004.

GMA distributes lot certificates to informal settlers in Cebu City

SM MALL, Cebu City – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's latest visit here today is aimed at providing city residents with the benefits of her two important programs – the right to own a house and lot and access to clean water.

The President distributed today Certificates of Lot Allocation (CLAs) to informal settler-families in various barangays of Cebu City.

The President pointed out that this is part of her program of providing security of tenure for poor families whose houses are located in government-owned lands.

“This was done in accordance with the directives I had issued declaring that government lots could be used for low cost housing,” the President said.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo personally handed to representatives of 30 families the lots formerly owned by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Barangay Labangon through Executive Order 136; some 1,200 families in Barangay Apas, through Proclamation No. 409; 700 families in Duljo Fatima, through Proclamation No. 278; and more than 1,000 families in the lot owned by the Department of Health in Sambag 2 at Carreta, Cebu City.

Starting today, the President said these families have graduated from being squatters to owners of their own lots.

“In my short term as President, some 280,000 poor families have been given security of tenure,” she said.

The President said the government’s low-cost housing program is the largest in the history of the nation, stressing that some 400,000 workers and poor families have been given housing within the last three years.

A total of 2,269 households in Cebu, almost half of them in Cebu City, were provided with housing assistance, while 3,987 households, also almost half of them from Cebu City, were given security of tenure.

According to the President, proclamation of government lands for housing project have benefited more than 700,000 families, or 3.5 million Filipinos.

On the supply of clean water in Cebu, the President said that this problem could be alleviated after the rehabilitation of the source of water in Carmen, Cebu.

The President said there is already a Memorandum of Understanding for the provision of a watershed in Luyang River in Carmen.

She said the Luyang River is the source of 50,000 cubic meters of water per day for the Carmen Water Supply project in Metro Cebu Water District. The completion of the rehabilitation of this source of water will add 35 percent to the supply of water today in Metro Cebu.

Since the start of the “*Patubig ni PGMA Program*,” more than 600,000 families in Metro Manila and neighboring provinces have been provided with clean water.

“We will not stop until all the 45,000 barangays in the country are provided with clean water,” the President said.

She said this is part of her pro-poor agenda that she wishes to implement in the next six years.

The President said she takes pride in her accomplishments in the last three years. However, she said that there are still many things to accomplish.

The President then asked for unity and cooperation for a good future.

“Let us together finish this change which we started, let us together eliminate poverty, and unite the whole nation,” the President said.

GMA attends reenactment of Battle of Mactan

CEBU CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived here this morning to join the 483rd annual commemoration of the Battle of Mactan.

The celebration was highlighted with the reenactment of the historic battle between Ferdinand Magellan and Lapu-Lapu that occurred on the island of Mactan on April 27, 1521.

She also joined the 10th Regional Barangay Health Workers General Assembly and attended the inauguration of Talisay City's new city hall complex.

Her latest visit came just two weeks after her participation in the 50th anniversary of the Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP), the country's biggest labor union.

During the convention, labor leader Democrito Mendoza and other officers of ALU-TUCP endorsed the President's candidacy in the May 10 elections.

After her arrival here, President Macapagal-Arroyo proceeded to the Waterfront Cebu City Hotel in Lahug for a meeting with Cebu Governor Pablo Garcia.

She returned to the "Kadaugan sa Mactan" celebration and later went back to Cebu City to speak before the barangay health workers assembly at the Cebu Coliseum.

The President also attended a convention of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) held at the SM Mall in Cebu City. (PNA)

GMA moves SOCCSKSARGEN Regional Center to Koronadal City

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has designated Koronadal City as the regional center and seat of the SOCCSKSARGEN region in Mindanao to improve government operations and services in the area.

In Executive Order No. 304, the President ordered the transfer to Koronadal City of all departments, bureaus and offices of the national government in the SOCCSKSARGEN Region composed of the provinces of North Cotabato, Sarangani, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and the cities of Cotabato, General Santos, Kidapawan, Koronadal and Tacurong.

In signing the EO last March 30, the President cited the policy of the state to institute changes in existing administrative structure of government according to the changing requirements of the country and the administrative regions.

The prevailing political and socio-economic conditions in the region, she said, point to the need for designating the regional center and seat of the region to improve government operations and services.

The SOCCSKSARGEN Region came into being through Executive Order No. 36 dated Sept. 19, 2001 reorganizing region 12 but did not specify its regional seat.

Unification day proposed after May 10 elections

The Association of BGen/PC Supt./Commodore Pensioners of the Philippines, Inc. (ABCOPOP) has approved a resolution proposing the creation of Unification Day, a national holiday, two weeks after the proclamation of winners in the May 10 elections.

In a meeting held last April 22 at Camp Aguinaldo, the board of directors of the group, in a majority vote, passed the resolution that it will present to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as soon as possible.

The resolution was signed by ABCOPOP corporate secretary Police Chief Superintendent George Andan Carbonnel and authenticated by ABCOPOP chairman and president Juan Gallardo Abuan Jr., also a police chief Superintendent.

In the resolution, members of the association, more popularly known as the Fusiliers, expressed support for the proposal in line with President Macapagal-Arroyo's unification efforts.

They expressed belief in the unification of warring ideologies and the principle of human relations, saying men, after a period of conflict, war and contested political campaigns should have the time to heal all the wounds and bruises, including its casualties, through a National Unification Day.

The Fusiliers affirmed their trust and confidence that the Filipino people as a nation can resolve their differences after the elections.

OPS, ARMM pledge cooperation in information dissemination

In line with the administration's efforts to boost reconciliation, reintegration and rehabilitation in Mindanao, representatives of the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), signed today a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to foster strong collaboration in information dissemination in the ARMM provinces.

The agreement was signed by OPS officials led by Press Undersecretary Roberto Mananquil and Atty. Emma Salman, special consultant to the Office of the Regional Governor, at the Arlegui Guest House in Malacañang.

Under the MOA, the OPS would provide support for the ARMM in communication planning, research system and institutional development, project implementation and evaluation, production capability building, and coordination of information and advocacy.

In return, the ARMM will allow the OPS bureaus and attached agencies, like *Radyo ng Bayan*, National Broadcasting Network (NBN), Philippine Information Agency (PIA) and Philippine News Agency (PNA), which were signatories to the MOA, in using the ARMM facilities.

Also present in the signing were Assistant Press Secretary Martin Antonio Crisostomo; Director Dante Cruz of the Bureau of Broadcast Services; Director Lucita Sanchez of the News and Information Bureau; and Directors Abebakrin Lukman (Bureau of Public Information, and Abdulmuin Ahmad, Technical Management Service, ARMM; and Irene F. Gonzales, BPI, ARMM for ARMM.

The agreement was pursuant to the final peace agreement signed between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) on September 2, 1996. It was brokered by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

The agreement brought about a lasting partnership between the government and the MNLF aimed at addressing the decades-old Mindanao secessionist problem.

The ARMM is composed of the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-tawi, and Maguindanao. Its regional headquarters is in Cotabato City.

GMA to renew commitment to develop Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will renew her commitment to vigorously push the economic development of Mindanao as she swings through the Southern Philippines with the campaign period now entering the homestretch.

The President earlier directed Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo to hold office in Mindanao to bring government services closer to the farmers and other agriculture stakeholders.

“There is no agriculture to speak of in Metro Manila,” Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo told Lorenzo.

President Macapagal-Arroyo will be revisiting Mindanao almost on a daily basis as the campaign period enters the homestretch.

The President will grace this evening a general assembly of bishops in Zamboanga City, then lead a political rally of the ruling Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4) in Prosperidad town in Agusan del Sur tomorrow morning.

Last Saturday, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, her running mate Sen. Noli “Kabayan” Castro and the administration senatorial ticket barnstormed Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon and Cagayan de Oro City, where she presided at the formal opening of the Mindanao Container Terminal Port and groundbreaking for the Palm Oil Mill Plantation.

She also delivered the keynote address at the 22nd National Convention of REACT Philippines in Cagayan de Oro City.

Urging the people of Mindanao to support her bid for a fresh mandate as well as the candidacy of the entire K-4 team in the May 10 elections, the President said she wants to continue what she has started.

“I am asking for your help in order for us to fulfill the six-point plan of action that would give the people a better life,” the President said.

Her six-point platform includes creation of one million jobs a year, reducing by 50 percent the price of common medicines, energizing 1,500 barangays a year and bringing down the cost of electricity to the lowest level in Asia, construction of 3,000 new schools and providing a computer to every school, tripling of loans to self-employed and small entrepreneurs, and delivering potable water to 45,000 barangays nationwide.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also said her administration has gained headway in its efforts to unify the country, adding that Muslims, Christians, Visayans, Tagalogs, and Lumads (natives) should be “one in fighting for change for the future.”

The Macapagal-Arroyo government has drawn up a number of high-impact infrastructure projects in Mindanao such as the Laguindingan Airport and a 200-megawatt coal-fired power plant.

Her administration was also credited for the reopening of the mothballed National Steel Corp. in Iligan City and the strengthening of the palm oil industry in Bukidnon.

Another milestone accomplishment of the government under President Macapagal-Arroyo is the establishment of a chain of roll-on, roll-off ferry services in strategic points of the country under her Strong Republic Nautical Highway program.

The President said she already discerned the growth potentials of Mindanao while she was still an undersecretary of trade and industry, prompting her to strongly push for its development, particularly along the Cagayan-Iligan corridor.

GMA cites need for Lapu-Lapu’s heroism to fight ‘new enemies’

LAPU-LAPU CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on the people to emulate the heroism of Lapu-Lapu, although not to do battle with foreigners but to fight “new enemies” in the country.

The President flew to this City this morning to participate in the observance of the 483rd anniversary of Lapu-Lapu's victory over Ferdinand Magellan, head of a Spanish expeditionary force, in the Battle of Mactan on April 27, 1521.

Speaking before a big crowd at the "Kadaugan sa Mactan" Day celebration here, the President said the victory of Lapu-Lapu, the first Filipino hero, underscores the message to the whole world that every Filipino will not allow foreign aggression to trample our sacred shores.

But, the President stressed that the country is now fighting "new enemies" – destabilizers of government, insurgents and those engaged in dirty politics. Moreover, the country has to fight – and defeat — poverty, she said.

She reiterated the six-point program that she promises to implement, if given mandate by the people in the May 10 elections. The program, which includes creation of 1 million jobs a year, energization of all barangays, scholarship for a member of each poor family, and medicines at half their usual prices, would boost the economy and well-being of the Filipino people.

In commemoration of the heroism of Lapu-Lapu, President Macapagal-Arroyo approved for implementation the Lapu-Lapu City North Reclamation Development Program.

After her arrival here, the President proceeded to Waterfront Cebu City Hotel in Lahug for a meeting with Cebu Governor Pablo Garcia and other local officials. She then went back here to grace the annual *Kadaugan sa Mactan* Day.

The President also went to Talisay City to inaugurate its new City Hall complex in Barangay Lawaan 2.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also joined barangay health workers in this city in commemorating the 10th anniversary of their association at the Cebu City Coliseum. The barangay health workers gave their pledge of support for the President in the May 10 elections.

Representatives of the informal settler families from various barangays in Cebu City, who received their Certificates of Lot Allocations, expressed their gratitude to the President for giving them a chance to own houses and lots.

"*Kailangan lang pala natin ay isang sincere and hardworking President (What we only need is a sincere and hardworking President),*" they said.

She also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) for the construction of the first of medium-rise buildings, a project of the Poverty Alleviation Fund of the President. Some 330 urban poor families in Mandaue City are to benefit under the program. The MOA was signed by Mandaue City Mayor Thadeo Quano and NHA Assistant General Manager Jopet Sison.

She also witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for security of the watershed of the Luyang River in Carmen under the PGMA Clean Water project.

GMA pledges more infrastructure projects for Bohol

TAGBILARAN CITY, Bohol—Aside from the P1.510-billion Bohol Circumferential Road Improvement Project (BCRIP), President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured Boholanos that her administration would pursue the construction of Baclayon International Airport to further boost tourism climate in the province.

In a big rally at the Carlos P. Garcia Sports Complex here, the President made known her next priority project if given a fresh mandate in the May 10 elections.

The Chief Executive stressed the need for an international airport in Baclayon town to make the island-province of Bohol competitive in the international tourism arena.

“To be able to attract foreign tourists to see the world famous Chocolate Hills, the Baclayon Church, Panglao Beach Club and other tourism destinations in Bohol, we need to construct the Baclayon International Airport in my next administration,” the President said, to the cheers of some 25,000 Boholanos in the jam-packed sports complex.

The President also acknowledged the Boholano’s way of describing her as their “Patroness to Gigantic Bohol Projects” because of the multi-billion infrastructure and road projects she implemented in Bohol.

The President said that the P1.5 billion BCRIP that she inspected in Guiwanon, Baclayon is the second phase of the Arterial Road Links Development Project designed to speed up agricultural and economic development in this part of Central Visayas.

She said that once completed, the 136.2-kilometer two-part Calape – Tagbilaran City – Valencia Section and the Candijay – Jagna – Valencia Section Road improvement project would further uplift the living conditions of residents of the municipalities along the route.

The major road rehabilitation program is being funded by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the government.

The President also thanked the Boholanos for their hospitality and the big majority that she garnered in Bohol when she ran for senator in 1992.

She added that Bohol province is really a “Gloria country” because she topped in her 1995 reelection bid for the Senate and when she ran for vice president in 2001.

The President then appealed for the Boholano’s support, this time not only for her bid for a full six-year term but also for the entire Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4) slate in the May 10 polls.

Those who expressed their full support for the President during the provincial proclamation rally were Bohol Governor Erico Aumentado, Vice Governor Julius Herrera, 1st District Representative Edgar Chatto, 2nd District Rep. Roberto Cajés, 3rd District Rep. Eladio Jala and Tagbilaran City Mayor Jose Torralba.

She also proclaimed all the K-4 provincial and local candidates in next month’s simultaneous polls led by Mayor Torralba’s wife, city mayoralty bet Alberta Torralba.

Help GMA heal the wounds of the nation, Bunye exhorts MMC graduates

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye called on graduating interns of the Makati Medical Center today to help President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo heal the nation in their own personal way by living lives imbued with integrity, truthfulness and fairness.

Speaking at the MMC commencement exercises this afternoon, Bunye cited the President’s goal of healing, uniting and reconciling “our deeply divided nation.”

“She cannot do this alone,” he noted. “She is counting on each one of you, as the new generation of healers, to help heal our nation in your own personal way.”

Bunye said Filipinos are approaching the May 10 elections as a deeply divided and hurting nation not only politically and economically “but in the way we deal with one another.”

“There is much rancor and partisanship, instead of goodwill and partnership. There is much buck-passing and blame-laying, instead of asking what can I do to help? Or conversely, what can I do so as not to add to the problems,” Bunye said.

Bunye asked the interns to be not only healers of illnesses or injuries but also of hearts and souls, of families and of the nation.

“Leading others need not be in grand or public ways. One does not have to hold public office or be publicly recognized in order to serve,” he said. “Rather the true test of leadership, of our commitment, our core values and fundamental principles, lies in the quiet, even unseen moments of the day-to-day – how we live our lives; the small choices we make; the simple daily acts.”

Bunye said the true test of a person’s character is in the small things we do when no one else is watching.

In closing, the Presidential Spokesman paraphrased what the late President Diosdado Macapagal once said: “You only fail when you give up. In everything you do, always do your best and God will take care of the rest.”

Filipinos in Iraq safe, Palace assures

Malacañang gave assurances today that Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Iraq are safe and that their situation in the war-torn country is “well in hand.”

Deputy Presidential Spokesman Ricardo Saludo, in a press briefing at the Palace, said head of the Philippine humanitarian team in Iraq, Ambassador Roy Cimatu, visited the camps and other areas where the Filipinos are staying to get a first-hand information about their situation.

“Ambassador Roy Cimatu is confident that we have the situation well in hand. In fact, he has visited dozens of camps where Filipinos are situated. He counts about 4,293 OFWs, and the great bulk of them are in camps that he has already visited,” Saludo told reporters at Malacañang.

Nonetheless, a contingency plan is in place and could be immediately set in motion in case of exigency to keep the OFWs out of harm’s way.

For the time being, Saludo said there is no need yet to transfer the OFWs to “safer areas.”

“Not at the moment. As I said, the situation now is that they are secured where they are, and there are contingency plans to put in motion once the situation deteriorates,” Saludo explained.

He added, however, that OFWs who might wish to either transfer to another camp or facility or be repatriated would be assisted by the government.

Director of FPJ “Panday” and producer wife back GMA

Along with his Cebuana movie producer wife Donna Villa, Carlo J. Caparas, the director of the blockbuster 1980’s movie “Panday” that starred Fernando Poe, Jr., is a staunch supporter of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s bid for a six-year mandate this May.

The showbiz “power couple” that had produced blockbuster true-to-life stories and massacre films, reiterated their support for the President when they attended the Battle of Mactan ceremonies held in Lapu-Lapu City in Cebu today where the President was the guest of honor.

“Panday” was the movie based from a Pinoy comics legend classic that cemented the fame of FPJ in the 1980’s with the actor and blockbuster film-maker being associated together. The movie’s enduring popularity had even led to its being remade in the 1990’s into another movie starring Ramon “Bong” Revilla, Jr., now running for senator under the administration ticket of Arroyo.

For her part, Villa, a true blue Cebuana, confirmed that Cebu is “GMA country”. This overwhelming support of Cebuanos could be traced to President Macapagal-Arroyo’s concern for the needs of the province in her three-year administration.

GMA inaugurates new Talisay City Hall

CEBU CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo inaugurated today the new Talisay City Hall in Barangay Lawaan 2.

The three-story building with a combined floor area of 10,000 square feet sits on a 4.6-hectare lot that used to be a poultry farm owned by the family of Gabriel Yap, Sr.

It is just 50 meters away from the recently inaugurated six-lane Cebu South Coastal Road that cuts across the city.

The completion of the P110-million edifice came two months before Mayor Eduardo Gullas ends his term as first elected chief executive of the three-year-old component city.

Gullas said the old city hall complex will be converted into a public college by June to be run by the city, making Talisay the first local government in Cebu to open a public college.

Gullas is seeking a return to Congress in the May 10 elections as first district representative.

Also present during the inauguration was Mayor Gullas’ brother, incumbent Rep. Jose “Dodong” Gullas, who is retiring from politics at the end of his term.

In a brief speech, the President thanked the people of Talisay for their support when she first ran for senator, plucking first place in Talisay and in Cebu’s first district.

She cited the unprecedented growth and development of the three-year-old city which will further improve with the completion of the Cebu South Coastal Road.

The P7 billion highway stretches from Cebu City to Talisay City, an alternative to the south road which is choking traffic in the area.

The President also acknowledged the need for a stable water supply to the province, newest component city, through the Metro Cebu Water District (MCWD), Metro Cebu’s lone water utility.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: April 27, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026222947/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/apr27.htm>

President's Month in Review: May, 2004

President's Month in Review: June, 2004

The President's Day: July 14, 2004

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- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Ill-gotten Wealth**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Sandiganbayan**
- **New Zealand to fund P75-M RP ecotourism LGU projects**
- **Marker of GMA's inaugural to be put up in Cebu**
- **Pahayag ng Pangalawang Pangulo Noli L. de Castro**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Ill-gotten Wealth

We welcome the spirit of the US court decision, but all decisions on ill-gotten wealth lies within the sovereign prerogative of the Philippines.

We are committed to the compensation of human rights victims during martial law and this commitment will be carried out under our laws.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Sandiganbayan

The executive has never interfered with the judiciary.

We have supported a policy of humanitarian treatment for former President Estrada but we have not imposed it on the courts.

New Zealand to fund P75-M RP ecotourism LGU projects

The Philippines and New Zealand recently signed an agreement to implement two programs worth P75 million to address poverty in the country.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo L. Neri stressed that the two programs — the Local Government Unit Management Training Program and the Philippine National Ecotourism Program, Phase II — stand as another testimony of the many contributions of the New Zealand Government to the country's social-economic development.

“The realization of these programs also gives greater meaning to the development partnership among the New Zealand government, the Philippine government, the civil society, the private sector and other Filipino stakeholders,” Neri said.

The Philippine National Ecotourism Program, Phase II, seeks to continue building on and extending the institutional development of key partners implementing the National Ecotourism Strategy.

A particular focus of the project is strengthening the capacity of the Protected Areas and Wildlife Coastal Zone Management Services of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the National Ecotourism Program Office, so they could manage protected natural areas and provide for visitor services.

Four key sites — the Hundred Islands National Park, the Mayon Volcano Natural Park, Bohol and Lake Sebu — will be targeted for site level interventions and new approaches towards public/private partnerships.

The Local Government Unit Management Training Program, on the other hand, aims to build the capabilities of locally-based institutions to provide technical and managerial training to local government units (LGUs).

The project hopes to establish a regional network of highly-skilled training providers in program and project development and management. It also hopes to strengthen the capabilities of selected LGU staffs in program and project development and management by actually working on their priority programs and projects.

For this particular project, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) shall be its counterpart agency. A project steering committee to be chaired by the NEDA Regional Office-CARAGA Regional Director shall provide overall guidance to the project.

New Zealand has committed a total of P75 million to fund the two programs.

Neri expressed appreciation, on behalf of the Philippine government, for the New Zealand government's continued support to the country's development initiatives.

Marker of GMA's inaugural to be put up in Cebu

CEBU CITY—Plans are afoot to set up a permanent marker at the Capitol Grounds here where President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo took her oath of office on June 30.

This was revealed today by Provincial Board Member Victor Maambong who plans to sponsor a resolution proposing the installation of an obelisk or a metal marker to constantly remind the Cebuanos of that glorious moment in their contemporary political history.

“It can be told that the 14th President of the Philippines took her oath of office here. It is not only an honor to the Cebuanos; it is also an affirmation of the clear mandate that she received,” Maambong said.

The resolution has yet to be drafted, but Maambong has already conveyed the idea to Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia.

President Macapagal-Arroyo opted to hold her inaugural in Cebu City as a gesture of gratitude for the overwhelming support its people gave her in the May 10 elections. The President has also announced the setting up of a Malacañang in the South in this city.

Pahayag ng Pangalawang Pangulo Noli L. de Castro

Ang buong bansa ay patuloy na nagdarasal para sa kaligtasan ni Angelo dela Cruz. Ang Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at ako kasama ang buong pamahalaan ay kumikilos at patuloy na gumagawa ng mga hakbang para mabigyan ng solusyon ang hostage situation ni Angelo. Nagsalita na ang ating pamahalaan sa pamamagitan ng DFA at patuloy ang pakikipag-usap sa mga Iraqi at iba pang kaibigan sa Gitnang Silangan na tumutulong at namamagitan para mapalaya si Angelo.

Nananawagan ako na suportahan natin ang ginagawa ng gobyerno. Ang pagtatalu-talo natin ay may tamang panahon. Bigyan natin ang ating pamahalaan nang sapat na panahon at pagtitiwala. Sa pamamagitan ng inyong suporta at pagkakaisa ay maresolba at maisasaayos natin ang problemang ito nang may dignidad bilang isang bansa. Ang mahalaga ngayon ay ang kaligtasan ni Angelo. Nakikiusap ako sa mga kasamahan natin sa media na unawain ang sitwasyon ng news black out dahil hindi kaagad maibubulgar ang mga ginagawang hakbang ng gobyerno sapagka't lalong malalagay sa panganib ang buhay ni Angelo. Huwag na nating dagdagan ang pagdadalamhati ng pamilya at kamag-anak sa pamamagitan ng mga ispekulasyon. Umaasa ang pamahalaan sa pakikiisa nang lahat para sa kaligtasan ng ating kababayan.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 14, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071025211725/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul14.htm>

The President's Day: July 15, 2004

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- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Anti-Corruption Campaign**
- **GMA's 10-pt agenda, core of new dev't plan — NEDA**
- **GMA to launch "Malacañang in the South" in Cebu tomorrow**
- **GMA names Vice President as NAPC alternate chair**
- **KALAHI cites gains in poverty alleviation program**
- **GMA swears in new set of Laguna officials**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Anti-Corruption Campaign

It is our policy to involve, engage and empower all sectors in the anti-corruption campaign.

We welcome the request of the CBCP (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines) to be part of the bidding process.

The Chief Presidential Legal Counsel has been instructed to study the matter closely in the light of present procedures and statutes, to determine the most feasible way the CBCP can play its desired role.

GMA's 10-pt agenda, core of new dev't plan — NEDA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's 10-point national development agenda would be the focus of the country's economic master plan for the next six years.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo L. Neri said the President herself directed the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) to use the 10-point agenda as the substantial basis of the NEDA master plan, also known as the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2004-2010.

"NEDA is already working towards translating the President's 10-point agenda into an action-oriented plan containing programs, projects and activities of national government agencies," Neri said.

The development, Neri said, marks a distinct shift for the national planning agency from its traditional sector-based approach to one that is more target-based and implementation-oriented.

The President's 10-point agenda covers the creation of six to 10 million jobs, education for all, balancing the national budget, and the development of transport and digital infrastructure to connect the entire country.

The agenda also includes the provision of power and water supply to all barangays, decongestion of Metro Manila by developing new centers for government and housing in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, and development of Subic and Clark into the best international service and logistics center in Asia.

The automation of the electoral process, just completion of the peace process, and "closure of divisions" resulting from EDSA 1, 2, and 3 complete the 10-point agenda.

Neri said the President also instructed all Cabinet members to be directly involved in the formulation of the national development agenda and its translation into specific chapters of the MTPDP.

To achieve the 10-point legacy, he cited specific fighting targets, including the creation of 10 million new jobs in six years, increase in growth to a sustainable 7 percent or more up to 2010, and the reduction of poverty incidence from 34 percent to 17 percent.

Other fighting targets are to increase investment rate from 19 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) to 28 percent of GDP in two years, increase exports from \$38 billion to \$50 billion in two years, develop two million hectares of agri-business land, and develop and support two million entrepreneurs.

GMA to launch “Malacañang in the South” in Cebu tomorrow

CEBU CITY— President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo returns to Cebu tomorrow, Friday, to formally launch the “Malacañang in the South” at the Bureau of Customs Building in Cebu City’s port area.

This is the President’s first visit to Cebu after she took her oath of office last June 30 at the Cebu Capitol Grounds.

The Customs Building is situated near the city’s entrance to the newly-finished P7-billion South Coastal Highway that links Cebu and Talisay cities.

Last July 5, Malacañang has issued a memorandum identifying the Customs Building as the site of the “Malacañang in the South.”

Customs officials are now scouting for another building that would house the entire Cebu Customs District and its personnel.

The President is also set to induct into office the government officials who will man the “Malacañang in the South.”

Presidential Assistant for Central Visayas Felix Guanzon said the President’s move to put up to a presidential office outside Metro Manila shows that she intends to fulfill her promise to bring the national government closer to the people not only of the Visayas but also of Mindanao, Cebu being the center of commerce in Southern Philippines.

He said the President is also expected to attend the fiesta of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel at the Carmelite Monastery here. The President had stayed at the monastery after the elections.

GMA names Vice President as NAPC alternate chair

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today designated Vice President Noli de Castro as alternate chair of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC).

The President pointed out that as far as the government’s pro-poor programs are concerned, De Castro will not just be vice president, he is also deputy president. The President is chairman of NAPC.

“As such, he will help me not only to hold meetings of NAPC, but also to exercise supervision over the departments that are part of NAPC in so far as their programs are concerned,” the President said at the 14th en banc meeting of the NAPC in Malacañang.

Discussed at the meeting held at the Heroes Hall were the accomplishment report of the Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHÍ) program, report on the People’s Development Trust Fund (PDTF) strategic direction, and the process of basic sector assemblies and resources requirements.

There was also a presentation of the basic sector priority agenda for the Macapagal-Arroyo’s continuing administration.

NAPC also celebrated its sixth anniversary today. Its theme, “*Ituloy ang Pagkapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan*,” marks the gains of the commission under the leadership of the President in the fight against poverty.

During the program, a compendium of poverty-related researches and studies was launched.

NAPC Lead Convenor Veronica Villavicencio presented a book on micro-finance entitled, “Delivering to the Poor: A Search for Successful Practices in Philippine Microfinance.”

Also launched was the three-year Consolidated NAPC report, which was a fitting tribute to NAPC’s anniversary and in time for the dawning of a renewed administration.

In the spirit of the KALAHÍ convergence, NAPC saw fit that its sixth anniversary would uphold the sacrifices, efforts and dedication of the KALAHÍ stakeholders by giving them recognition for exemplary performance.

The Most Outstanding Basic Sector Council was awarded to the Women Sectoral Council for its unwavering dedication to the poverty alleviation efforts.

It was chosen for its effective and efficient advocacy of its sectoral and cross-sectoral agenda through networking and partnership with the government and other basic sectors.

The Most Outstanding NAPC National Government Agency (NGA) for 2004 was awarded to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) for its efficient and effective partnership with the NAPC Basic Sectors, championing in the successful implementation of innovative and anti-poverty programs and projects that effectively addressed the agenda of the marginalized sectors of society.

The line agencies under NAPC’s supervision on their pro-poor programs are the following: DSWD, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Tourism, Department of Education, Office of the Presidential Assistant on the Peace Process, Department of National Defense, National Economic and Development Authority, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Justice, Department of Finance and Department of Health.

KALAHÍ cites gains in poverty alleviation program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHÍ) convergence programs have reached 696 poor and vulnerable communities in 279 cities and municipalities nationwide, the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) reported in its 14th en banc meeting held today at the Heroes’ Hall in Malacañang.

It is in these communities where regional government agencies, local government units, basic sectors and other groups working for anti-poverty programs converge their energies and resources through the Regional KALAHÍ convergence Groups.

Approximately P826.8 million worth of anti-poverty programs and services have been implemented benefiting hundreds of KALAHÍ communities.

Thirty-five percent went to asset reform-related programs, including agrarian reform, distribution of ancestral domain titles and socialized housing projects.

Forty-nine percent went to social services delivery, including nutrition, health and education and fifteen percent to livelihood development and increasing employment opportunities for the poor.

The amount does not include those provided by the Department of Social Welfare and Development’s KALAHÍ-CIDSS (Comprehensive Integrated Delivery of Social Services) and Department of Agrarian Reform’s KALAHÍ Agrarian Reform zones.

Through the President’s Social Fund, projects in 305 barangays under rural KALAHÍ, KALAHÍ-Urban and KALAHÍ in Conflict Areas and KALAHÍ-Local Initiatives were given an average of P300,000 support for priority projects.

These projects included small infrastructures like farm-to-market roads, small irrigation and construction of health and day-care facilities (P23,733,633); provision of social services like emergency shelter, potable water facilities and electrification (P34,883,471); and income-generating and livelihood projects (P27,385,568).

Based on its three-year experience, the NAPC concluded supportive environment policy, particularly legislation, should have a clear bias for poor and vulnerable sectors for anti-poverty programs to work. The executive branch and the basic sectors have significant roles in bringing this to reality.

The NAPC also said it is necessary to harness and capitalize on private sector investment through technical and resource support to advance and sustain the poverty-reduction goal.

KALAHÍ is the President's comprehensive framework and strategy to reduce poverty, targeting the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society. It is focused, accelerated, convergent and expanded.

KALAHÍ has allotted three million square meters of land for socialized housing, awarded 11 Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles covering 367,346 hectares, earmarked P30 billion Marcos ill-gotten wealth for agrarian reform, realized passage of the anti-trafficking of persons and violence against women and their children act.

GMA swears in new set of Laguna officials

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today administered the oath of office to newly elected provincial and municipal officials of Laguna in simple ceremony held at the Heroes Hall of Malacañang.

Those sworn in were re-elected Laguna Governor Teresita Lazaro and Vice Governor Edwin Olivarez, together with 11 provincial board members and 26 mayors.

The mayors who took their oath were Felicísimo Vierendeza of San Pedro, Nila Aquillo of Cabuyao, Caesar Perez of Los Baños, Bruno Ramos of Bay, Buenafredo Berris of Calauan, Dwight Kampitan of Victoria, Rolan Urriquia of Rizal, Cesar Sulibit of Liliw, Rosendo Corales of Nagcarlan, Samuel Bueser of Alaminos, Teresa Nieva Reodica of Magdalena, Victorino Rodillas of Majayjay, Manuel Rondilla of Luisiana, Wilfredo Paraiso of Lumban, Emmanuel Magana of Kalayaan, Emmanuel Cadayona of Paete, Ignacio Martinez of Pakil, Juanita Manzana of Pangil, Guillermo Lucero of Siniloan, Gerardo Fader of Mabitac, Joel Cuento of Sta. Maria, Vicente Amante of San Pablo City, Joaquin Chipeco of Calamba City and Emilio Ramon Ejercito of Pagsanjan.

Ejercito, nephew of deposed President Joseph Estrada, was among local government officials who called on President Macapagal-Arroyo earlier to congratulate her for winning the May 10 elections.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 15, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028002731/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul15.htm>

The President's Day: July 16, 2004

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- **Gov't leaving no stone unturned in poverty reduction campaign**
- **Philippines-Canada Business Council to set up chapter in Cebu City**
- **RP, U.S. to remain as strong allies — Palace**
- **Human rights victims under Marcos would be compensated — Palace**
- **GMA arrives in Cebu City to formally launch "Malacañang in the South"**
- **GMA graces installation of Arguelles as archbishop of Lipa City**
- **GMA says OPS will undergo major restructuring**

Gov't leaving no stone unturned in poverty reduction campaign

The Macapagal-Arroyo administration is leaving no stone unturned in its continuing anti-poverty campaign, using the multi-pronged approach dubbed Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHÍ) to ensure that government services filter down to the grassroots.

Over the past three years, the NAPC and its partners have endeavored to integrate KALAHÍ poverty reduction thrusts in government programs and projects.

In its July 15, 2004 en banc report, the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) said that about P826.8 million had been poured into KALAHÍ communities in anti-poverty programs and services.

Thirty-five percent of this amount went to what was termed as "asset reform-related programs" that include agrarian reform, distribution of ancestral domain titles and socialized housing projects; 49 percent was allocated for delivery of social services such as nutrition, health and education; 15 percent spent for livelihood development and job creation; and the remaining one percent used for capacity-building programs, particularly of local government units.

During the same three-year period, the NAPC has also identified three million square meters of land as socialized housing sites for the poor, awarded some 367,345 hectares of ancestral domain, earmarked P30 billion in recovered Marcos ill-gotten wealth for agrarian reform and caused the passage of the Anti-Trafficking of Persons and Violence Against Women and Children Act.

The NAPC has also established microfinance, one of President Macapagal-Arroyo's pet projects, as one of the cornerstones in poverty reduction. Microfinance for the poor was accelerated with the creation of the People's Credit and Finance Corp., as well as existing implementing arms such as the Self-Employment Assistance-Kaunlaran of the Department of Social Services and Development targeting one million woman-clients within three years.

The concept of institutionalizing convergence structures and mechanisms for a more efficient implementation of the government's anti-poverty plans and programs formally set in motion with the issuance of Memorandum Circular 33 in 2002.

The memo gave rise to the KALAHÍ which was described as the government's "overarching anti-poverty program" and the convergence mechanisms at the national and regional levels.

Philippines-Canada Business Council to set up chapter in Cebu City

CEBU CITY –To enable companies in this province to take advantage of lucrative trade opportunities in Canada, a Cebu chapter of the Philippines-Canada Business Council (PCBC) is being set up here.

Companies in Cebu can get into fruitful business ventures in tourism, furniture, manpower services and real estate in the major cities in Canada, PCBC president Mina Gabor told members of the Cebu Chamber of Commerce in a luncheon meeting recently.

Gabor especially encouraged real estate developers and brokers to tap Filipinos in Canada who are interested in investing in real estate projects.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is now in this city to formally open the “Malacañang in the South” and inspect the site of the main office of the Department of Tourism which is being moved to this city.

There are about 300,000 Filipinos now residing in Canada and many are purchasing properties in the Philippines, according to Gabor.

There is also an increasing demand for high-skilled laborers in Canada, Gabor said.

Member companies of the PCBC in Cebu can join trade missions and events to showcase their products in Canada.

Besides trade exhibits and festivals, member companies can also join business missions to forge closer relationships with human resource groups in Canada, Gabor said.

In cooperation with the Canadian Embassy, PCBC will hold a seminar in September on how to do business in Canada, Gabor added.

RP, U.S. to remain as strong allies — Palace

Malacañang today said that the Philippines would remain as a strong ally of the United States.

“We have always been strong allies. And we believe that this situation will remain,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said today in a press briefing in Malacañang.

Bunye was reacting to a statement by US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone who said that the US would remain as an ally and a friend of the Philippines.

Human rights victims under Marcos would be compensated — Palace

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye today reiterated President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s previously announced stand that she is for the compensation of the human rights victims during the martial law regime.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Bunye said that the President had earlier earmarked substantial amount of the Marcos recovered wealth for the human rights victims.

“But this needs appropriation on the part of Congress,” Bunye said on how much the recovered wealth of the Marcoses will go to the human rights victims.

In a statement Wednesday, Bunye said Malacañang welcomes the spirit of the US court decision “but all decisions on ill-gotten wealth lie within the sovereign prerogative of the Philippines.”

Bunye was reacting to a decision by US District Court Judge Manuel Real ordering the government to earmark \$40 million as compensation for human rights victims.

“We are committed to the compensation of human rights victims during martial law and this commitment will be carried out under our laws,” he stressed.

GMA arrives in Cebu City to formally launch “Malacañang in the South”

CEBU CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived here this afternoon to formally launch the “Malacañang in the South” and inspect the proposed site for the Department of Tourism head office, which will be transferred to Cebu shortly.

The “Malacañang in the South” will be housed at the Old Cebu Customs Building at the city’s port area.

From Mactan Benito Ebuen Air Base, the President and her official entourage were escorted by a motorcade to the Kawit Point at the Cebu South Reclamation Project to inspect the proposed DOT central office.

Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña led local officials who welcomed the President.

Mayor Osmeña said that the city government, which owns the area, would give a discounted rate for the land that would be used by the DOT premises. He also said that the city government would spend for the transfer of the DOT to this city.

The new DOT building to be put up in Kawit Point would cost about P300 million but Osmeña assured the public that he would help in looking for institutional investors who would help provide funds for the building.

The President then proceeded to the Bureau of Customs Building, the proposed site of the “Malacañang in the South.”

The 84-year-old BOC building, which was constructed in 1920, has been chosen as the “Malacañang in the South” office.

The setting up of a “Malacañang in the South” was a commitment of the President in her desire to bring the national government closer to the people not only of the Visayas but also of Mindanao, Cebu City being the center of commerce in Southern Philippines.

Later in the afternoon, the President held a closed-door meeting with national and local officials involved in the setting up of the “Malacañang in the South.” She was also scheduled to have an informal interaction with the local media here.

After staying overnight, the President will leave at 9 a.m. Saturday for Dumaguete City in nearby Negros Oriental, to meet with local officials there and inspect projects.

GMA graces installation of Arguelles as archbishop of Lipa City

LIPA CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today graced the canonical installation of Archbishop Ramon Arguelles as the 5th archbishop of this city through a high mass held at the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Sebastian here.

Pope John Paul II named Arguelles as archbishop of Lipa City last May 14, replacing Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales who was transferred to Manila following the retirement of Jaime Cardinal Sin.

Arguelles vowed to continue his predecessor’s initiatives in maintaining Lipa as a “drug-free and vice-free” community.

Other ranking officials who attended the affair were Sen. Ralph Recto and his wife, Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos, Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita and a host of senior officials of the military and the police.

Arguelles served as Military Ordinary in 1995. Born on November 12, 1944 in Batangas City, Arguelles completed his studies and seminary formation at the San Carlos Seminary.

In 1993, Arguelles was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Manila. He came home from Rome after his Episcopal ordination on January 6, 1994 and was appointed Military Ordinary on August 25, 1995.

He has been chairman of the Ecumenical Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines since 1995.

Arguelles was also named Spiritual Director of the National Service Committee of the National Charismatic Renewal Movement.

In his remarks following the canonical installation and liturgical reception, Arguelles urged the people to pray for the safety of overseas Filipino worker Angelo de la Cruz who was being held hostage by Islamic militants in Iraq.

Arguelles also thanked the President and other government officials for attending the special occasion.

Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines Bishop Antonio Franco turned over the symbolic pastoral staff to Arguelles.

GMA says OPS will undergo major restructuring

CEBU City—The Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) will undergo a major restructuring to streamline its operations, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced here today.

In a talk with reporters at the training room of the old Customs house here, the President said she is studying the appointment of a Presidential Assistant for Communications who would supervise the five sub-structures under the OPS.

Among the five sub-structures is the Presidential Spokesman who would give regular press briefings and would handle queries by journalists. She identified the four others as an official who would be in charge of preparing the daily presidential messages, an official who would write the presidential speeches, an official in charge of the administrative functions of the OPS, and another who would handle government-owned publications, television network and radio stations.

One of the five sub-structure officials would be designated as the Press Secretary, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said.

“Because the OPS is too big for one person to handle, somebody must handle it, but not the Press Secretary,” the Chief Executive explained.

The President said the timetable for the study on the reorganization of the OPS would be completed before the opening of Congress.

In the same press conference, President Macapagal-Arroyo gave assurances that the projected transfer of the Department of Tourism (DOT) to Cebu City would not upset the national budget.

“It (cost of DOT transfer) will not add to our budget deficit, and I will assure you that no expenditures will be added to our national budget,” the President told reporters here.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said she plans to transport some pieces of furniture in her apartment in Quezon City to the Customs house here which would be converted into what she calls “Malacañang in the South” where she would hold office once a month.

The President pointed out it would not be necessary to hire new staff or reassign employees from Manila, since existing personnel at the President Management Staff in Region 7 would suffice.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also said she chose the old Customs house as the Palace's extension in Cebu because of its beauty and historical value.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 16, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071025212525/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul16.htm>

The President's Day: July 17, 2004

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- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Malacañang in Cebu**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: MILF**
- **Greece potential market for RP seamen**
- **GMA to stress 5 packages of gov't measures in SONA on July 26**
- **DOT transfer to Cebu City starts December**
- **PGMA stresses power of prayer**
- **PGMA launches major projects in Dumaguete**
- **Statement of Foreign Secretary Delia Albert 3:00 pm, 17, July 2004**
- **"Fish sleep in transport" technology presented to GMA**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Malacañang in Cebu

A Malacañang in Cebu is both symbolic and practical.

We always talk of bringing government closer to the people and this is it.

Cebu has been a frontier of progress for a long time but this has not been adequately projected before our people and the world.

By having Cebu host the Presidency part of the time, we bring to the region a greater sense of belonging to the national destiny and future.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: MILF

The international community is one with the Filipino people in pushing the peace process forward.

This is one item in the President's 10-point agenda that has been gaining ground as far as the MILF is concerned.

Peace and development in Mindanao will bring jobs and prosperity to all our people.

Greece potential market for RP seamen

Greece, the world's largest ship owning country, remains one of the major potential labor markets for Filipino seafarers, according to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

In a report to Malacañang, DOLE Undersecretary Manuel G. Imson said the Union of Greek Shipowners (UGS) has acknowledged the role of Filipino seafarers in satisfying the crewing requirements of the Greek fleet.

The Greek fleet has 3,500 ocean-going vessels of all types, renewed and modernized on \$6.9 billion ship building program with additional acquisitions of second hand quality tonnage amounting to \$5.2 billion.

Imson said the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) in Athens verified during the last couple of years a total of 289 manning agreements between the Philippines and Greece involving 340 vessels and 7,302 Filipino seamen.

The verification of manning agreements is conducted before international shipping firms can employ Filipino seafarers, Imson said, stressing that the process is a measure taken by the government to protect the seafarers from illegal recruitment.

“The number of Filipino seafarers based in Greece right now accounted only for less than 10% of the total Greek fleet of 3,500 vessels,” Imson said. “It means that there still exists a considerable market for Filipino seafarers in Greek shipping.”

But while Greece remains a big potential market for Filipino seamen, Imson said the Philippines has to preserve its existing share in the seabased labor market by intensifying its marketing thrusts because of threat from Greece’s European neighbors.

The Philippines remains the number one global supplier of maritime workers with over 200,000 Filipino seafarers on board international vessels, representing 20 percent of actively employed seafarers in international ocean-going vessels. Out of this number, 50 percent are deployed abroad as hotel and restaurant crew for international cruise liners.

Filipino seafarers are also one of the biggest dollar earners. In 2001, they remitted US\$2.3 billion to the country.

GMA to stress 5 packages of gov’t measures in SONA on July 26

CEBU CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has five packages of government measures that she would stress in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) as 14th President of the Republic on July 26.

The President divulged this during a one and a half hour informal interaction with the local and national media at the Training Room of the Old Customs House in the Bureau of Customs building late Friday afternoon.

These will be new measures on economic growth, the government’s anti-corruption campaign, modernization of the educational system, energy improvement, and food for the masses.

The President also said she will convene a Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) meeting a day after she delivers her SONA to present and explain to the body the specifics of her five packages.

The President also plans to continue her *pulong-bayan* type of consultations with the people, at least twice a week because in this town hall type of meetings she gets to know first-hand and feel the problems and needs of the community or barangay.

The *pulong bayan* proved most effective for the President in getting to the masses during the campaign.

The President assured media she would make a formal announcement on her Cabinet at the proper time.

DOT transfer to Cebu City starts December

CEBU CITY—The relocation of the Department of Tourism (DoT) to this city starts in earnest in December, Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan said here Friday as he stressed that the transfer “gives the signal that the government is looking for other avenues of progress.”

“This will have a big impact not only on Cebu alone, because Cebu is the center, it is the hub of the country,” Pagdanganan, who joined President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during a visit here Friday, added.

He said the relocation is necessary to broaden the tourism market. “We can’t have five million tourist arrivals if we only have the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).”

He said other international airports in Cebu and Davao must be developed as tourism gateways.

Three agencies will be transferring their center of operations to Cebu City, according to DoT undersecretary Armand Areza.

Aside from the DoT, the Philippine Tourism Authority and the government-run Philippine Convention and Visitors Corporation will also be based in Cebu City.

The President herself has promised to work in Cebu City at least once a month to bring the government closer to the people.

In a press conference with Cebu and Malacañang reporters, the President announced she would return to this city on August 31 to see if the “Malacañang in the South” is already livable.

On that day, she will also inspect the South Road Project to see if the contractor shall have complied with the deadline to complete the P784-million project.

“I will be coming back in six weeks time. Maybe they can do the repair (of the BOC building),” she said, referring to the 84-year-old Bureau of Customs Building which will be converted into the “Malacañang in the South.”

While holding office in Cebu, she would accept visiting dignitaries, the President said. “They can follow me where I go.”

PGMA stresses power of prayer

CEBU CITY—For President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, nothing beats the power of prayer.

This, the President emphasized before mediemen here late Friday afternoon prior to visiting the Our Lady of Carmelites Seminary to pray for the safety of Angelo de la Cruz, the Filipino truck driver being held hostage by Iraqi militants since last week.

In her interaction with the members of media, the President said she will ask the Divine intervention of the Our Lady of Our Nation to save De la Cruz in much the same way that she prayed for the release of the Dos Palmas hostages at the hands of the Abu Sayyaf more than a year ago.

The President narrated that during the Dos Palmas hostage crisis, she also made the same prayer to the Our Lady of Our Nation. She revealed that after her series of prayers, the hostages were released one by one by the terrorists.

The visit to the Carmelites seminary was the Chief Executive’s last scheduled activity here following an inspection of the proposed site of the new Department of Tourism at the Kawit Island and the future office of the “Malacañang in the South” at the old but imposing Bureau of Customs Building at the port area here.

She also administered the oath of the newly elected officers of the Press Photographers of the Philippines-Cebu Chapter at the Training Room of the Old Customs building where she interacted with the local and national media, her first since a Malacañang-imposed news blackout on the Iraq hostage crisis.

The President defended the government move to impose a news blackout on the case of De la Cruz, saying she wants to preserve the life of the Filipino overseas worker.

“We strictly implemented a news blackout because the government is very sensitive to the plight of Angelo De la Cruz,” the President said.

PGMA launches major projects in Dumaguete

DUMAGUETE CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today led the groundbreaking of major projects designed to promote employment, trade, tourism and the Information Technology (IT) industry in Dumaguete City and Negros Oriental.

In her “Pasasalamat Visit,” the President inaugurated these key infrastructure projects that are expected to help realize the 10-point program she promised in her inaugural speech. “In my term and beyond, I am sure that the realization of these dreams will benefit a lot of our countrymen. Your dream is my dream. These infrastructure projects are surely supporting the creation of 10 million new jobs in the future,” she said in her multi-sectoral program speech at the Lamberto Macias Sports and Cultural Center.

The projects include the construction of a P100-million 1,000-seat Convention Center at the Perdices Memorial Coliseum complex, the P35-million Dumaguete passenger port terminal, the Taclobo High School building and the first call center in the city.

She said the new Philippine Port Authority (PPA) port terminal would address the long-felt need for a decent terminal building for passengers and house the offices of the Coast Guard and Customs in Dumaguete. The Dumaguete port is also a priority project of the PPA, which is linked to the Presidential Nautical Highway serving the Visayas-Mindanao area. President Arroyo said the presence of Zamboaga del Norte Governor Roland Nieves in the ceremony proved the importance of her pet project Roll-on-Roll-off (RORO) Nautical Hi-Way that has provided closer links between Negros Oriental in Visayas and Zamboanga del Norte in Mindanao. She also lauded businessman Julio Sy of EPIXTAR Philippines IT-Enabled Services Corporation, a local subsidiary of a Miami, Florida contact center, for its first call center in the city that is set to hire an initial 250 employees. The President also unveiled the new seal of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) which is also known as Central Visayas Polytechnic College.

Present in the ceremonies were Negros Oriental Governor George P. Arnaiz, Vice-Governor Jose A. Baldado, 1st District Representative Jacinto V. Paras, 2nd Dist. Rep. Emilio C. Macias II, 3rd Dist. Rep. Herminio G. Teves, Dumaguete City Mayor Agustin R. Perdices and Vice-Mayor William Ablong and other elected provincial and local officials who had their mass oath-taking at the Lamberto Macias Sports Center. Included in the Presidential party were Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun, incoming Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) president Garry Teves.

Statement of Foreign Secretary Delia Albert 3:00 pm, 17, July 2004

RP Humanitarian Contingent Chief, 10 Members now in Kuwait

Latest information received was that Brig. Gen. Palparan arrived in Kuwait from Baghdad at midnight of July 16 (Friday). Together with the ten-member Philippine Humanitarian Contingent who arrived earlier in Iraq, they immediately arranged for their onward flight to Manila.

These arrangement have already been finalized. They will be leaving Kuwait in the evening of July 18 (Kuwaiti time) and are expected to arrive in the Philippines on Monday afternoon, July 19 (Philippine Time).

The members of the entire group are as follow:

BGEN JOVITO PALPARAN, AFP

MAJ SAMUEL APAYART, PAF

TSGCHARITO GUTIERREZ, PA

TSG ORLANDO CALANO, PA

TSG NEGSUR BETANTOS, PN

SSG PHILIP VILLAMAR, PN

SSG NESTOR LANUEVO, PA

SGT RONALD MAMUNGAY, PN

SGT EDWIN GARCIA, PA

PO3 JOVEN IBAÑEZ, PN

S1DP MANUEL CAJOTE, PN

“Fish sleep in transport” technology presented to GMA

DUMAGUETE CITY— A new technology on live fish transport could very well make the Philippines very competitive in terms of marketing live the abundant sea commodity internationally, particularly to Hong Kong and China.

Filipino marine-biologist Bonifacio Comandante presented to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo here today the new technology on “how fish are put to sleep” using a non-chemical “buhì solution”.

“We can save on air freight costs by as much as 75 percent due to the absence of water during its transport. Survival rates were determined to be between 95 to 100 percent within nine hours in non-aquatic conditions or without water,” explained the inventor to the President.

President Arroyo then received a gift of a “sleeping lapu-lapu” to be brought back to Manila after the presentation witnessed also by Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Elisea Gozun and incoming Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap.

In her visit to this city, the President also inducted the newly elected Dumaguete Press and Radio Club officers, led by its president Alex Pal of NBN-4 at the Ground Floor of the Bethel Guesthouse.

She then motored to Dumaguete Cathedral of Saint Catherine of Alexandria to attend a concelebrated mass officiated by Negros Oriental Bishop John F. Du before flying back to Malacañang to end her two-day visit to the provinces of Cebu and Negros Oriental.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: July 17, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026225410/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul17.htm>

The President's Day: July 18, 2004

18 JULY 2004

- **Provincial planning props pro-poor economic growth – Neri**
- **Overseas employment continues to grow**
- **Statement of Foreign Secretary Delia Albert: RP Humanitarian Contingent Finalizing Turnover of Responsibilities**

Provincial planning props pro-poor economic growth – Neri

Provincial planning and implementation are keys to pro-poor economic growth as they are more responsive to the needs of the people, particularly the rural poor, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo L. Neri said.

To bring about quality provincial plans, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) recently conducted intensive capacity-building workshops for about 150 provincial planners nationwide Neri himself conceptualized.

“We targeted provincial planning and development coordinators particularly because they possess the institutional memory that is essential in provincial planning,” Neri said during the workshops.

Unlike local elective officials, local planners stay in their posts across different administrations. This makes it imperative that their capabilities be maximized, Neri explained.

Provinces are central to development because of their broadened responsibilities, increased share in national resources and authority to generate revenues under the 1991 Local Government Code, Neri furthered.

“Provinces can also take advantage of scale economies and inter-LGU networks which can yield greater benefits and lessen the cost of providing goods and services, given its supervisory powers over its component municipalities and cities,” Neri said.

“For example, when one service or good is shared by several municipalities, in effect, cost becomes less because more people are able to benefit from it. This may apply to dams, sanitary landfills and heavy equipment,” Neri said.

Neri stressed the importance of effective planning at the provincial level especially in guiding provinces make sustainable investment decisions. He said this also involves enabling provinces to perform their increasing responsibilities more effectively.

Provinces are the most efficient economic units in government as they are independently wealthy compared to the national government and municipalities.

The workshops were conducted for provincial and regional planners in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Cebu City, Davao City and Subic Freeport Zone.

Workshop topics included pro-poor economic growth such as poverty alleviation and economic growth. Also discussed were local fiscal management, environmental/spatial planning, micro-enterprise development and knowledge networking.

The project was funded by the German Cooperation for Development and the Asia-Europe Meeting Trust Fund.

Overseas employment continues to grow

The growth of overseas employment has softened the impact of the high unemployment level as reflected by the latest labor force survey (LFS), Labor Undersecretary Manuel G. Imson said.

The total deployment of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) rose by 12 percent as of June 15 this year as 472,001 OFWs were hired or rehired, surpassing by 50,828 the 421,173 OFWs who were hired or rehired in the same period last year, said Imson who also heads the Department of Labor and Employment's (DOLE) employment promotion and manpower development cluster.

The hiring and rehiring of land-based OFWs grew to 368,431 this year from 319,858 last year and seafarers to 103,570 from 101,315, Imson said.

"The LFS of the National Statistics Office (NSO) does not reflect these facts but they are there. Overseas employment continues to be on the upbeat," Imson stressed.

The number of employed persons in the Philippines continues to increase each year. For April 2004, the number of employed Filipinos rose to 31.520 million, up by 3.6 percent (+1.102 million) from 30.418 in April 2003.

"The number of employed persons will be larger if the LFS accounts for the nation's absent population, the OFWs, Imson explained.

"The government will conduct an employment summit shortly and we are determined to do our share in generating six million local and overseas jobs in the next six years. We shall continue to promote and strengthen decent work, gainful employment, skills development and assistance to informal and other disadvantaged workers," he added.

Statement of Foreign Secretary Delia Albert: RP Humanitarian Contingent Finalizing Turnover of Responsibilities

The remaining members of the Philippine Humanitarian contingent are finalizing the turnover of their responsibilities. Ambassador Roy Cimatu will accompany them in an exit call on the new Polish Commander at Camp Charlie, in Babil Province, Iraq, on Monday morning, July 19.

After the call, the remaining contingent will then proceed to Kuwait and from there return to Manila by commercial flight. Arrangements for their return flight are being made by Philippine Embassy officials in Kuwait. Their exact date and time of arrival in the Philippines will be announced as soon as these details are available.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 18, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071027153804/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul18.htm>

The President's Day: July 19, 2004

19 JULY 2004

- **Statement of the President: Principled Unity**
- **Statement of the President: Drug Problem**
- **GMA reaches out anew to political groups to achieve national reconciliation**
- **World Bank assures GMA of full support**
- **GMA's new mandate spurs more investments**
- **MTRCB board, employees bat for Laguardia's retention**
- **AFP to secure safe release of army officers held captive by NPA – Palace**
- **GMA to discuss specifics of her 10-point agenda in upcoming SONA**
- **GMA's anti-drug war scores big anew**
- **Statement of Foreign Minister Delia Albert**

Statement of the President: Principled Unity

There should be no barriers to principled unity in a democratic nation.

What is past is past and the people have decided to move forward.

We shall continue to reach out to all political groups in the spirit of just reconciliation as we galvanize our people behind a renewed surge of solidarity and nationalism driven by the train of domestic and international events.

This nation is ready to heal its wounds, embrace a collective leadership with pure heart, and get back to work on its most urgent priorities.

Statement of the President: Drug Problem

We have pushed the drug menace far back but we take the UN report as a reminder that there is more to be done.

The drug problem has been half beaten and the street price of amphetamines has gone up almost five fold.

We will keep moving against drug manufacturers and distributors as we team up with our international allies.

This is not only a domestic problem but one that we share with the rest of humanity.

The Filipino people fight alongside all civilized nations on this issue.

GMA reaches out anew to political groups to achieve national reconciliation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has renewed her call for the opposition, and the nation too, to join hands with her to move the nation forward to achieve national reconciliation, principled unity and progress.

“We shall continue to reach out to all political groups in the spirit of just reconciliation as we galvanize our people behind a renewed surge of solidarity and nationalism driven by the train of domestic and international events,” the President said in an official statement issued this morning.

After winning the May 10 polls, the President asked the opposition to send her their best minds so she can put their talents of use in alleviating, if not eradicating, the ills that beset the masses, deliver to them the basic necessities and provide them all the opportunities to uplift their lives and be active partners in realizing economic growth.

“The nation is ready to heal its wounds, embrace a collective leadership with pure heart, and get back to work on its most urgent priorities,” the President said.

Thus during her visit to Dumaguete City to launch some new infrastructure projects and inspect the progress of others already in the works, the President said she will set aside for 12 months her thrust to have some constitutional changes to allow Congress time to enact laws needed to push through her 10-point pro-poor program for the next six years.

“There should be no barriers to principled unity in a democratic nation,” the President emphasized. “What is past is past and the people have decided to move forward.”

World Bank assures GMA of full support

The World Bank has pledged full support for the programs of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s administration.

“We offer you one hundred percent support for your programs and agenda,” World Bank Country Director for the Philippines Joachim von Amsberg told the President this morning during a courtesy call at Malacañang’s Music Room.

“We can do much more for the Philippines in terms of support but you really have to go on first with important measures,” Joachim added.

The President welcomed a suggestion by Joachim for a seminar-forum in the Philippines that will have in attendance former world leaders whose countries also faced fiscal difficulties like a budget deficit.

She asked Joachim to conceptualize the idea so that it can be implemented after her State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 26.

The President also instructed Finance Secretary Anita Amatong to tap former President Fidel V. Ramos to coordinate with the world leaders who would attend the seminar-forum.

The President discussed with Joachim her 10-point pro-poor program, placing emphasis on the construction of school buildings, electrification and water for all and the people’s credit finance cooperative.

She also told Joachim her government has focused on agriculture, particularly on irrigation.

Joachim arrived three weeks ago and expressed satisfaction with the social welfare situation in Cebu and Mindanao which he has already visited.

Joachim joined the World Bank in 1993 and rose to become Country Anchor at the World Bank headquarters in Latin America and the Caribbean. His country experience includes India, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Argentina, Egypt, Arab Republic, Europe-Part I and North America.

He has a Ph. D. in Finance/Economic Policy from the University of British Columbia, an M.S. in Electrical Engineering from the Technische Universitaet Berlin, and an M.B.A., major in Finance, also from the University of British Columbia.

GMA’s new mandate spurs more investments

In what analysts consider largely as an end result of the proclamation of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the country’s foreign portfolio reached \$254.7 million in the first half of the year, nine percent higher from the \$233.6 million posted in the same period last year.

Total inflows and outflows in the first semester, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, were \$1.050 billion and \$796 billion respectively.

Analysts said net foreign portfolio, or investments by non-residents in shares of stocks listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange, government securities, money market investments and peso bank deposits, is expected to surpass last year's figures.

Net foreign portfolio investments posted a total of \$875.8 million in 2003.

"We're expecting an increase this year, but we don't set targets for this. It will depend on what factors but there would be less political concerns," one of the analysts said.

The cooling down of the political climate following the May 10 elections is also seen as a big factor in the surge of investments approved by the Philippine Export Zone Authority (PEZA).

PEZA investments soared 141 percent, to P27.245 billion in the first semester from P11.278 billion in the same period last year.

PEZA Director General Lilia B. de Lima, in a report to Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar V. Purisima, expressed confidence in the country's ability to attract more investments.

"As we put the elections behind us, we are confident that the investment inflows will be sustained for the rest of the year," she said.

The information technology industry registered the biggest growth with P4.03 billion, an increase of 139 percent from last year's P1.686 billion.

For the month of June alone, the PEZA board approved P3.434 billion in new investments which is expected to generate annual average export sales of \$48.592 million and provide direct employment to 3,176 workers.

MTRCB board, employees bat for Laguardia's retention

Members of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) and the MTRCB Employees' Association have rallied behind Chairman Ma. Consoliza Laguardia who has been accused of bungling her job.

Laguardia "has competently led and provided our Board with the proper vision and moral directions, and always with due regard for the constitutional rights of members of the television and movie industry as well as their freedom of expression, with a view to self-regulation within the sector," the Board members said in a letter to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

They expressed utmost confidence and respect for Laguardia and hoped there will be no sudden change in the MTRCB leadership "considering the competence and utmost integrity by which Chairperson Laguardia presides over our Board."

Laguardia "has proven to be a very effective head of our agency and has consistently been living up to the standards of a reasonable, just and capable leader," the MTRCBEA said also in a letter to the President.

"Hence, Madam President, may we humbly request for her re-appointment as chairman of the MTRCB for we deem that Chairman Laguardia is the person best suited for the position," the MTRCBEA said.

Msgr. Nico Bautista, a member of the MTRCB Board, has asked the President Arroyo, also in a letter, to immediately replace Laguardia because of the alleged “state of disarray” of the agency due to her alleged “lack of direction and unimaginative leadership.”

AFP to secure safe release of army officers held captive by NPA – Palace

Malacañang today said the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is exerting all efforts to secure the release of two army soldiers captured by the New People’s Army (NPA) on February 29, 2004.

Army Lt. Ronaldo Fedelino and Pfc. Ronel Nemenon were snatched by members of the Romulo Jalones Command during a seven-hour encounter in Barangay Tamban in Tanambac, Camarines Sur.

One soldier was killed and six were wounded during the battle.

“Of course, like any other hostage situation, efforts cannot be reported in detail, but definitely the AFP top brass are concerned about the safety and welfare of the soldiers,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in a press briefing in Malacañang.

Fedelino’s wife Lea, who complained about the lack of attention given by the government to free the hostages, sought the help of top Army officials to have her husband released in time for their daughter Alea Nicole’s second birthday on August 16.

She also appealed to NPA spokesman Gregorio Rosal who, she said, could secure the release of her husband if he wants to.

Bunye assured Fedelino’s wife that the AFP is exerting all efforts to secure the release of the hostages.

GMA to discuss specifics of her 10-point agenda in upcoming SONA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to discuss the specifics of her fighting targets in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) as 14th President of the Republic on July 26.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said in a press briefing that the Chief Executive now devote more of her time in outlining the specific measures that would flesh out her 10-point program for the next six years.

“The President will be devoting a lot of time on threshing out her 10-point program. And then she will be discussing some fighting targets for the year and she will be discussing some principles and values,” Bunye said.

Earlier in Cebu City, the President divulged five packages of new measures to speed up economic growth, strengthening the government’s anti-corruption campaign, modernize the educational system, promote energy independence and savings, and reduce poverty among the masses.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, had earlier enumerated the fighting targets that would operationalize the President’s 10-point legacy.

Among the targets is to promote the business environment so there could be 10 million jobs for the next six years, reduce poverty incidence from 34 percent to 17 percent, increase the investment from 19 percent in gross domestic product (GDP) ratio to 28 percent in the next two years.

Neri also said the government aims to stabilize the foreign exchange rate and bolster the international reserves from \$38 billion to \$60 billion within two years, develop two million hectares of agricultural business land and support two million entrepreneurs.

According to Neri, to strengthen and sustain the country's global competitiveness, the government must reduce the cost of electricity, modernize infrastructure, and reduce red tape in all government agencies.

GMA's anti-drug war scores big anew

The government's intensified campaign against the drug menace continues to take its toll on big-time drug dealers and manufacturers as elements of the Anti-illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force of the Philippine National Police (AIDSOTF-PNP) raided today another shabu warehouse in Valenzuela City.

A total of 147 drums of precursor and essential chemicals used in the manufacture of shabu, also known as metamphetamine hydrochloride, and other chemicals were confiscated from the warehouse located at the Villa Liwayway Subdivision.

An elated President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo personally visited the underground laboratory and congratulated AIDSOTF chief Police, Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay, for their accomplishment, saying it underscored once again the importance of close coordination among law enforcement agencies and the active support of the people in winning the war against illegal drugs.

"We will keep moving against drug manufacturers and distributors as we team up with our international allies," the President said. "This is not a domestic problem, but one that we share with the rest of humanity."

The President said that since she launched the intensified anti-drug campaign, the drug menace has been half-beaten, and the street price of amphetamines had gone up almost five-fold.

Aglipay said he has directed the task force intelligence Chief Police Senior Superintendent Federico Laciste Jr. to lead the operations for the arrest of suspected syndicate leader Jimmy Coo Huo and his transnational drug trafficking group believed to be involved in smuggling into the country of the prohibited substances.

"Efforts are likewise being exerted to locate the whereabouts of the alleged owner of the warehouse identified as Roger Ang to determine his possible involvement in the illegal activity of Coo Huo," Aglipay said.

He added that while the AIDSOTF has already trained its sights on the local tentacles of Huo's syndicate, the campaign against international drug syndicates remains among the primary concern of the task force.

The President was accompanied to Valenzuela by Interior and Local Government Secretary and NAKTAF Chief Angelo Reyes, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency Director General Anselmo Avenido Jr. and Dangerous Drugs Board Executive Director Jose C. Calida.

Statement of Foreign Minister Delia Albert

(3:00 P.M., July 19, 2004)

The remaining 34 members of the Philippine Humanitarian Contingent in Iraq today concluded turning over their humanitarian and civic projects, and paid their farewell call on the Commander of the Polish sector.

This last component of the Humanitarian Contingent began their journey out of Iraq this morning when they left their quarters in Babil province.

Before the end of this day, all members of the Philippine Humanitarian Contingent will be out of Iraq.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 19, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028004236/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul19.htm>

The President's Day: July 20, 2004

20 JULY 2004

- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Unity Efforts to Continue**
- **Palace welcomes watchdog function of well-meaning groups**
- **GMA's SONA to flesh out her vision, program for the next 6 years**
- **Statement of the President: On the release of Angelo dela Cruz**
- **Crisis over, news blackout lifted as Angelo is coming home soon**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Unity Efforts to Continue

The President's efforts to unite this country are for the Filipino people and not for political convenience.

These efforts will be continuously pursued until such time that leaders of all opposition groups are encouraged to participate and do their share in moving this country forward.

We cannot talk about national development with a divided people, and we have faith in all Filipinos coming together behind the fight for change.

Palace welcomes watchdog function of well-meaning groups

Malacañang said today it would always welcome the watchdog attitude of certain quarters towards the government as long as this contributes towards the effective implementation of services to the people.

In a radio interview this morning, Deputy Presidential Spokesman Ricardo Saludo said watchdog groups, such as non-government organizations (NGOs), have been part and parcel of the administration's governance.

"Ang watchdog ay tumutulong din iyan. Ibig nga natin na ang ating mga programa ay mayroong mga sumusubaybay na hindi nasa gobyerno (Watchdog groups also help. We prefer that our programs are monitored by non-government people)," Saludo said.

In related development, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye today said that the President's efforts to unite this country "are for the Filipino people and not for political convenience."

"These efforts will be continuously pursued until such time that leaders of all opposition groups are encouraged to participate and do their share in moving this country forward," Bunye said, in reaction to the reported statement of defeated presidential candidate Eddie Villanueva.

Villanueva reportedly turned down an offer of reconciliation by the President, stating among other things that whoever is President, he would just give his unsolicited advice, if the national interest was at stake.

Bunye stressed that national development could not be effectively pursued "with a divided people". But he added that the government has faith that all Filipinos would come together "behind the fight for change."

GMA's SONA to flesh out her vision, program for the next 6 years

In an era of change and national renewal, the government is eyeing only one direction — putting people first.

This, in a nutshell, is the theme of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (SONA), which she will deliver before a joint session of the 13th Congress next Monday, July 26, as she tries to convey her vision and program of government in the next six years.

In an update on the much-awaited SONA, the fourth since the President took over the helm of government in 2001 and the first under her new mandate, Malacañang said the contents of the President's address is still a work in progress.

It is, however, expected to outline five packages of executive and legislative proposals covering job creation and economic growth, anti-corruption and good governance, social justice and basic needs, education improvement and youth opportunity, and energy independence and savings.

The SONA, according to a Palace statement, will be preceded by an unveiling of proposed executive and legislative package for job creation and economic growth before a group of businessmen in Makati City on Thursday.

Further discussions on the five packages will be taken up during consecutive Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) meetings after the SONA.

In an effort to bring the proposals down to the people, *pulong bayans* or small town meetings, which proved quite a success during the last presidential campaign, are being planned by the government.

During the SONA, the President is also expected to discuss the specifics of the 10-point agenda she bared in her inaugural speech last June 30.

Among the fighting targets enumerated earlier by Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, are to promote the business environment so there could be 10 million jobs for the next six years, reduce poverty incidence from 34 percent to 17 percent, increase investments from 19 percent in gross domestic product (GDP) ratio to 28 percent in the next two years.

The government also aims to stabilize the foreign exchange rate and increase exports from \$38 billion to \$50 billion within two years, develop two million hectares of agricultural business land, and support two million entrepreneurs.

To strengthen and sustain the country's global competitiveness, the government will try to reduce the cost of electricity, modernize infrastructure, and reduce red tape in all government agencies.

Statement of the President: On the release of Angelo dela Cruz

I am happy to announce to the nation that our long national vigil involving Angelo dela Cruz is over. I thank the Lord Almighty for His blessings.

I just spoke to him. His health is good, his spirits high and he sends his best wishes to every Filipino for their thoughts and prayers.

For Angelo, our nation—Muslim and Christian alike—united around our compassion for an innocent in a world of danger. A father of eight, Angelo has become a Filipino "everyman," a symbol of the hardworking Filipino seeking hope and opportunity.

Your government worked tirelessly for his release; the nation prayed vigilantly for his well-being. I commend the men and women of the government who worked quietly for Angelo's freedom. I am grateful for the unnamed allies, Filipinos and foreigners, who helped facilitate the negotiations and extended goodwill.

Most of all, I thank the Filipino people for their forbearance and prayers.

It was a time of trial and a time of triumph. But it is also a time for sober reflection about the world in which we live and our obligation to our nation and to humanity.

As you know, I committed a small humanitarian force in Iraq to help in reconstruction after the war there, in line with a mandate of the United Nations. I am proud of the work we have done and the courage and determination displayed by our troops and workers there.

With over one million OFWs in the Middle East and over eight million over the whole world, my government has a deep national interest in their well-being wherever they live and work. I made a decision to bring our troops home a few days early in order to spare the life of Angelo. I do not regret that decision.

Every life is important. Angelo was spared, and we rejoice. We are all rewarded for it, particularly his loving family and friends. But our people must also know that will not always be the case. Innocents will come into harm's way, and circumstances may not allow such a successful outcome.

Our people and our nation must remain true to our values and convictions here at home. While remaining committed to other friends and allies abroad.

We must rejoice at the good news, but our happiness must be tempered by the awareness that we live in dangerous times, and that we must work to create a more peaceful world.

To the family of Angelo, he will be home soon. (In Kapampangan)

Salamat at Mabuhay ang Plipino.

Crisis over, news blackout lifted as Angelo is coming home soon

The hostage crisis involving overseas Filipino worker Angelo de la Cruz in Iraq is over.

An ecstatic President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced this to the media this afternoon while thanking the Lord Almighty that the crisis that shook the whole nation and tested the Filipino spirit has come to an end.

"I am happy to announce to the nation that our long national vigil involving Angelo dela Cruz is over," intoned the President as she confirmed the release of the Filipino OFW.

In a scene reminiscent of her reaction in the aftermath of the failed Oakwood mutiny, an elated President raised both her fists in triumph after talking to Dela Cruz following his release from the hands of his abductors in Iraq.

With the release, Malacañang officially ends the news blackout implemented to secure his safety and security.

The President said the government "has a deep national interest in the well-being" of over one million overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East and over eight million worldwide.

"I made a decision to bring our troops home a few days early in order to spare the life of Angelo. I do not regret that decision," she said.

She said every life is important. She noted that Angelo was spared, and "we rejoice." "We are all rewarded for it, particularly his loving family and friends. But our people must also know that that will not always be the case. Innocents will come into harm's way, and circumstances may not allow such a successful outcome," she added.

The President said that the Filipino people and nation must remain true to its values and convictions here at home "while remaining committed to other friends and allies abroad."

"We must rejoice at the good news, but our happiness must be tempered by the awareness that we live in dangerous times, and that we must work to create a more peaceful world," she said.

In the press briefing, the President said that when Angelo arrives home, she would bring him to Our Lady of Rosales in Pangasinan, where she prayed for the safety of the Filipino hostage.

The President said the Filipino driver's health is good, his spirits high and, "he sends his best wishes to every Filipino for their thoughts and prayers."

In their conversation, Angelo assured the President that he is in good condition but the President advised him to undergo medical check-up in a hospital in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) where he will be brought from Baghdad before proceeding to Manila.

The President also talked to Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rafael Seguis who was with Angelo at the time of his release.

Seguis informed the President that the UAE government has extended all assistance in helping bring home Angelo to Manila.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 20, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071027151402/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul20.htm>

The President's Day: July 21, 2004

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- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Budget deficit**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: On Angelo possibly attending the SONA**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: On NY Times editorial**
- **A mass at Our Lady of Rosales, Pangasinan, GMA's way of welcoming Angelo**
- **S. expresses relief over Angelo's release**
- **GMA cites alternative to 5th year in high school**
- **GMA vows to strengthen distance learning**
- **Angelo dela Cruz won't be at GMA's SONA**
- **DOLE to set policy on deployment of OFWs to Iraq — GMA**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Budget deficit

Our economic team has already laid down sound, concrete and equitable proposals to address the budget deficit and these are being worked on with Congress.

We assure the public that every ounce of sacrifice that will be levied out of new tax measures will be matched with vigorous steps in revenue collections and in cutting waste in government.

We are bent on doing our share in terms of sacrifice and responsibility.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: On Angelo possibly attending the SONA

Angelo will be undergoing routine medical checkup at an Abu Dhabi hospital.

He has expressed the desire to have more privacy, and quality time with his family, relatives and townmates.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: On NY Times editorial

The President does not regret her decision.

But we still consider the United States as our big brother in the security arena.

Our long-standing and maturing relationship with the United States will survive this hostage crisis.

We will maintain our strong stand against terrorism in the face of this isolated event.

A mass at Our Lady of Rosales, Pangasinan, GMA's way of welcoming Angelo

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will accompany freed hostage Angelo dela Cruz to pray at Our Lady of Rosales in Pangasinan when the 46-year-old truck driver held hostage for over two weeks in Iraq comes home, Malacañang said today.

Before his release, the President prayed for dela Cruz at Our Lady of Rosales.

"They will hear mass at Our Lady of Rosales in Pangasinan. That is the personal welcome of our President for Angelo," Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said this morning in a radio interview.

“We would like to thank many unnamed persons, entities and friends of our government who helped in the release of dela Cruz,” said Bunye, citing in particular the help of the government of Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Bunye reiterated the government’s concern for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

“Our number one consideration is the safety of our countrymen, not only those in the Middle East but all OFWs,” Bunye said.

U.S. expresses relief over Angelo’s release

The United States embassy today expressed relief over the release of Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz but at the same time condemned the targeting of innocent civilians by Iraqi militants.

In a statement following President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s announcement that the overseas Filipino worker has been released by his Iraqi abductors after 13 days of captivity, the US embassy said it was glad to hear of the good news.

“Our thoughts and prayers have been with Angelo de la Cruz, his family, and the Philippines throughout this ordeal,” the statement said.

While the embassy said it was glad to hear President Macapagal-Arroyo’s announcement, it also condemns the targeting of innocent civilians such as Angelo de la Cruz.

In a separate statement, Malacañang earlier today said that the President did not regret her decision to order the pullout of the Philippine humanitarian contingent in Iraq ahead of schedule.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that the Philippines still considers the US as its “big brother in the security arena.”

“Our long-standing and maturing relationship with the United States will survive this hostage crisis,” Bunye said, in reaction to a New York Times editorial critical of the Philippine decision.

Bunye said the Philippines would maintain its strong stand against terrorism in the face of the isolated event.

GMA cites alternative to 5th year in high school

LUCENA CITY—Instead of requiring a fifth year in high school, the government will incorporate pre-school in the education ladder to encourage early childhood development.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced this today at the opening of the two-day 4th Annual National Convention of the Philippine Schools District Supervisors Association (PSDSA) at the Queen Margarett Hotel here.

“Education is not only about making our young people competitive in the global market. It’s about providing Filipinos excellence in their work and building our nation around democratic and universal values. That is what a good education is,” the President said.

Among those who welcomed the President were Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Edilberto de Jesus, PSDSA president Estelita Reyes, and local officials led by Quezon Governor Wilfrido Enverga and City Mayor Ramon Talaga.

To strengthen the implementation of the early childhood development program of the DepEd, the President said there should be coordination between the DepEd and local government units (LGUs) to transform the already devolved day-care centers into kindergarten schools.

The President said this could be done under a memorandum of understanding between the DepEd and the LGUs or through a legislation.

Education improvement and youth opportunity are among the President's five key packages on jobs creation and economic growth.

The Chief Executive said youth welfare would also be prioritized through sustained government campaign against illegal drugs and gambling with the help of the parents and the community.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said she has allowed NGOs to conduct values formation in schools.

Before her term ends in six years, the President said she wants to accomplish the computerization of elections so teachers could concentrate exclusively on education.

Also to be accomplished, the President said, are the construction of at least 3,000 new classrooms every year, grant of vocational-technological scholarship for every poor family, providing all public high schools with computers and the strengthening of Math, Science and English subjects in the curriculum.

GMA vows to strengthen distance learning

LUCENA City—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said here today she would ask Congress to pass a bill strengthening the distance learning systems to rationalize the distribution of teachers vis a vis the student population.

Speaking at the opening of the 4th Annual National Convention of Philippine Schools District Supervisors Association (PSDSA) here, the President noted that while some areas in the country have an excess of classroom teachers, others are wanting of educators.

The Chief Executive traced the problem to the Magna Carta for teachers which prohibits the reassignment of teachers to another place without her/his consent.

To make up for the inadequacy of teachers in certain places without violating the law, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said a possible option is to institutionalize distance learning through information technology (IT).

“The television can be an additional teacher, so that you can have learning from the main school in the poblacion to the barangay school through information technology,” the President told the school supervisors.

The President also took the opportunity to thank the teachers for their sacrifice and forbearance in “delivering credible elections.”

“I hope that when I step down six years from now, the electoral process would have been completely computerized so that you, the educators of our country, can concentrate exclusively on education,” the President said.

“And I hope that when I step down six years from now, your work would be easier because everyone of school age will be in school, in an uncrowded classroom, in surroundings conducive to learning,” Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo added.

Angelo dela Cruz won't be at GMA's SONA

LUCENA CITY — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said freed Filipino overseas contract worker Angelo dela Cruz would not be attending her State-of-the-Nation Address (SONA) on Monday to give him enough time to recover from his recent ordeal and spend quality time with his family.

In a talk with reporters at the sideline of the 4th Annual National Convention of the Philippine Schools District Supervisors Association (PSDSA) at the Queen Margarett Hotel here, the President said she is also leaving it to Dela Cruz to decide when to visit the Our Lady of Rosales Church in Rosales, Pangasinan, where she prayed for his safe release.

The President also said that the Commission on Appointments (CA) would be constituted a week after her SONA.

The President said all incumbent appointees would remain as caretakers for the time-being.

The President also bared that Oscar Sevilla would be appointed as chairman of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) vice Alfonso Cusi who recently replaced Edgar Manda as general manager of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

DOLE to set policy on deployment of OFWs to Iraq — GMA

LUCENA CITY – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said here today that she is leaving it to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to decide on whether to lift or keep the ban on the deployment of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Iraq.

In an informal interaction with the media here, the President said it is important for the DOLE to come up with a system of informing OFWs of the risks of working in strife-torn Iraq.

In Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye reiterated the government’s offer of assistance to OFWs “who feel that they are in danger in their worksite.” If they would need assistance to return home, that will be facilitated,” he said.

Bunye revealed that during the past two months, the government-assisted repatriation program in Iraq has been able to facilitate the return to the country of more than 200 OFWs from that country.

“For information, we have already repatriated more than 200 of our countrymen during the last two months,” he said.

It will be recalled that the President has directed the DOLE to stop facilitating papers of Filipinos who want to work in Iraq after de la Cruz was kidnapped two weeks ago.

*Source: **Office of the Press Secretary***

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: July 21, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026142237/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul21.htm>

The President's Day: July 22, 2004

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- **GMA orders DOLE to inform OFWs of risks in their country of destination**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Relocation of key departments**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Angelo dela Cruz**
- **GMA spells out proposed tax measures**
- **GMA says gov't to pursue aggressive trade and investments promo drive**
- **GMA pushes development of more SMEs to propel growth**
- **GMA unwraps reform packages before business leaders**

GMA orders DOLE to inform OFWs of risks in their country of destination

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to inform Filipinos of the risks they face in getting employment in the Middle East, Malacañang said today.

The President wants each applicant to consult with DOLE which will explain to them the risks they may encounter in the country they want to work in, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said this morning in his regular radio interview.

Many of our workers are willing to take chances even with the risks so the President wants them to be fully aware of these, Bunye added.

Bunye cited the case of Angelo dela Cruz who was held hostage for more than two weeks by Islamic militants in Iraq before releasing him.

Dela Cruz was employed as a truck driver in Saudi Arabia but he had to follow his employer's orders to go to Iraq, Bunye said.

Conditions like these are what the President wants DOLE to fully explain to Filipino workers applying for work in the Middle East, Bunye said.

Yesterday, the President said DOLE would decide on whether to lift or keep the ban on the deployment of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to Iraq.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Relocation of key departments

Moving out key departments to the regions must be appreciated in the light of decongesting the metropolis as well as empowering a broader segment of our people.

These operational and political objectives far outweigh the temporary dysfunctions that are bound to happen, if there will be any.

These administrative movements are expected to be carried out in a gradual manner so as not to disrupt essential public services, entail higher costs or prejudice organizational efficiency.

These actions are all about bringing the government closer to the people.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Angelo dela Cruz

Many countries, mostly Islamic, as well as groups and individuals, helped us secure the release of Angelo de la Cruz.

At the height of the hostage crisis, we asked the help of both formal and non-formal channels.

In due time, we should be able to formally thank all of them.

GMA spells out proposed tax measures

A comprehensive set of revenue generation and spending reduction initiatives are among the five packages of legislative and executive proposals expected to be outlined by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) before a joint session of the 13th Congress on Monday, July 26.

The measures, both legislative and administrative, are intended to enable the government to eventually balance its budget and reduce the drain on government finances.

The measures were spelled out by the President in her speech before a joint meeting of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the Makati Business Club (MBC) held this afternoon at the Makati Shangri-la in Makati City.

Designed to increase revenues by broadening the tax base and improving tax collection efficiency, the following measures are being considered.

- a gross income tax system;
- the repeal of the value added tax (VAT) to be replaced by a tax that is simpler to administer and would result in increased compliance;
- a tax on windfall telecom income;
- increased tax revenues on sin products and petroleum products;
- rationalization of fiscal incentives;
- use of a targeted tax amnesty; and
- creation of a performance-driven system for revenue agencies.

The administrative actions on the package are designed to maximize the efficient utilization of the nation's resources; reduce costs; increase specific fees, charges, and the duty on petroleum products and capturing more of the revenue potentials of selected government-owned and controlled corporations.

The government is targeting measures that can generate additional annual revenues of over P80 billion and administrative reforms that could generate savings of over P100 billion.

It also aims to achieve its fiscal objectives, aims to create a strong momentum in fostering business confidence, the cornerstone of domestic and foreign investments, and consequently in generating more jobs for the Filipino worker.

GMA says gov't to pursue aggressive trade and investments promo drive

The Macapagal-Arroyo administration is poised to pursue an aggressive promotions campaign for trade and investments in line with its ambitious agenda of reforms to address poverty, corruption, social justice and economic growth.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo elaborated on her platform of government over the next six years in a speech at a joint meeting of the influential business groups Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the Makati Business Club held today at the Makati Shangri La Hotel in Makati City. The affair was also dubbed as Business Pre-SONA (State of the Nation Address) 2004.

Parallel to the trade and investment promotion drive, the government would also launch a vigorous infrastructure development program through close coordination between the Office of the President and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the President said.

“That initiative is a resourceful approach to managing government resources. We aim to fast-track the implementation and approval of ongoing or pipeline infrastructure projects through a new Philippine Infrastructure Corporation,” Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo stressed.

The Chief Executive pointed out that stepped-up infrastructure projects would attain three important economic goals. These are:

1. Providing vital infrastructure that will open up the arteries of new economic activities in areas outside Metro Manila;
2. Pump priming the economy through job creation and growth generation in the high-multiplier sectors of construction, especially housing, agribusiness and mining;
3. Raising the revenue base of the government.

The President said the mining sector would be revitalized by “enhancing the industry road map, streamlining its start-up process, privatizing government assets in mining and by intensifying oil and gas exploration.”

The government also aims to establish the Philippines, specifically the Clark Economic Zone and Subic Freeport, as the “best logistics hub” in Asia.

In her speech, the President directed DTI Secretary Cesar Purisima to institutionalize public-private partnerships to help the government meet its employment and income targets.

“It will be private sector-driven and government-enabled,” the Chief Executive added.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also called on government planners to make the country a regional leader in healthcare services given its “reach base of qualified health professionals” and strategic location in the region. “We could be in the forefront of a billion dollar industry within a few years.”

GMA pushes development of more SMEs to propel growth

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today gave a preview of her July 26 State of the Nation Address (SONA) where she will expound on five reform packages she intends to pursue to spur the country’s economic growth.

The occasion was the joint business meeting at the Shangri-la in Makati City with business leaders of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the Makati Business Club (MBC).

On top of the President’s agenda is the job creation and economic growth package.

“We want to mobilize capital at the grassroots level by continuing to promote entrepreneurship and the development of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs),” the President said.

This is central to the struggling working class who have the entrepreneurial zeal but who need a boost to move into the middle class, she explained.

“By focusing on this activity, we aim to generate one to two additional jobs per enterprise per year,” she said.

There are over 800,000 SMEs now all over the country so that resources and efforts to enlarge them and the micro-enterprises will surely make a meaningful impact on the economy, the President said.

Last month, the President ordered the Cabinet to systematize government procedures for lending to SMEs in line with her promise to triple the amount available to them for loans.

This year's amount for loans from banks to SMEs should be P644.4 billion, or treble the P214.8 last year, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

For the Sulong (SME Unified Lending Opportunities for National Growth) project, the Small Business Finance and Guarantee Corp. (SBFGC) must offer P80.1 billion which is three times P26.7 billion last year.

The President also ordered then the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to have a special undersecretary who would consolidate the various funds that can be put together for more focused lending efforts to SMEs not serviced by the private sector.

GMA unwraps reform packages before business leaders

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today called on every sector, including the opposition, to join hands in helping push her economic, social and political reforms, notably those involving job creation and economic growth.

Speaking at a joint business meeting held this afternoon at the Shangri-la Hotel in Makati City, the President said the package of measures, when fully implemented, would be the most ambitious economic reform agenda in a generation.

The job creation and economic growth package is one of five reform packages that the President aims to enunciate in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Monday. The four others are anti-corruption and good governance, social justice and basic needs, education improvement and youth opportunity, and the energy independence and savings.

In her speech, the President said she is open for Congress, members of the business community, and the people, to participate in the lawmaking process.

“But let me also be clear: while the consultative process is wide open, it is not open-ended. We must and we will move quickly to involve the best minds and best ideas from K-4 and our (political) opposition, to build a package that will move the nation forward. But I will not allow infighting to derail legislation for the sake of scoring political points,” the President said.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo noted that everyone is for economic reform until the details are revealed. “But let me be clear when I say we are no longer at a point where we can step back from the responsibility and say the package isn't perfect,” she said.

She said it is time to bite the bullet and take fundamental action on the economy. “We cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good. We have to move with what we have very, very quickly.”

The President said the country does not have the luxury of time. “We must move forward by making the tough choices, or slip backwards into mediocrity. I am very hopeful and optimistic that we would unite around social and economic reform once and for all and make the Philippines the nation we all know it can be,” she added.

The job creation and economic growth package include:

- A gross income tax system;
- The repeal of the value-added tax;
- VAT to be replaced by a tax that is simpler to administer and increases compliance;
- Tax on windfall telecom income;

- Increasing tax revenues from sin products and petroleum products;
- Rationalization of fiscal incentives;
- The use of targeted tax amnesty;
- The creation of a performance-driven system for revenue agencies

The President also said she would be soliciting the help of the people in promoting the early passage of the measures once this package has been introduced in Congress. “I fully intend to use my new mandate to promote the change demanded by the voters,” she said.

Government officials, as well as representatives of the local business community and foreign chambers of commerce, attended the joint business meeting.

Trade and Industry Cesar Purisima introduced the President as guest speaker while MBC vice chairman Ramon del Rosario Jr. and PCCI president Noemi Saludo made opening remarks.

The meeting was attended by officials of the Makati Business Club, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the American Chamber of Commerce, Australia-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce, Bankers Association of the Philippines, Bishops-Businessmen’s Conference, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Chinese Filipino Business Club, European Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, Japanese Chamber of Commerce, Management Association of the Philippines and the Philippine Exporters Confederation.

The President said the job creation package addresses one of our most formidable challenges, which is consolidating the government budget. It comprises a comprehensive set of revenue generation and spending reduction initiatives, both legislative and administrative that would enable the government to eventually balance its budget and reduce the drain on government finances.

The administrative measures in the package, on the other hand, aims to maximize the efficient use of the nation’s resources, reduce costs, increase specific fees, charges and the duty on petroleum products and capturing more of the revenue potential of selected government-owned and controlled corporations.

The President said the government targets measures that could generate additional annual revenues of about P80 billion and administrative reforms to generate savings of over P100 billion.

On the effort to boost investor confidence in the country, the President said she aims to:

- Heighten promotions for trade and investments;
- Develop infrastructure;
- Fast-track the implementation and approval of ongoing and pipeline infrastructure projects through a new Philippine infrastructure corporation;
- Revitalize the mining sector by enhancing the industry road map, streamlining its start-up process, privatizing government assets in mining and intensifying oil and gas exploration;
- Position Subic and Clark as the best logistics hub in the region;
- Institutionalize public-private partnerships to help the economy meet employment and income targets;
- Develop real strategies to unlock the tremendous advantage in health care services;
- Mobilize capital at the grassroots level by continuing to promote entrepreneurship and the development of small and medium enterprises;
- Generate one to two additional jobs per enterprise per year
- Fast-track the promotion of trade agreements to set the state for a more competitive Philippines in the external sector.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 22, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028091617/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul22.htm>

The President's Day: July 23, 2004

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- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Revenue measures**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Pulse Asia Survey**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Electoral Protest**
- **Strategic RP-US partnership remains strong — GMA**
- **GMA cites specific measures to safeguard OFWs in Iraq, other Middle East countries**
- **GMA lauds 10 outstanding youth organizations**
- **Church, Christian groups express support for GMA programs, moves**
- **RP committed in fight vs terrorism — GMA**
- **GMA's SONA online on OPS website**
- **GMA swears in newly appointed gov't officials, military brass, local execs**
- **GMA, Angelo, hear mass together in Rosales, Pangasinan**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Revenue measures

Work with Congress on these tax measures has already begun ahead of the State of the Nation Address (SONA).

There is a consensus building up on the tax plan in the reform coalition led by President Macapagal-Arroyo and leaders of the House and the Senate.

These will be followed up in weekly post-SONA meetings of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC).

The President will also hold a series of town hall meetings (pulong-bayan) to bring this message across backed up by an action plan to carry her pro-poor agenda forward.

Urgent action is needed to push forward vital programs for the benefit of the poor.

While we are vigorously pushing for the passage of the eight new tax proposals, we will also actively go after tax cheats.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Pulse Asia Survey

We acknowledge the pessimism about the future that is conditioned by transient socio-economic dislocations.

That is why improving the lives of ordinary people is the priority goal of the President and she would deliver.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's ten-point agenda aims to alleviate the hardship among our people.

The agenda is both an omnibus safety net as well as a strategic vanguard against poverty in the long term.

We aim to cut poverty in half during her term and we have hit the ground running.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Electoral Protest

We are glad that Mr. Poe and Ms. Legarda chose only the legal and proper forum to contest the elections.

We welcome their protest in the spirit and in the interest of fair play.

But we are ready to defend our case and we are confident that we stand on solid ground.

Nonetheless, we will continue to extend our hand to all our former adversaries for the sake of unity and reconciliation.

Strategic RP-US partnership remains strong — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today assured the nation and the world that there is no break in the strategic partnership between the Philippines and the United States with the early departure of the Philippine humanitarian contingent in Iraq.

“Let me set the record straight on exaggerated claims by critics and in the media that there is a break in our strategic partnership with the US. This is not the case,” the President said in her remarks during the 106th Foundation Day of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pasay City.

She said the two countries have century-old bonds, tightened by a common political tradition, by world wars fought together, by tens of thousands of brave soldiers who died in the battlefields of freedom.

“No president can break that bond because it is held together by a permanent history. Our partnership for a better world is stronger than ever,” the President said.

She said she enjoys a cordial and direct relationship with US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone and values the ambassador’s role in helping the Philippines. “The same is true with our strong relations with the Bush administration,” she said.

The President also emphasized that the Philippine foreign policy has not changed and that it is and has always been shaped and driven by the supreme interest of the Filipino people.

She said these people include the family of Angelo de la Cruz, his eight children and wife who have to let go of a father halfway around the world, across firefights and trenches, just to make a living.

“That we have to bring Angelo home safely is only incidental to my message to his kin and all others in their grim situation”, she said, adding that she has to look them in the eye and tell them she will fight for their better future.

“This is not a tale about politics. It is about human survival and Diaspora, about poverty and families being torn apart, and our will and resolve to bring food on every table,” the President said.

As De La Cruz comes home, she said she is not about to bare a bleeding heart to defend her position. She said she took sole responsibility, made no apologies and she stuck to her oath.

To prove the consistency of the Philippine foreign policy, the President restated the eight realities she enumerated in January 2001 that the country responds to in order to protect the interests of the Philippines.

These are:

- that China, Japan and U.S. have a determining influence in the security situation and economic evolution of East Asia;
- that more and more, Philippine foreign policy decisions have to be made in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN);
- that the international Islamic community will become more and more important to the Philippines;
- that the coming years will see the redefinition of the role of multilateral and inter-regional organizations in promoting common interests;

- that the defense of the nation's sovereignty and the protection of its environment and natural resources can be carried out only to the extent that it gets others to respect its rights over maritime territory;
- that the country's economic growth will continue to require direct foreign investment;
- that the Philippines can benefit most quickly from international tourism; and
- that OFWs will continue to play a critical role in the country's economic and social stability.

On the uniqueness of the Philippine situation, the President said the country's allies must understand that the nation is in a special circumstance as to matters concerning the safety and security of its workers overseas.

She noted that unlike the US, Australia, Bulgaria and other countries, the Philippines has 1.5 million Filipinos who live and work in the Middle East.

The President said that there are at least four thousand Filipinos now working in Iraq, the largest contingent of private foreign workers in Iraq who drive trucks, build bridges and provide medical treatment and other vital services to Iraqis in need.

According to the President, the life and livelihood of these courageous OFWs are hazardous enough even without the threat of being held as "a political pawn in some terrorist chess game."

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said, arguably, the 4,000 Filipino private workers are more valuable to Iraq than the 100 peacekeepers, notwithstanding the fine work our troops have performed in Iraq.

She said truck drivers and construction workers are highly vulnerable to terrorist attacks. "Combat troops of other coalition members are by definition not as vulnerable. Our people, OFWs, are vulnerable," the President stressed.

"That vulnerability, that threat has now been relieved as a result of the previously-authorized departure of our Philippine troops," the President said.

GMA cites specific measures to safeguard OFWs in Iraq, other Middle East countries

To put out of harm's way some 4,000 Filipino workers in Iraq, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the government has made representations with the coalition camp commanders to enhance security measures for civilian workers, particularly Filipinos, inside their bases.

The President, who spoke during the 106th Foundation Day of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in Pasay City, said that the government has also advised Filipino workers to stay inside the protection of the camps, exercise vigilance and to always keep in mind emergency procedures.

She also stressed the policy of not allowing further deployment of Filipino workers in Iraq "outside secured and established bases." The President imposed the temporary ban immediately after the kidnapping of Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz in Iraq some two weeks ago.

Later, however, the President said it would be up for the Department of Labor and Employment to decide on whether the ban should be lifted or not. But she ordered the DOLE to set up a system whereby all departing OFWs are briefed about the risks or dangers that they face in their areas of work, particularly in the Middle East.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also said that Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert has issued a directive to Philippine missions abroad to ask respective governments bordering Iraq not to allow Filipino truck drivers to cross to that country.

The DFA's Foundation Day falls on the birth anniversary of Apolinario Mabini, the brains of the Katipunan, and considered the first foreign secretary of the Philippines.

In stressing the important role of the Philippine foreign service in rescuing Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz from the hands of his kidnappers, the President thanked the men and women of the service, “who held the line of duty in Iraq especially those who manned their posts during the hostage saga.”

“There were those who braved great danger to complete the mission, and many more others who assisted the overall effort from the sidelines throughout the Middle East and here at home. I am grateful to you all,” she said.

The President said the Philippine foreign policy recognizes that overseas Filipinos will continue to play a critical role in the country’s economic and social stability.

She said the Philippine economy would, for the foreseeable future, continue to be heavily dependent on overseas remittances.

“On the basis of this and of the nation’s humanitarian responsibilities to its people wherever they are, my government works doubly hard to strengthen workers’ protection – protection from the depredations of domestic recruiters as well as of overseas employers, agents, and officials, and protection from physical harm,” she said.

The President has stressed that unlike the U.S., Australia, Bulgaria and other countries, there are at least 1.5 million Filipinos who live and work in the Middle East.

She further noted the 4,000 Filipino workers in Iraq, who drive trucks, build bridges, provide medical treatment and other vital services to Iraqis in need.

“Truck drivers and construction workers are highly vulnerable to terrorist attacks, combat troops of other coalition members are by definition not as vulnerable. Our people, OFWs, are vulnerable,” she said.

Among those present during the DFA Foundation Day ceremonies were Secretary Albert, Undersecretaries Rafael Seguis, Jose Brillantes and Franklin Ebdalin, and Special Envoy Roy Cimatu.

GMA lauds 10 outstanding youth organizations

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the country’s Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations (TAYO) “for proving once more the relevance of youth power in nation-building.”

The President led the awarding ceremonies at Heroes Hall in Malacañang for the best and brightest youth clubs of the nation, a culmination of the second search for TAYO, which is a joint initiative of Senate Majority Leader Francis “Kiko” Pangilinan and the National Youth Commission (NYC).

A distinguished panel of judges headed by NYC Chairperson Paolo Benigno “Bam” Aquino IV and Senator Pangilinan interviewed the representatives of the 20 finalists belonging to the top five organizations from Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao and the National Capital Region.

The youth organizations were judged on the basis of recent programs and projects that have made impacts in the community.

According to Aquino, judges looked into indicators of social mobilization, innovation, creativity, and sustainability and the probability of having the project replicated in other communities.

The ten winners in this year’s TAYO search, which were given P50,000 grants each for future projects of the organization and trophies specially designed by sculptor Toym de Leon Imao, are the following:

1. Students' Association of Management Accountants (SAMA) of the Mariano Marcos State University in Laoag;
2. Sugbuanong Pundok Aron Sugpuon and Child Abuse (SUPACA) of Cebu City;
3. Musical Dramatics Society of Sta. Ana National High School in Davao City;
4. Philippine Rescue 2000, based in Misamis Oriental;
5. Conservation and Restoration Exercise (CORE), Inc., from Bukidnon;
6. Tingog sa Kasanag (TISAKA), in Cagayan de Oro;
7. Watershed Management Youth Council of Davao City;
8. GenRev Student Network, based in Quezon City;
9. Tuklas Katutubo, based in Quezon City; and
10. De La Salle University Manila Student Council.

In her message, the President said the youth of today possess great potential to initiate growth-oriented community programs.

“They have the talent, vigor, and idealism to make things happen. When organized, they can wholly take in the challenges of nation building, as exemplified by TAYO,” the President pointed out.

TAYO is an annual search that aims to recognize, reward, and encourage youth efforts in nation building.

Church, Christian groups express support for GMA programs, moves

Leaders of various Church and Christian organizations today pledged full support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's government, including her decision to pull out the Philippine humanitarian mission from Iraq ahead of schedule.

“Please be assured that in the urgency of the hour, we are here to respond to your call to unity, healing and cooperation for our country to move forward. We pledge the best of our support to make your government successful to the end that our people's aspirations as embodied in our Preamble will finally be realized,” they said in a manifesto presented to the President during a luncheon meeting at Malacañang's State Dining Hall.

They also expressed encouragement from the President's strong resolve to achieve her 10-point program that is her legacy to the nation.

The manifesto also quoted a passage from a world renowned Christian leader Dr. Bill Hamon who spoke in June 1992 in a conference at the Philippine International Cultural Center:

“I have a 20-year plan for the Philippines and over the next 20 years, I am going to make it a head and not a tail, says God. . . I'm going to redeem the Philippines from its slavery, bondage, from being used and abused by other nations, by other people and the Lord says, I'm going to turn it around. And by the year 2005-2012 the Lord says, I'm going to have this nation be a Head-nation and not a Third World nation,” the manifesto said.

They look forward to the fulfillment of God's Prophetic word beginning next year and for the duration of the President's term, the manifesto said.

Among the Church and Christian organizations represented were Christ Jesus Our Life Church, International Bible Society of the Philippines, Living Epistles Churches, Hope Churches Philippines, Foursquare Bible College, Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, Bangon Pilipinas, Family Christian Fellowship, Christian Missionary Alliance, Prayer Life Seminars Inc., Christian City Presbyterians, Universal Pentecostal Church and Peace Makes Churches.

Another group, the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches, also presented a manifesto of support for the President's pullout of the Philippine humanitarian contingent in Iraq read by its secretary general, Bishop Efraim Tendero.

“The President has prayed to God for wisdom and God has given her the wisdom to do what is right. That is what the President has found, the courage to stand by her decision even if some countries criticized her decision as cowardly. . . We supported the President for the Christian act of valuing one human life over and above the interest of commerce,” the manifesto said.

Earlier, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales also expressed his support for the President’s order for the pullout of the troops from Iraq to save Filipino truck driver Angelo dela Cruz.

RP committed in fight vs terrorism — GMA

Even with the pullout of its humanitarian contingent in Iraq in the wake of the Angelo de la Cruz hostage crisis, the Philippine commitment to its global allies in the fight against terrorism does not waver at home or abroad.

This was stressed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today in a policy speech at the Foundation Day of the Department of Foreign Affairs where she was guest of honor and speaker.

“We fully support the world community and our allies including the United States in our coordinated fight,” she said.

“And while we are thankful for the release of Angelo, we must unite around our resolve to wipe out terrorism especially in the Philippines but also in accordance with the international commitments especially under the United Nations and our alliances with our friends abroad,” the President said.

The President said the Filipino people and the nation remain committed to its friends and allies abroad “while remaining true to our convictions here at home.”

“We share the same goal but do not always walk on the same path,” she stressed.

Recent capture of terrorists in the Philippines, she said, has continued to decimate their underground cells.

“Our fight (against terrorism) has been successful. And they know their days are numbered, because we will be coming after them everyday I am in this office until the last one is driven from our islands and we return to peace, order and stability,” she said.

The President asked for understanding in her decision to save the life of de la Cruz, saying the Philippines is in a special circumstance, unlike other countries that are part of the coalition.

She said the Philippines has 1.5 million Filipinos working in the Middle East, 4,000 of them are in Iraq.

These make them vulnerable to terrorist attacks, the President said, as she cautioned that “we may not always have such a happy ending when it comes to terrorist situations.”

GMA’s SONA online on OPS website

The Office of the Press Secretary (OPS), through its website: <http://www.ops.gov.ph>, will show online the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo before a joint session of Congress on Monday, July 26.

Internet users in the Philippines and elsewhere in the world will be able to monitor, in real time, the President’s SONA through the OPS website.

The theme of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (SONA) is "A New Direction: Putting People First in an Era of Change and National Renewal."

In her SONA, the President is expected to discuss the specifics of the 10-point pro-poor agenda that she bared in her inaugural speech last June 30.

GMA swears in newly appointed gov't officials, military brass, local execs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo swore into office today newly appointed Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) General Manager Alfonso Cusi, newly-elected local government executives, flag officers and generals of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, newly-promoted officers of the Philippine Coast Guard and private groups in a ceremonial mass oath-taking at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang.

Aside from Cusi, other government officials inducted were Commissioner Reynaldo Villar of the Commission on Audit (COA), Commissioner Ernesto Dinopol of the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) and Presidential Appointments Secretary Marilou Frostrom.

Other inductees were Rizal Governor Casimiro Ynares, Jr., and Vice Governor Anthony Jesus Alarcon, Surigao del Sur 1st District Representative Prospero Pichay, Jr., Pampanga 3rd District Rep. Jesus Reynaldo Aquino, Leyte 3rd Dist. Rep. Eduardo Veloso, Valenzuela City Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian and Tagudin, Ilocos Sur Mayor Roque Versoza.

The newly appointed flag officers and generals of the AFP who were sworn in include Lt. Gen. Jose Reyes, Rear Admiral Abraham Abesamis, Maj. Gen. Jaime Viernes, Jr., Maj. Gen. Romeo Alamillo, Maj. Gen. Pedro Ramboanga, Jr., Maj. Gen. Antonio Anciano, Maj. Gen. Ricardo Brillantes, Brig. Gen. Alexander Yapching, Brig. Gen. Vicente Guerson, Brig. Gen. Jose Angel Campo, Brig. Gen. Anastacio Salud, Brig. Gen. Emmanuel Jimenez, Commodore Arturo Montojo, Brig. Gen. Manuel Natividad, Commodore Rogelio Calunsag, Brig. Gen. Horacio Tolentino, Brig. Gen. Horacio Lactao, Commodore Reynaldo Basilio, Brig. Gen. Juanito Gomez, Brig. Gen. Manuel Llena, Brig. Gen. Nelson Allaga, Brig. Gen. Ramon Santos, Commodore Emilio Marayag, Brig. Gen. Jesus Tuadles, Commodore Cesar Carranza and Brig. Gen. Leodegario Lopez.

From the Philippine Coast Guard, the newly promoted officers inducted were Vice Admiral Arthur Gosingan, Rear Admiral Danilo Abinoja, Rear Admiral Elpidio Padama and Rear Admiral Damian Carlos.

Also inducted were the officers and board members of the Philippine Councilors League, League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP)-Pangasinan Chapter, Cavite Mayors League, Asian Institute of Management (AIM) Alumni Association, Geodetic Engineers of the Philippines, Inc., Bantay Turista Foundation International, Lopez, Quezon – Greater Manila Residents Association (LOQUEMARA) and the Malacañang Employees Cooperative (MECOOP).

The 45-minute mass oath-taking was witnessed by former President Corazon Aquino and son Tarlac 2nd Dist. Rep. Benigno Aquino III, Executive Secretary, Alberto Romulo, Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, AFP Chief of Staff General Narciso Abaya and Senator Alfredo Lim.

GMA, Angelo, hear mass together in Rosales, Pangasinan

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today took time out from her hectic official functions to hear a Thanksgiving Mass in Rosales, Pangasinan for Divine intercession for the safe release of truck driver Angelo de la Cruz by Islamic militants who held him hostage for two weeks in Iraq.

The President flew to Rosales onboard the presidential chopper and arrived at the Grotto of Our Lady of Immaculate Concepcion Church at 3:25 p.m.

De la Cruz, his wife Arsenia and their five children arrived at the Church about an hour earlier. They were accompanied by Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon “Dinky” Soliman, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Pangasinan Rep. Conrado Estrella III and Rosales Mayor Ricardo Revita.

The Chief Executive hugged Arsenia and shook hands with Angelo upon arrival at the Church before they sat down side by side to recite the Holy Rosary.

The 40-minute Thanksgiving Mass, officiated by Fr. Gregorio Calix, started at 3:40 p.m., followed by *merienda* at the nearby house of visionary Ruel Darang.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo revealed earlier that she prayed for Angelo’s safety at the Church in Rosales.

Shortly after news of Angelo’s release broke out, the President said she would return to the same Church, together with the former hostage, to say their thanksgiving prayer.

Interviewed later by reporters, Angelo said he considered his safe release as a second lease on life, and expressed hopes that other Filipino overseas workers, particularly truck drivers like him, would not come into harm’s way.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: July 23, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026222356/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul23.htm>

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The Good News: Japanese, local businessmen upbeat on RP prospects

Philippine-based Japanese traders are upbeat on business prospects in the next quarter with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo back in office and political and economic reforms seemingly forthcoming.

A July business sentiment survey of the Japanese External Trade Organization (JETRO) showed Japanese businessmen in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were optimistic only in the Philippines as the outlook diffusion index declined in all other ASEAN countries.

The survey was done in the first week of the July shortly after the President took her oath as the 14th President in Cebu City.

Big business is also upbeat as a result of the recent presidential elections according to the most recent executive outlook survey of the Makati Business Club.

Almost seven in every 10 respondents (69 percent) expect economic growth this year to be higher than last year's 4.7 gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate.

"Economic prospects are at its most bullish since 2000 in the eyes of the country's top business executives," the MBC said in a statement.

While MBC interpreted the results as "early signs" of post-election bullishness and optimism, it noted that first quarter GDP already grew by 6.4 percent.

Business sentiment in July compared with June also generally improved, except in oil, chemicals, steel and metals, non-manufacturing, construction and real estate, and other non-manufacturing businesses.

But there was considerable improvement in transportation, machinery manufacturing as well as transport communications, commerce and services segments, the MBC said.

It was the non-traditional manufacturing sector, categorized as "other manufacturing businesses," which made the most headway last month.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: RP-US ties

We are confident that our allies will eventually appreciate the unique Philippine experience and situation that impelled us to withdraw our contingent.

Even the most stable international relationships can follow divergent paths at a certain point, but these paths always meet again.

We travel along the same road of democracy and share the same burden of global security.

We believe that the just decision of the Filipino people will be accepted by the rest of the world just as we respect the decisions of all sovereign nations and peoples.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Abu Sayyaf

The Philippines will continue to do its part in the war against terrorism domestically, regionally and globally.

The domestic arena is our prime focus as we have sustained intelligence operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group and the remnants of the Jemaah Islamiyah.

No week has passed without our forces chalking up gains in capturing and neutralizing their leaders and key operatives.

The noose is tightening on them and their capacity to make trouble is now considerably restricted.

RP now Asia's leader in SMS technology

The Philippines was cited as Asia's leader in short message service (SMS) technology during the recent CommunicAsia 2004, an industry-wide communications and IT-trade event in Asia held in Singapore, according to Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM).

With over 23,000 visitors and 18 participating countries, including the Philippines, the trade event recognized the Philippines as a reliable provider of export products in electronics as well as an emerging leader in telecommunications, both for mobile communications and fixed line subscription.

Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima said that this development only shows that the Philippines is an integral part of IT and telecommunications development in Asia.

The Philippines bested the other countries due to its existing automated information on demand via SMS available to its subscribers over the other countries' basic send and receive SMS.

Foreign visitors commended CITEM, an attached agency of the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) for the Philippine participation to the said trade event.

The twelve Philippine companies that participated in the event were Globe Telecom, GlobeQuest, Smart Communications, PLDT Business Solutions, PLDT Global, 3D Networks, BayanTel, GiveMe Unlimited, INTEX Telecom Systems, Paysetter International, Institute of Electronics and Communications Engineers of the Philippines (IECEP) and Wireless Services Asia.

Other awards given to the Philippines were: Mobile News Award Most Innovative Service, "Share a Load" by Paysetter International; TelecomAsia Magazine Best GSM Carrier, Globe Telecom; TelecomAsia Magazine Best Telecom CEO, Gerardo Ablaza Jr of Globe Telecom and TelecomAsia Magazine Best Emerging Markets Carrier, PLDT.

Trade Undersecretary for International Trade Thomas Aquino said that Philippine content providers are already very much ahead of their ASEAN counterparts in terms of SMS gateway technology, messaging, gaming, location-based services and mobile commerce applications.

To date, the Philippines' telecommunications industry boasts of progressive ICT infrastructure and policies, competitive rates and a very active mobile market, with an estimated 25 percent penetration rate in Metro Manila alone.

There are 23 million active mobile subscribers in the country, statistics say and this figure is attributed to the affordable and accessible mobile services in the Philippines.

Already dubbed as the 'world's texting capital,' the country's SMS or text messages dominate the traffic by a factor of 8 to 1 (text to voice calls) and is expected to accelerate further in the next few years.

"We see a growing trend towards third generation (3G) applications and mobile commerce and this presents an opportunity to Philippine developers in the telecommunications industry," Aquino said.

Third generation applications enable users to send and receive videos, short film clips and conduct videoconferences at the speed of 128 to 265 mbps while m-commerce uses phone to pay bills, buy grocery and pay for cab or bus rides.

New DOLE order provides for additional insurance for OFWs

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has issued guidelines providing for additional insurance and other protective mechanisms for land-based overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who perform tasks requiring them to cross borders, particularly in the Middle East

Department Order No. 63-04, series of 2004, which provides for the guidelines, was signed by Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas during the Command Conference of Middle East-based labor attaches held last July 19-20.

Acting Labor and Employment Secretary Manuel G. Imson said D.O. 63-04 specifies that all land-based OFWs performing cross-border assignments, in whatever capacity, shall be covered by work hazard premium pay which shall not be lower than 100 percent of the basic pay.

They shall also be entitled to an additional insurance cover in the amount of not less than US\$35,000.

Sto. Tomas also issued D.O. No. 64-04 providing for the creation of the DOLE crisis management committee tasked to handle problems involving OFWs especially those who may be caught by acts of violence, terrorism and other similar circumstances abroad.

Imson, in his capacity as Undersecretary for Employment Promotion and Manpower Development, heads the team.

Other members include Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Chief Rosalinda D. Baldoz, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) Chief Virgilio R. Angelo, and the DOLE's International Labor Affairs Service (ILAS).

D.O. 63-04 also provides for the following:

- All land-based OFWs who are required to go into countries other than their contracted country of employment shall be informed of the condition at the time of the contract signing;
- All land-based OFWs, already at the worksites abroad, who are required by their employers to travel outside the borders of their contracted country of employment, as indicated in the employment contract, shall likewise be covered by work hazard pay not lower than 100 percent of the basic pay and additional US\$35,000 insurance cover. Such amendments to the contract shall be submitted to the Philippine Overseas Labor Office having jurisdiction over the place of employment for verification and approval;

- OFWs shall be entitled to indemnity pay equivalent to one month's basic salary plus cost of repatriation and accrued wages and other benefits in case of accidents, fortuitous events, or acts of violence or terrorism and other similar circumstances causing the discontinuance or non-performance of the OFWs' duties onsite;
- Drivers and other OFWs onsite shall no longer be required to physically turn over their vehicles and other equipment in case they fail to perform their duties in areas outside of their contracted country of employment due to act of violence or terrorism, and when their safety is in danger.

During the 106th anniversary of the DFA last Friday, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said that Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert has also issued directives to all Philippine missions bordering Iraq to request their host governments not to allow Filipino truck drivers to cross into Iraqi territory.

The President said the Philippines would continue the temporary ban on the deployment of Filipino workers in Iraq outside secured and established bases, such as truck drivers, hotel and household staff, workers in oil refineries, power plants and other infrastructure.

“We have also advised our workers to stay inside the protection of the camps they are working and to exercise vigilance and keep in mind emergency procedures,” the President said.

Some 4,000 Filipino civilian workers are still working inside military bases of the coalition forces in Iraq.

GMA swears in new set of officers of LGP, LCP

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo swore into office the new set of officers of the League of Governors of the Philippines (LGP) and League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP) in ceremonies held Friday night at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall.

The oath-taking was witnessed by newly designated Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Angelo Reyes and by 40 provincial governors, city mayors and congressmen.

The new officers of LGP are Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis “Chavit” Singson, national chairperson; Bohol Gov. Erico Aumentado, national president; Nueva Ecija Gov. Tomas Josen III, executive vice president; Palawan Gov. Joel Reyes and Cagayan Gov. Edgar Lara as vice presidents for Luzon.

Also inducted into the LGP leadership are Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Lerias, vice president for Visayas; Surigao del Norte Gov. Robert Lyndon Barbers, VP for Mindanao; Bulacan Gov. Josefina dela Cruz, secretary-general; Pangasinan Gov. Victor Agbayani and Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Raymond Villafuerte as deputy secretary-general; Rizal Gov. Casimiro Ynares, treasurer; Laguna Gov. Teresita Lazaro, assistant treasurer; Catanduanes Gov. Leandro Verceles, Jr., spokesman; Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone, press relations officer; Misamis Occidental Gov. Loreto Leo Ocampos, publication and public information officer; and Misamis Oriental Gov. Oscar Moreno as auditor.

In the council of advisers are Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas as chairman, and Oriental Mindoro Gov. Bartolome Marasigan, Bataan Gov. Enrique Garcia, Northern Samar Gov. Raul Daza, South Cotabato Gov. Daisy Fuentes, Negros Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz and Compostela Valley Gov. Jose Caballero as members.

The LCP officials who took their oath were Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn, chairman of the board; Iloilo City Mayor Geronimo Buenaventura Trenas, national president; San Fernando City Mayor Mary Jane Ortega, executive VP; Calbayog City Mayor Mel Senen Sarmiento, secretary-general; Antipolo City Mayor Angelito Gatlabayan, treasurer; Caloocan City Mayor Erico Echiverri, VP for NCR; Urdaneta City Mayor Amadeo Perez, Jr., VP for Luzon; Mandaue City Mayor Thadeo Ouano, VP for Visayas; Surigao City Mayor Alfonso Casurra, VP for Mindanao; Marikina City Mayor Maria Lourdes Fernando, deputy secretary-general for Luzon; Sorsogon City Mayor Sally Ante Lee, women's sector; San Jose Del Monte City Mayor Angelito Sarmiento, policy group

chairman for the House of Representatives and Oroquieta City Mayor Jorge Almonte as the city mayors and local executives chairman.

After the oath-taking, the President hosted a dinner for the local executives at the Ceremonial Hall.

Monday's SONA will have 6-year time frame — Palace

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Monday will be different in that it will have a time-frame of six years unlike her previous ones which were one-year projections, Malacañang said today.

The President is submitting very comprehensive reform packages on five issues so that it will take about 40 minutes which will be longer than the usual, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in a radio interview this morning.

Because of the comprehensive nature of her coming SONA, the President deemed it necessary to give previews. She presented her education program to a group of public school teachers Tuesday and her economic program to business leaders Wednesday, Bunye said.

After delivering her SONA, the President will also hold consultations with the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council and continue to look for a consensus to push through her programs, Bunye added.

The President will also take her programs to the people all over the country in town meetings or *pulong bayans* so that they will understand her thrusts for the next six years.

"We can say the SONA is not just for one day. It is a continuous event. We had a pre-SONA. We will have the actual SONA and post-SONA activities," Bunye said.

The five issues the President will focus on for the next six years are job creation and economic growth, anti-corruption and good governance, social justice and basic needs, education improvement and youth opportunity, and energy independence and savings.

Palace offers hand of reconciliation anew to political foes despite filing of poll protest

While welcoming the electoral protest filed by the opposition in the interest of fair play, Malacañang said today it would continue to extend its hand to all former adversaries for the sake of unity and reconciliation.

In a radio interview this morning, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye reiterated the offer even as he expressed confidence that the administration stands on solid ground with its belief that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro got the clear mandate in the last May 10 polls.

"In the end, this protest would be resolved in favor of the President and the Vice President," he said. "*Naniniwala ako na sila ay ibinoto ng mahigit 13 milyon nating mga kababayan* (I believe that they were voted by more than 13 million of our countrymen)."

Bunye said Malacañang is glad that actor Fernando Poe Jr. and his running mate Loren Legarda chose the legal and proper forum to contest the elections.

The defeated standard bearers of the opposition the other day formally filed their protest at the Presidential Electoral Tribunal.

"We welcome their protest in the spirit and in the interest of fair play," Bunye said. "But we are ready to defend our case and we are confident that we stand on solid ground."

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 24, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071027151836/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul24.htm>

The President's Day: July 25, 2004

25 JULY 2004

- **The Good News: Gov't foresees record rice, corn harvests this year**
- **GMA's SONA a work in progress**
- **Malacañang hails "Kabayan" as a statesman for declining DSWD post**

The Good News: Gov't foresees record rice, corn harvests this year

The Macapagal-Arroyo administration is upbeat over the country's agriculture production this year, saying rice and corn harvests would likely hit record levels due to the promotion of the high-yield Gloria hybrid rice and corn varieties.

Outgoing Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo Jr. said total rice production would increase by about six percent from 13.5 million metric tons (MT) last year to 14.28 this year.

Lorenzo noted that this year's production growth would be highest so far under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, averaging 2.9 percent over the past three years.

The Secretary also said the projected bumper harvests would be realized despite a decline in the harvest area from 4.06 million hectares in 2001 to 4.01 million hectares this year.

Corn production is also expected to hit 5.2 to 5.5 million MT, representing 13 percent to 20 percent improvement over the 4.6 million MT mustered last year.

Lorenzo said the projections indicated that corn harvest for next year could reach 6.1 million MT, enabling the country to attain self-sufficiency in corn.

He attributed the expected hefty growth in rice production to expansions in areas cultivated for the hybrid rice. He pointed out that when the hybrid rice program started in 2001, only about 6,000 hectares were planted to the high-yielding variety. The area continued to widen since, reaching 25,000 hectares in 2002, swelling further to 100,000 hectares in 2003.

For this year, the Department of Agriculture expects to double the area to 200,000 hectares.

"As a result, the national average yield per hectare for rice increased from 3.07 MT per hectare in 2000 to 3.19 MT in 2001, 3.28 MT in 2002 and 3.37 MT in 2003," Lorenzo said.

The average harvest this year is expected to improve further to 3.56 MT per hectare, with the first quarter already hitting 3.43 million MT for a 13.14-percent growth over the same period last year.

Corn, which suffered a 4.55 percent decline in 2002, recovered this year with a first quarter harvest of 1.53 million MT which is 13.27 percent higher than the figure posted for the comparable period last year.

Lorenzo attributed the increase in corn harvest to an expansion in harvest area to 2.5 million hectares from 2.4 million hectares in 2003 and to the sustained improvements in the yield per hectare.

Average yield for corn, Lorenzo said, also showed dramatic improvement at 2.2 MT per hectare this year compared to only 1.80 MT in 2001 and 1.92 MT in 2003.

For the third quarter this year, Mindanao is expected to deliver 60 percent of the country's corn output.

Lorenzo said Mindanao farmers expanded corn cultivation to take advantage of the improved corn prices. The price for yellow corn went up from P8.10 to P9.50 per kilo, while the white variety rose from P9.10 to P10.30 per kilo.

The Secretary also said the world market price for corn is expected to remain stable for the next two years. Hence, it would be easier to encourage more farmers to plant corn, resulting in the stabilization of domestic prices to the benefit of local livestock and poultry sectors.

GMA's SONA a work in progress

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (SONA) she will deliver before a joint session of Congress at 4 p.m. tomorrow is a work in progress, Malacañang said today.

"As is her habit, our President personally is continually reviewing and revising the draft of the speech based on the inputs of her Cabinet and advisers," Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in a radio interview this morning.

Until the President delivers her SONA, no one can really be sure what the final draft of her speech is, Bunye added.

"It is safe to say, however, that the SONA will be very comprehensive as it will cover all six years of her new term, unlike her previous ones which had time frames of one year," Bunye said.

The President is focusing first on her program of government for the next six years so that any changes that will be made in the Cabinet will have to wait, Bunye said.

Thus, the President had two pre-SONA speeches, first with a group of public school teachers on her education program, then with business leaders on her job creation and economic growth program, Bunye said.

And even after the SONA, the President will continue to explain her programs to the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) and also to the people in town meetings or *pulong bayans* with the people.

In her SONA, the President will present five reform packages on job creation and economic growth, anti-corruption and good governance, social justice and basic needs, education improvement and youth opportunity and energy independence and savings.

Malacañang hails "Kabayan" as a statesman for declining DSWD post

Malacañang hailed Vice-President Noli "Kabayan" de Castro as a statesman who puts national interest over his personal interest.

Thus Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said after de Castro declined to head the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in his regular radio.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 25, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071027152108/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul25.htm>

The President's Day: July 26, 2004

26 JULY 2004

- **GMA pledges to trim down bureaucracy**
- **GMA bares vision for the country for next 6 years**
- **'We must have sufficient, cheap energy,' says GMA**
- **GMA defends decision on Angelo, offers no apologies to critics**
- **GMA tells Congress to consider Cha-Cha next year**
- **GMA gets kudos for SONA message**
- **GMA calls for stronger Ombudsman**
- **GMA says budget deficit most urgent problem**

GMA bares vision for the country for next 6 years

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today bared her vision for the country for the next six years, vowing to create economic opportunity at home and abroad.

In her State of the Nation Address (SONA) that she delivered this afternoon before a joint session of the 13th Congress at the Batasan Pambansa, the President said that her administration had made a head start during the last three years.

"We must take bolder steps forward in the next six," the President said.

The President's 35-minute speech was applauded 36 times.

Thanking the people for their "overwhelming support" for her during the May elections, the President said "this is a new day, with a new direction, and a renewed confidence in what we can achieve together."

The President also appealed anew to the political opposition to set aside partisan politics so that the roadmap for progress that she has envisioned for the country can be achieved.

"The season of bitter partisanship is over; the season of service is upon us all — majority, minority, opposition, administration," the President said.

The President said that during her inaugural address last June 30, she laid down a 10-point agenda for the next six years, "not Utopia but something practical we can achieve and accomplish on time."

"At the end of her term, the question will no longer be whether we can compete but where else in the world shall we take an indisputable competitive advantage," the President said.

She said that the next six years is when we finally get things right.

She then restated the five key areas where her administration could focus so that the national economy could expand, namely: 1) job creation and economic growth package; 2) anti-corruption and good governance package; 3) social justice and basic needs package; 4) education improvement and youth opportunity package; and 5) energy independence and savings package.

According to the President, tough decisions will have to be made. "It's going to be tough love from here on. It must be tougher on those who've had it easy than on those who've had it tough already," she added.

"We must bear the pain and share the pain to enjoy the gain together," the President said.

The President said that every year, every President tells Congress that it is the last chance for meaningful change.

“The time for change is well past due. This time, let me say, let’s just do it,” the President said.

‘We must have sufficient, cheap energy,’ says GMA

The country must achieve sufficient, efficient and cheap energy to spur economic growth, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo stressed today.

In her State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered before a joint session of the 13th Congress this afternoon at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City, the President said that the privatization of the state-run National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) is crucial in the thrust for energy independence and efficiency.

The President, however, said that NAPOCOR should be sold “but not in a fire sale.”

She said that investments in infrastructure and energy would provide multiplier effect for the growth and job creation.

“I ask Congress to pass the Transco (National Transmission Corporation) bill that already passed the House in the 12th Congress,” the President said.

The President said that NAPOCOR’s transmission systems will be sold on terms that recognize the lucrative monopoly of its transmission grid.

The Transco franchise bill, which was passed by the House of Representatives during the last Congress, was not acted upon by the Senate.

House leaders assured the President that they would pass the Transco franchise bill anew during 13th Congress.

The passage of the Transco franchise bill is expected to speed up the sale of NAPOCOR and spur new investments in the power sector.

Energy independence is one of the five economic reform packages laid down by the President for her program of government in the next six years under a 10-point agenda that she wants to leave as her legacy to the nation.

The President’s 35-minute speech was applauded 36 times.

GMA pledges to trim down bureaucracy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today asked Congress to pass a law that would enable her to do away with excess personnel and deadwoods in the government service.

“I ask Congress to pass a law on government re-engineering with a silver parachute for redundant offices,” the President said in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered this afternoon at the opening of the 13th Congress at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City.

The President’s 35-minute speech was applauded 36 times.

She said that there is a need to downsize government to reduce “layers of inefficiency.”

According to the President, she has already abolished 80 offices at the Office of the President, vowing to abolish 30 more.

The Chief Executive said part of the savings generated by the trimming of the government workforce would be used to pay for the salary increase of teachers and other employees of a “lean and mean bureaucracy.”

The President said the retooling process also covers a reassessment of the corporate missions of government-owned and/or controlled corporations (GOCCs).

She said that in areas where the private sector can perform better and cheaper, the government would have to step aside.

GMA defends decision on Angelo, offers no apologies to critics

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today defended her decision to pull out the Philippine humanitarian contingent in Iraq to secure the safe release of Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz who was held hostage and threatened of execution by Islamic militants.

In her 35-minute State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered this afternoon during the opening of the 13th Congress at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City, the President said she did not sacrifice the country’s foreign policy, but used it to save the life of an overseas Filipino worker.

Reacting to criticisms that she abruptly changed foreign policy at the height of the hostage drama in Iraq, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said she has no reason to apologize for recalling the humanitarian mission just to ensure the safety and welfare of some eight million OFWs in the Middle East.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo stressed that her administration “holds human life more dearly than international acclaim.”

“And you have a President who is your friend,” the President told the people.

The President added that she saved De la Cruz “because I stuck to my oath.”

“Since I first became President in 2001, my declared foreign policy focus has been to protect the vital interests of the nation, including our eight million overseas Filipinos,” Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo pointed out.

“I cannot apologize for being a protector of my people,” she stressed.

The President also said the few weeks difference in the scheduled pullout and the actual recall “could not justify sacrifice of a human life.”

“Sacrificing Angelo de la Cruz would have been a pointless provocation; it would have put the lives of a million and a half Filipinos in the Middle East at risk, by making them part of the war,” Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said.

She explained that war are for combatants, adding that at the moment, communist rebels are holding hostage two soldiers, but the captives could not expect to be released except by the compassion of their captors or by a military operation.

The President said since she has shown that the government cares for a single human life in the recently concluded hostage crisis involving De la Cruz who was reunited last week with his family in Mexico, Pampanga, the more reason for her to show that government cares for the entire Filipino people.

GMA tells Congress to consider Cha-Cha next year

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said she expects Congress to start considering next year the proposed amendment to the Constitution to pave the way for a change in the country’s system of government.

“Once we have proved to our people that we have done what we can within the present structure of government, we can move on to changing the system to one that enhances our freedom and flexibility to do more,” the President said in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered this afternoon during the joint session of the 13th Congress at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City.

It was the most applauded portion of the SONA, and the Chief Executive even got a standing ovation among the legislators for her short remark on the contentious charter change issue.

At the same time, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo called on all sectors, including the political opposition and her critics, to join her administration in the overall efforts at nation-building.

“No one has a monopoly on right ideas. I am reaching out to all segments of society and all parties, be they with me or against me, to join me in those things that should be everyone’s concern because they rise above politics to the level of patriotism,” the President stressed.

Pressing her advocacy for conciliation, the President brushed aside the traditional “honeymoon period” afforded a newly installed government, saying she does not want such honeymoon after which the national welfare is set aside as bitter political rivalry resumes.

“I want a marriage not of convenience but of conviction, across the spectrum of parties and groups, encompassing the range of intelligent political, religious and economic views. I want a marriage for at least the life of this Congress,” the President stressed.

“I do not ask for unprincipled support because it will not hold. I do ask for an end to unprincipled obstructionism because that always succeeds in defeating our best efforts,” Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo added.

The President also warned agitators exploiting the poor and the victims of social injustice that the government would put an end to their practice.

Underscoring her agenda for reforms, the President said change becomes harder to accomplish with each administration failing to accomplish what it sought to do.

“The time for change is well past due. This time, let me say: Let’s just do it.”

GMA gets kudos for SONA message

Former President Fidel V. Ramos today hailed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s call for unity in her State of the Nation Address (SONA), saying it is the only way to succeed in the intense global competition.

“As an ex-president, I support what President Macapagal-Arroyo has done in the case of Angelo de la Cruz. *Tamang policy na yon* (That policy is right). National interest should come first, including her call for unity and sacrifice. Let’s do it. *Kaya natin ito* (We can do it),” he said.

Newly elected Senator Manuel Roxas II and Surigao Congressman Prospero Pichay echoed Ramos’ observation.

Roxas, who topped the recent senatorial race with the biggest mandate in history, described the President’s SONA as “an outstanding performance.”

The President’s 35-minute speech was applauded 36 times.

“In basketball parlance, she hit a three-point shot. It was specific and fully explained. The President was successful in encouraging everyone to move the country forward. *Ayaw niya ng plastikan. Gusto niya magtrabaho ang lahat ng sama sama* (She doesn’t want pretensions. She wants everybody to work together),” he said.

By opening her speech with the successful resolution of the Angelo de la Cruz hostage crisis, Pichay said the President was successful in imparting that hers is a government that cares and the President is everybody’s friend.

“She was able to convey that her administration is ready to protect the interest of our overseas Filipino workers. The case of Angelo on the other hand united our nation. Once she was able to convey this, she appealed for self-sacrifice and sense of patriotism. With that achieved, people would be willing to pay their taxes. With that single appeal, I think there would be no need for tax measures,” Pichay said.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said that despite the decision of some opposition members to boycott the SONA held at the joint session of the 13th Congress at the Batasang Pambansa, the President would continue to extend her hand of unity and reconciliation.

He also said that after the SONA, the President would continue explaining her package of reforms for the next six years during the scheduled pulong bayans, or small town hall meetings in various parts of the country.

“It is important that our countrymen know what their government intends to do in the next six years,” Bunye said.

Businessman Raul Concepcion hailed the standing ovation the President got on two occasions during her speech – the first when she said that destabilization by those who urge the poor to rebel against the government must stop and the second when she asked Congress to work for a change in government. The President also got a standing ovation when she closed her speech by saying, “We can do it.”

“I’ve never seen such standing ovation. No other President has done this. The business sector for sure would cooperate. As she had said, those who have more will have to give more,” Concepcion said.

GMA calls for stronger Ombudsman

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today asked Congress to pass a law making the Ombudsman’s function as effective as Hong Kong’s Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

In her State of the Nation Address (SONA) before the joint session of the 13th Congress at the Batasang Pambansa this afternoon, the President stressed the need for such a measure, saying government incompetence like bureaucratic corruption, with its numerous leakages, is bad.

Unlike in the private sector, where the free market punishes mistakes, government incompetence punishes only the public,” the President said.

She stressed the need to tear away layers of inefficiency piled on by decades of political accommodation.

These, according to her, include redundancy in the national service, waste in local governments, and pointless procedures for getting done what isn’t needed to secure the public welfare.

“Just how does paying off the health inspector banish bacteria from a dirty kitchen?” the President asked rhetorically to emphasize public corruption.

The Chief Executive said her administration will simplify procedures to eliminate fixers.

GMA says budget deficit most urgent problem

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today identified budget deficit as the government's "most urgent problem."

In her State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered at the joint session of the 13th Congress at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City, the President said solving the budget deficit could be tricky.

"Sometimes stamping out deficits too vigorously can slow down growth, but ignoring them can kill the economy. It sends the wrong signal that we don't understand our fiscal predicament and will not help ourselves. This will drive away investments, exacerbate the deficit and hurt job growth," the Chief Executive explained.

In her SONA, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also cited a litany of the adverse effects of fiscal shortfalls. She said the problem drastically reduces government's ability to undertake infrastructure investments needed to promote business growth and create jobs, as well as hamper the delivery of social services.

"This is a sure-fire formula for national failure," the President stressed.

To address budget deficits, President Macapagal-Arroyo said the government must strengthen its revenue collection, expand government services and, at the same time, indulge in cost cutting. "It boils down to right priorities," she added.

"The beauty of the fiscal problem is that all the solutions are known, though applying the right ones is tricky," the President noted.

She pointed out that all the solutions require toughness on the part of the government, cooperation on the part of business, patience on the part of the people and active support on the part of Congress.

The President earlier disclosed a set of proposed tax measures designed to raise government revenues by at least P80 billion and generate savings by more than P100 billion.

Addressing a gathering of business leaders in Makati City last week, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said the proposed tax measures were designed to maximize efficient utilization of resources, reduce costs, increase specific fees, charges and duty on petroleum products, as well as enhancing revenue-generation capabilities of government-owned or controlled corporations.

The proposed tax measures are:

- gross income tax system;
- repeal of the value added tax (VAT) and replacing it with a tax system that is simpler to administer, resulting in increased compliance;
- a tax on windfall telecom income;
- increased tax revenues on sin products and petroleum products;
- rationalization of fiscal incentives;
- use of targeted tax amnesty; and
- creation of a performance-driven system for revenue agencies.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 26, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028191929/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul26.htm>

The President's Day: July 27, 2004

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- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: SONA**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Triumvirate for Change**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Principled Fiscalization**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Pulse Asia Survey**
- **GMA expands scope of NAKTAF to include other crimes**
- **GMA signs 2 new laws aimed at stimulating private sector investments**
- **SONA report: Agriculture sector posted 8.2% growth in 1st quarter of 2004**
- **Congress leaders support GMA's pro-poor package**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Presidential Electoral Tribunal**
- **NAPC cites 3 measures to realize GMA's pro-poor agenda**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: SONA

The SONA has outlined the President's overall plan of action, the values and principles that must guide us and the end states we must achieve.

As she works with Congress on key reform measures, the Cabinet will also align all its efforts along the overall plan.

We will ensure tight synergy behind the new Philippine agenda as defined by the President.

Mamamayan muna will be pursued together with national stability, peace and progress.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Triumvirate for Change

In Congress and in the Palace, we now have an effective triumvirate that will work for the people.

We are confident that this new era of Philippine democracy will move our nation forward.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Principled Fiscalization

The President has emphasized that while she will not brook unprincipled obstructionism, she is keeping an open mind towards principled fiscalization.

We are confident that the opposition will respond positively by enriching the debate and not by pushing back the clock on reforms.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Pulse Asia Survey

These concerns are already embodied in the President's 10-point agenda, but the public's cooperation is needed in order to address these issues.

Our efforts to curb inflation, and fight crime and corruption have made a significant headway.

We will be unrelenting in these efforts.

The Cabinet is closely monitoring developments on a daily basis and taking the necessary administrative measures to provide relief to the public.

The President will tackle the fundamental reform agenda with Congress.

GMA expands scope of NAKTAF to include other crimes

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today ordered the expansion of the scope of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTAF) so that it would now go after other crimes.

The President said that with the strong recommendation from the board of advisers composed of the business sector and law enforcement groups, the anti-kidnapping agency will now be known as National Anti-Crime Task Force, which will still be chaired by Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes.

She made the announcement during the presentation to the media this morning of the Number 5 Most Wanted Kidnapper, Alexander Aldas, also known as "Ali," at the Presidential Security Group's Conference Room in Malacañang Park, Malacañang, Manila.

Aldas has a P1 million reward and is known to be one of the leaders of the notorious Waray-Waray kidnap-for-ransom gang. He was allegedly involved in the kidnap-slay of Betty Chua Sy, a Coca-Cola executive abducted and killed in Quezon City on Nov. 17, 2003.

At the presentation, the President commended Reyes and the other members of the NAKTAF, the Philippine National Police Intelligence Group, and other operative groups involved in the anti-kidnapping campaign for neutralizing 118 gang members and leaders in less than a year, "bringing kidnapping to an all-time low."

"Their teamwork has been excellent and they continue to make us proud," the President said.

She also lauded all kidnap victims who stood up against their kidnappers and filed appropriate charges against them, adding that they have shown their sense of duty and have greatly contributed to the success in the fight against kidnapping.

The President likewise assured the public that the criminal justice would be pursued to the fullest, all the way up to conviction. She also appealed for the continued support and vigilance of the citizenry "because the welfare of the nation rests upon the sense of duty of each and every citizen."

GMA signs 2 new laws aimed at stimulating private sector investments

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed into law today two important amended measures designed to support her administration's 10-point agenda that includes stimulating private sector investments in Philippine overseas shipping and providing greater protection to all 26 million bank depositors nationwide.

The newly enacted laws, passed by the 12th Congress, are Republic Act 9301, otherwise known as the Overseas Shipping Development Act, and RA 9302, which amends the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) Charter.

RA 9301, which revised certain provisions of RA 7471, is expected to enhance the competitiveness of the Philippine overseas merchant fleet in gaining better access to cargoes worldwide.

Its expansion will allow ship owners and operators to increase investments through the acquisition of ships, investments in overseas shipping, job generation not limited to the deployment of the Filipino seafarers on board Philippine flag-bearing ships and increased shipping activities through acquisition of additional Philippine-registered ships.

The law was a joint effort by Senator Ralph Recto, principal author and sponsor being the chairman of the Senate ways and means committee; Sen. Joker Arroyo, principal author and co-sponsor being the chairman of the public

service committee; former senator now Vice President Noli de Castro, principal author, Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr.

On the part of the House of Representatives, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., and Negros Occidental 1st District Rep. Julio Ledesma IV, House chairman of the House ways and means committee as principal sponsors; Negros Occidental 2nd District Rep. Alfredo Maranon and Negros Oriental 1st District Rep. Jacinto Paras, principal authors and co-sponsors; and Nueva Ecija 3rd District Rep. Aurelio Umali and Negros Oriental 3rd District Rep. Herminio Teves, co-authors.

“The amendments to the Overseas Shipping Act as a complementary measure to RA 9295 or the domestic shipping act signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo in May 2004, will further invigorate our international cargo shipping industry and promote Philippine trading with the rest of the world in the medium and long terms, while creating additional employment in the immediate term,” said Presidential Adviser for Legislative Affairs Gabriel Claudio during the signing ceremony at the Ceremonial Hall.

The enacted RA 9301 was based on the reconciled version of Senate Bill 2732 and House Bill 5770.

The other newly-enacted law, RA 9302, is meant to provide greater protection to all 26 million depositors nationwide through an increase in the maximum deposit insurance coverage (MDIC) from P100,000 to P250,000.

The law will now provide full protection to some 96 percent of deposit accounts amounting to P739 billion as compared to 91 percent or P463 billion under the previous ceiling of P100,000.

Senator Sergio Osmeña III, Chairman of the Senate committee on banks and financial institutions, served as the principal sponsor. Other principal authors included VP de Castro, Senate President Pro Tempore Juan Flavio Velasco, and Senators Magsaysay and Edgardo Angara.

Their counterparts in the House were de Venecia and Tarlac 3rd District Rep. Jesli Lapus as principal authors and co-sponsors; Manila 2nd District Rep. Jaime Lopez, chairman of the committee on banks and financial intermediaries as principal sponsor and Isabela 2nd District Rep. Edwin Uy, Bacolod City Rep. Monico Puentevella, Parañaque City Rep. Eduardo Zialcita, Negros Occidental 3rd District Rep. Jose Carlos Lacson, Makati City Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr., and Congresswoman Cynthia Villar as members of the House Bicameral Conference Committee.

Witnessing the signing ceremony were de Castro, Drilon, de Venecia, Senators Recto and Francis Pangilinan and Congressmen Teves, Lopez, Lapus, Emilio Espinosa and Gerry Salapuddin.

Also in attendance were Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, members of the Monetary Board led by Melito Salazar and Fe Barin; PDIC president Ricardo Tan and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes.

Captains of the banking industry present in the ceremony were Tomas Clemente Jr., president of the Chamber of the Thrift Banks; Philippine National Bank (PNB) Chairman Francisco Dizon and president Lorenzo Tan; United Coconut Planters Bank (UPCB) president/CEO Jose Querubin; Export Bank chairman Sergio Ortiz-Luis and President Benjamin Castillo; and National Association of Urban Depositors chairman Jose Antonio.

SONA report: Agriculture sector posted 8.2% growth in 1st quarter of 2004

The agriculture sector posted a phenomenal growth of 8.2 percent in the first quarter of 2004, the highest recorded in 15 years.

This was contained in a Technical Report on the State of the Nation Address (SONA), which also revealed that growth in agriculture soared to an annual average of 4 percent in gross value added (GVA) in the first three years of

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's administration, attaining the highest output in 2002 with an increase of 4.6 percent.

Government efforts to modernize agriculture created 1.87 million jobs in agriculture, fishery and forestry sector (893,000 jobs) and agricultural services sector (978,000 jobs) from January 2001 to January 2004.

It also implemented the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) by utilizing P83.15 billion in three-and-a-half years for irrigation, post-harvest facilities and other infrastructure, credit, marketing assistance, research and development, capability building, national information network and salary supplement.

On March 20 this year, President Macapagal-Arroyo signed into law Republic Act 9281, which extended the effectivity of duty-free incentives on agricultural inputs, equipment and machinery, and provided for continuous funding support for AFMA until 2015.

To ensure food security, the government increased production of basic agricultural commodities with the average annual production of rice reaching 13.2 metric tons from 2001 to 2003.

The sugar industry has also achieved self-sufficiency since 2003 and will soon export the product to prevent the sudden plunge of sugar's farm-gate prices that will spell losses, instead of gains to sugar planters and workers.

As a showcase of the administration's peace and development efforts in Mindanao, the Mal-Mar Irrigation Project in Maguindanao and North Cotabato was completed and inaugurated in Sept. 2001.

Rice security was enhanced by opening up the industry to importation, when deemed necessary, while at the same time strengthening government support to farmers to increase farm productivity and incomes through modern farming technologies.

As part of its efforts to improve delivery of agricultural goods and services and enhance farmers' welfare, the Macapagal-Arroyo administration mobilized 1,500 rolling stores in 2002, of which 1,207 units were converted into stationary stores (Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera Sa Barangay) to better serve the depressed area constituents on a round-the-clock basis and to curb the diversion of National Food Authority (NFA) rice into commercial channels.

Congress leaders support GMA's pro-poor package

Leaders of Congress today expressed full support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's "pro-poor package" enunciated in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) and presented to the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) meeting at Malacañang.

In her opening remarks at the LEDAC meeting, the President said Vice President Noli de Castro, acting as alternate chairman of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), would oversee implementation of the "social justice and basic needs" component of the "five key reform packages" elaborated in her SONA.

The four other packages are job creation through economic growth, anti-corruption through good government, education and youth opportunity, and energy independence and savings.

During the LEDAC meeting, the first of such conference under her new administration, the Chief Executive presented the conceptual framework of the NAPC consisting of livelihood, asset reform, essential services, protection of the vulnerable and empowerment of the poor.

"To put social justice character to job creation, we have to make sure that we promote micro-finance and agri-business," Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo said. In her inaugural address, the President unveiled her vision of creating three million entrepreneurs through micro-financing and the conversion of two million hectares of land into agri-business hub.

The President said “asset reform” involves three areas of land reform—agrarian, urban and ancestral. “We need to move to the new land reform which is to make farms qualified as collateral,” she told the LEDAC members.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also revealed that she has commissioned Hernando de Soto, head of the Peruvian Institute for Liberty and Democracy, to study the complexity of the urban land situation in the Philippines, as well as the various land documents being used as negotiable instruments.

“The idea is to bring them out from the underground so that they will be officially recognized,” the President said.

The President identified water, power and low-cost medicines as the “most essential (government) services.

The President said there are 200 towns nationwide that still have no supply of potable water. “These will be your specific targets,” she told the LEDAC.

The President also said there are only 4,500 barangays without electricity.

“For low-cost medicines, we want the most essential medicines bought by the poor to be at half the price they were in 2001,” President Macapagal-Arroyo said.

The President identified the vulnerable sector as the children, orphans, out of school youth, battered housewives, the prostitutes and disabled persons.

She noted that De Castro, being the author of the latest law on older persons, qualifies for the job on social justice and basic needs..

On the issue of empowerment, the President said it calls for political participation of the poor.

The Chief Executive also announced that she would institutionalize consultation with the people by creating the Office of the Constituencies as a government arm to know and feel the concerns of the community.

In her opening remarks, the President welcomed the legislators — Senate President Drilon, Senator Aquilino “Nene” Pimentel, Senators Juan Flavio Velasco, Francisco Pangilinan, Ralph Recto, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. and other leaders of the House who attended the meeting.

The President invited them to five LEDAC meetings, corresponding to the five packages, to be held every Tuesday.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Re Presidential Electoral Tribunal

The legal counsel of the President will await service of summons and will file an answer within the time required by the Presidential Electoral Tribunal.

We are confident that we stand on solid legal ground.

NAPC cites 3 measures to realize GMA’s pro-poor agenda

National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Lead Convenor Veronica Villavicencio today said the government would push for the passage of three key legislative measures that are considered very essential in moving forward the pro-poor agenda of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Villavicencio bared this in a media briefing this afternoon after coming out of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) meeting presided by the President at the State Dining Room in Malacañang.

Villavicencio said the three legislations presented to the President by National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Director General Romulo Neri were the Agricultural Lands Collateral Act, National Land Use Policy Act, and the Land Administration Reform Act.

Villavicencio said the Agricultural Lands Collateral Act would only be re-filed and considered as priority legislation as it already passed the committees of both Houses during the 12th Congress.

She said this Act would provide farmers with access to credit such as the use of the Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) given under the land reform program as collaterals for borrowings or loans from government financing institutions (GFIs).

She said farmers could use these loans for improvements in farming and facilities to enhance their production and marketing.

Villavicencio said the National Land Use Policy Act, on the other hand, would provide guidelines in rationalizing land use, particularly for agriculture, ecological protection, and development of agri-business ventures.

Villavicencio said the Land Administration Reform Act, which was also filed in the previous Congress, is a landmark Act that provides the rationalization of land administration and surveying so that the different agencies tasked in the registration of lands, mapping, and surveying would be consolidated under one roof.

She said this office would be transparent and come up with firm guidelines in redefining land titling activities and transactions such as in land valuation.

She said this would also reinforce the agrarian reform program of government by giving security of land tenure, especially to the poor and the indigenious.

Villavicencio said Senate Minority leader Sen. Aquilino Pimentel is supporting the President's pro-poor programs.

"He (Pimentel) stated explicitly that the pro-poor programs are supported by all members of Congress. In fact, he has very constructive suggestions," she said.

Villavicencio said Senate President Franklin Drilon is also committed to the passage of the Agricultural Lands Collateral Act.

*Source: **Office of the Press Secretary***

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 27, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026061702/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul27.htm>

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Statement of the President: Investments in the future

We must look at new tax measures as an investment in the future, in the five reform packages that will bring social and economic benefits to the country and a better life to the average Filipino family.

We must bear a short term pain for a long term gain, brought together in the spirit of sacrifice for the common good and the generations to come.

This is not a one-way burden and government will take the same measure, and even more, of the sacrifices asked of the people.

We are now cutting waste, going after the tax cheats and weeding out the corrupt.

Statement of the President: Critical collaboration

We welcome critical collaboration and principled fiscalization.

Democracy needs an opposition that derives its legitimacy from discovering the best solutions and getting things done.

We will fight unprincipled obstructionism because we have to clear the way for reforms to take place quickly.

I am confident the opposition appreciates the exigencies involved and we are ready to work with them across the table.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Lean and mean bureaucracy

We are eliminating the layers of bureaucracy and the multiplicity of advisory posts.

The President wants straightforward work done along the simplest command line.

This should result in greater cost and work efficiency.

Six-year plan on anti-terrorism bared

The Task Force for the Security of Critical Infrastructures (TFSCI) under the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COC-IS), headed by Undersecretary Abraham Purugganan, would present the National Critical Infrastructure Protection Plan (NCIPP) to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo later this week.

The plan in a statement, Purugganan said the plan would enhance domestic preparedness against terrorism by instituting capacity-building in the government and private sectors, and pursuing the strategy of shared responsibility in the government and private sectors and the citizenry.

In the past critical infrastructures were the main targets for terrorist attacks. Some recent examples were the hacking of the PLDT server system, takeover of the NAIA Control Tower, LRT Rizal Day bombing, attacks on NAPOCOR power plants and transmission lines and Globe cell sites.

The NCIPP is a manifestation of the President's continuing commitment to anti-terrorism. It is a timely response to the changing national security environment requiring the active participation of the private sector and the citizenry in securing our critical establishments," Purugganan said.

Among the major initiatives identified for the next six years are the set of instructions for government agencies tasked with protecting the critical infrastructures in their jurisdiction, awareness-building of the citizenry, and the proposed creation of the Office for Critical Infrastructure Protection (OCIP) whose function will be that of a program manager; assisting the agencies in the implementation of programs.

Critical infrastructures (CI) as defined in the plan are "the underlying institutions and facilities essential for the normal functioning of the society, the economy and the government. What defines 'critical' is the indispensability of the facility to the country as a whole, to the local population, to the economy, or to the moral of the people."

The twelve key factors identified in the plan are food and agriculture, transportation, information and communication, water, energy, health, emergency response services, government, manufacturing, banking and finance, strategic commercial centers, and cultural and religious sites and facilities.

A product of many months of consultation with the government and private sector stakeholders, the NCIPP was formulated based on several assumptions. First is that any form of hazard or attack on CI's will disrupt the government and the economy. Secondly, the disruption or destruction of a single infrastructure asset can have a cascading effect. And lastly, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and other law enforcement agencies cannot sufficient cover the large number of CI's in the country.

While the task force recognizes that much work remains to be done in order to update, validate and fill-in the gaps in the NCIPP, Purugganan said that the NCIPP represents a milestones in defining a concrete domestic preparedness framework that is responsive to the changing security environment.

The Task Force for the Security of Critical Infrastructure was created last September 24, 2003 by the President under the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COC-IS) to ensure the protection of critical infrastructures.

SONA report cites sustained economic growth in GMA's 3-year rule

The administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has pushed for an improved macroeconomic growth performance that sustained economic growth in the last three years.

The technical report of the President's State of the Nation Address (SONA) noted that from 2001 to 2003, the gross domestic product (GDP) increased from three percent to 4.7 percent while the gross national product (GNP) grew from 3.5 percent to 5.6 percent.

In the first quarter of 2004, the GDP grew by to 6.4 percent from 4.8 percent in the same quarter last year while GNP increased by 6.2 percent from 4.6 percent.

This is the highest quarterly growth posted by the economy since the fourth quarter of 1989. The Philippine economy even outperformed the economies of Indonesia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore last year.

The economy also maintained slower increases in the prices of goods and services. Government gradually reduced and maintained inflation at single digit levels from 6.1 percent in 2001 to 3.1 percent in 2002 and 2003.

The economy also maintained interest rates at single digit levels. Interest rates based on the 91-day Treasury bills, used by banks and other lending institutions as a benchmark for lending rates, declined from 9.87 percent in 2001 to 6.03 percent in 2003.

For the first six months of 2004, interest rates averaged 7.02 percent. The lower interest rate regime makes credit and loans more affordable and supports economic growth.

The economy also maintained a generally stable peso-dollar exchange rate.

The government effectively contained the fiscal deficit. In 2001, the deficit exceeded the P145 billion ceiling and grew to P147.02 billion in view of the problems inherited from the previous administration.

However, the government was able to contain the 2002 deficit to P210.74 billion, well within the ceiling, and further lowered it to P199.99 billion in 2003. The deficit in 2003 was 4.6 percent of GDP, which is lower than the 5.3 percent of GDP in 2002.

For the first five months of 2004, the deficit stood at P77.4 billion, which is still below the first semester target of P79.58 billion. By focusing on fiscal discipline and pursuing good governance, the country expects to stay below its P197.8 billion deficit ceiling for 2004.

Revenue collections exhibited increasing trends on a year-on-year basis. Total revenues increased from P563.7 billion in 2001 to P626.6 billion in 2003. The sustained growth in collections is attributed to the continuing recovery of the economy and the improving collection efforts. As almost all agencies remitted higher collections in 2004, total revenues from January to May grew by 12.5 percent to P288.8 billion from P256.7 billion registered over the same period in 2003.

Meanwhile, total approved foreign direct investments expanded to P115.4 billion in the first quarter of 2004 from P6.3 billion in the same quarter in 2003, the highest quarterly foreign direct investment turnout since the third quarter of 1997. This was brought by the huge venture in the power sector and the upbeat prospects in the information and communications technology industry.

Initiatives in the motor vehicle sector likewise generated substantial investments from Ford Motor Company (\$50 million) and paved the way for Mitsubishi Motors Corp. to choose the Philippines as its ASEAN production base for its new SUV model. The Mitsubishi project entails P10 billion investments and production of 200,000 units for export in the next six to seven years.

Continued growth in exports were registered despite the weakness of the international markets in the previous years. Exports grew by 11.2 percent from \$32.15 billion in 2001 to \$35.75 billion in 2003, despite the terror attacks, weakening of the Japanese and US markets, and the spread of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Further improvement is expected this year as exports grew by 8.6 percent to \$15.42 billion in the first five months, from \$14.2 billion during the same period last year, led by the electronic, apparel and clothing accessories sectors.

The administration also pursued the development of the small and medium enterprise with the approval in 2002 of the National Small and medium Enterprises Development Agenda, the country's roadmap for SMEs, which seeks to create a relevant SME sector that would provide stronger domestic supply base for globally competitive industries.

In the last three years, the government was able to maintain industrial peace in 21 years with only 117 strikes recorded from 2001 to 2003, or an average of 39 strikes per year.

The government was also able to enhance domestic and international tourism promotion. Visitor arrivals to the Philippines increased from 1,796,893 in 2001 to 1,932,677 in 2002.

Despite the SARS outbreak, the Gulf war and threat of terrorism in pocket areas, tourist arrivals in 2003 reached 1,907,226. Except for 2003, tourism receipts showed a rising trend from \$1.72 billion in 2001 to \$1.74 billion in 2002.

From January to May 2004, tourist arrivals reached 954,473, up 36 percent from the same period last year, translating into \$609.47 million tourism receipts.

GMA to directly consult people through pulong bayan — Palace

As a corollary to the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) meetings on the five economic reform packages President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presented in her State of the Nation Address (SONA), she will also hold *pulong bayans* or town hall meetings with the people to keep them informed.

It will be a LEDAC meeting on one of her reform packages then a *pulong bayan* by the President so that she can directly explain to the people her measures and their implications, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said today.

The first pulong bayan after her SONA was held this morning in Barangay Don Bosco, Parañaque City.

It is important for the President to explain her programs to as wide a sector of society so they will understand the direction of government, Bunye said. This way it will be easier to get their cooperation in pushing through the programs of the President, he added.

Yesterday, the President designated Vice President Noli de Castro to take charge of the social justice and basic needs package.

GMA interacts with Parañaque barangay residents in first post-election pulong-bayan

In line with the administration's commitment to serve the people and continue its pro-poor program, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today launched the first of her new *pulong bayan* sorties in barangay Don Bosco in Parañaque City.

The President arrived at Don Bosco Park in Better Living Subdivision in Parañaque City 15-minutes early from the original 10:00 a.m. schedule.

In her impromptu speech before the actual *pulong bayan*, the President informed the 2,500 residents gathered inside the covered basketball court that the *pulong bayan* is the fulfillment of her promise during the election campaign to personally interact with the people and inform them about the government's plans for the welfare of the Filipino people in the next six years.

The President was assisted by Vice President Noli De Castro, the new alternate head of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, in the one-on-one interaction with Parañaque City residents.

She recalled that during the campaign she promised the Filipino people she would create six to 10 million jobs in the next six years, provide clean and potable water and cheap electricity in every barangay in the country, health insurance to all poor, quality education and school buildings in every barangay and food for every Filipino.

In the forum, the President personally urged a jobless lady named Rose, seamstress and a resident of Barangay San Antonio, to organize at least five of her fellow seamstresses and submit their names to Mel Alonzo of the SB Corporation.

She said the SB Corporation would provide them a micro-finance loan for their planned small business for them to be included in the self-employment assistance program of the government.

The President also ordered the Department of Social Welfare and Development-National Capital Region and Parañaque City Social Service workers to supervise the group of Rose.

The President also assured the residents of Barangay Don Bosco that in three months time, their long-time problem on potable water would be solved after Maynilad promised to give priority to the area.

She told them that with the successful implementation of the PhilHealth Card in Parañaque, she will now concentrate on setting up more *Botika ng Barangay* which sells branded medicines at half price.

According to Mayor Jun Bernabe, there is only one *Botika ng Barangay* in Parañaque now. The President wants more in Don Bosco, San Antonio and other barangays.

The visit of the President here provided more positive results for the residents. The management of SM Shopping Mall in Bicutan promised to build a pedestrian overpass along the Bicutan interchange all the way to Soledad Street in exchange for a tax credit from the city government.

Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman Bayani Fernando also informed the residents that Parañaque and Taguig have agreed to help each other in solving the traffic congestion at the Sucat and Bicutan interchanges.

Vice President Noli De Castro, Press Secretary Milton Alingod, Health Secretary Dayrit, Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes, Public Works Secretary Florante Soriquez, Deputy Presidential Spokesman and Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo, MMDA chairman Fernando accompanied the President in her visit.

Welcoming the President at the site were 1st District Representative Eduardo Zialcita, 2nd District Representative Roilo Golez, Mayor Jun Bernabe and Don Bosco Barangay Captain Jun Virata.

GMA greets INC on its 90th anniversary

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today congratulated the Iglesia ni Cristo on its 90th anniversary, which it celebrated yesterday, saying it has remained strong as an institution over the years.

In her message aired over the INC's radio station DZEC, the President thanked the Iglesia ni Cristo for its support and vowed to do her best to live up to its expectations.

"Maraming salamat sa inyong suporta sa akin at asahan ninyo na hindi kayo magsisisi (Thank you for your support and rest assured that you will not regret it)," the President said.

The INC supported the President in the May 10 polls.

“Gagamitin ko ang lahat ng aking kaalaman, lakas at kakayanan upang umunlad at maging mapayapa ang ating bayan (I will use all my knowledge, strength and power to make our country progressive and peaceful),” she said.

She reiterated her State of the Nation Address (SONA) vow that she would put people first in her list of priorities and implement good governance.

“Ito ay kaunlaran na magtataguyod ng mamamayan muna. Sisikapin kong tuparin ang nais ninyong matapat na pamamahala at malinis na pamahalaan (This is progress that would put the interest of the citizens first. I vow to implement good governance),” the President said.

She then urged the Iglesia ni Cristo to help her attain her vision for the country.

Palace to extend assistance to Gracia Burnham

Malacañang will extend all assistance and protection to former Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) hostage Gracia Burnham during her stay here to testify against her abductors, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in his regular press briefing this afternoon at Malacañang.

Bunye added that the government is confident the Department of Justice (DOJ) will get down to the bottom of the case and prosecute all involved in the Dos Palmas kidnapping incident in May 27, 2001.

Burnham, an American missionary, is scheduled to testify in the hearing tomorrow on the Dos Palmas kidnapping in Palawan on her harrowing ordeal in the hands of her abductors which she wrote in her book *“In the Presence of My Enemies,”* which was published in May 2003.

Seventeen Filipino tourists were also abducted with Burnham and husband Martin who was later killed.

Burnham arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Monday night aboard a Continental Airlines flight. She was accompanied by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

GMA restates responsible parenthood as her population policy

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today said that her stand on responsible parenthood and birth spacing is based on the Constitution but stressed that the method of attaining this would depend on the beliefs, culture and religion of the parents themselves.

In an interview with radio DZEC of the Iglesia ni Cristo, the President said she did not mention anything about population control in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) because the speech would have been too long.

“Hindi naman puwedeng mailagay sa SONA ang lahat ng aking patakaran at hindi tayo matatapos sa ating diskurso (we cannot put every policy in the SONA or we will not finish our speech),” she explained.

The President said it has always been her policy to follow what is stated in the Constitution about responsible parenthood.

Under the policy, parents are responsible for spacing their children and are left with the discretion on how to attain such according to their belief, religion and culture.

The President also said that some 1,000 barangays are lined up for electrification for the rest of the year in line with her 10-point agenda, one of which is to provide power to all the barangays by year 2008.

Some 3,500 barangays are still up for electrification. The President vowed to provide power to 1,500 barangays every year under the basic services package she expounded in her SONA last Monday.

“Hindi lahat attainable sa first two years. Mayroong timetable bawa’t isa (Not everything is attainable in the first two years. There is a timetable for each program),” she explained.

Aside from providing electricity, the government is set to construct 3,000 school buildings this year, according to the President, as part of her vision of constructing 18,000 school buildings or 36,000 classrooms to close the classroom gap for the next six years.

“Itong 3,000 school buildings at ang 1,000 barangays na malalagyan ng koryente mayroon nang pondo, pero marami sa mga programa malaking kailangang dagdag na salapi ng pamahalaan (There is a fund already for the electrification and the 3,000 school buildings but majority of the programs still need a lot of funding),” she explained.

The President said that there is an urgent need for the government to cut borrowing to be able to attain a balanced budget by 2010 as what she had espoused in her pre-inaugural address last June 30.

“Kaya marami sa gagawin natin ngayon ay babayaran ang utang at hindi lang interes, (That’s why it is important that we pay our debts not only the interests),” she explained.

GMA shifts to high gear her urban land reform program

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today shifted to high gear her urban land reform program by ordering appropriate government agencies to speed up the survey, titling and distribution of lots being occupied by informal settlers in Parañaque City.

The President issued the order during a “pulong-bayan” or multi-sectoral dialogue in Parañaque where she personally heard the concerns of masses as represented by local residents.

Parañaque Rep. Eduardo Zialcita revealed that President Macapagal-Arroyo has already proclaimed a number of communities in the city as “urban land reform” areas. Among them are the sitios of Nais, Maligaya, San Juan, Sta. Rita and Puyat Compound.

Zialcita said residents of these areas have been waiting for more than 50 years for an opportunity to own the lots they occupy.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said apart from the chance of owning the lots, the settlers may also use the lot titles as collateral for loans they could use to set up small businesses under the government’s micro-financing scheme under the Community Mortgage Program.

The President also cited the Gawad Kalinga, a non-government organization engaged in providing decent shelter to the underprivileged sectors of society. She said the government would fully support Gawad Kalinga’s flagship project dubbed “777,” representing 700,000 houses for 7,000 communities in seven years.

The Chief Executive pointed out that “777” was launched last year, hence it would coincidentally bow out of existence in 2010 when her six-year term expires.

Other officials present at the “pulong bayan” were Vice President Noli de Castro, Parañaque Rep. Roilo Golez, Press Secretary Milton Alingod Deputy Presidential Spokesman Ricardo Saludo and Parañaque Mayor Florencio Bernabe, Jr.

Palace lists down abolished offices under the Office of the President

A total of P337.92 million has been saved by the government in the abolition of 102 agencies under the Office of the President since 2002.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in his regular briefing in Malacañang this afternoon that the list does not include the 30 agencies mentioned by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her State-of-the-Nation Address (SONA) last Monday.

Bunye said various committees, task forces, and committees under the Office of the President were also transferred to the supervision of the different government line agencies since 2002.

Among these were the 77 agencies abolished under Executive Order 72 dated February 2002.

These were the Inter-Agency Committee on Intellectual Property Rights; Mindanao Rail System Task Force; Northwestern Luzon Growth Quadrangle Commission; Presidential Committee on Flagship Programs and Projects; Program Office for the Central East Asia Growth Circle; Philippine International Film and Television Office; Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee for National Programs and Projects in Metro Manila; Inter-Agency Committee for the Development and Management of Leyte Enhanced Resource-Based Area for Productivity Project; National Committee on the Culture of Peace; Committee on the President's Urgent Services for Housing; Presidential Housing Assistance One-Stop Center; Presidential Commission for Mass Housing;

Coordinating Council on Executive Response and Action for the People; Inter-Agency Committee on Philippine Schools Overseas; Inter-Agency Committee on Foreign Students; Presidential Commission on Educational Reform; National Heroes Committee; Inter-Agency Task Force on the Oil Price Increase; Petrochemical Industry Competitiveness Board; Presidential Iron and Steel Committee; Ad-Hoc Fact Finding Committee on Behest Loans; Executive Committee to Oversee the BOT/BOO Implementation of the Proposed Silangan Express 2000 Railway System; Mactan-Cebu Bridge Management Board; Southern Luzon-Central Philippines Rehabilitation Task Force;

Executive Committee to Oversee the BOT Implementation of Solid Waste Management projects for Waste Disposal Sites in Carmona (Cavite) and San Mateo (Rizal); National Coordinating Council for the Sugar Industry; Presidential Air Quality Commission; Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm Joint Working Committee; Presidential Committee to Study and Take Charge of the Modernization and Development of Various Penal Institutions in the Country; Preparatory Commission on Constitutional Reforms; Presidential Commission on the New Century and the Millennium; Presidential Retirement Income Commission; Public Acknowledgment Committee for the Participants of EDSA II; Task Force for the Development of Payatas in Quezon City;

Cabinet Projects Coordinating Committee; Presidential Task Force on Manila Bay Rehabilitation; Presidential Task Force on Traffic Improvement and Management; Presidential Task Force on Transport Strike and Mass Action; Executive Council on the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons, Particularly Women and Children; Joint Congressional-Executive Task Force on Legislative Matters for the Social Pact; Social Protection Coordinating Committee; Economic Coordinating Council; Economic Mobilization Group; Inter-Agency Committee on Investment Analysis, Promotion and Management; Inter-Agency Executive Committee to Assist the Trustee Committee for the Comprehensive Development of Welfareville Property in the City of Mandaluyong;

Inter-Agency Task Force to Prepare and Implement the Plans and Programs for the Maintenance and Beautification of All Roads Leading to the Domestic and International Gateways in Metro Manila; Institutional and Performance Audit Team on the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples; Inter-Agency Committee to Oversee the Turnover and Development of Properties in Makati Held by the Philippine Development Alternatives Foundation, Inc. and Presidential Commission on Good Government to the National Government and National Power Corporation; Inter-Agency Committee to Study Proposals for Reorienting the Basic Mandate of the Social Security System (SSS) as a Social Institution, Instead of a Financial Institution; Inter-Agency Steering Committee to Assist Local Government Units in the Preparation and Completion of their Comprehensive Land Use Plans; Inter-Agency Task Force to Combat Securities Fraud; Multi-Sectoral Consultative Task Force; Ad-Hoc Coconut Levy Funds Audit Committee; Committee on Presidential Foreign Travels and Coordinating Working Committee on Overseas Presidential Visits;

Task Force to Study and Determine the Settlement of the Obligations of the National Government to SGS; Special Committee on the Resettlement of Informal Settlers in Antipolo, Rizal; Tañon Strait Commission (revived as Atlas Commission); Maglanco Area Development Coordinating Council; Mindanao Coordinating Council; Mindanao Peace and Development Multi-Sectoral Agency Task Force; Special Development Planning Task Group to Undertake Economic and Social Development Planning for the Special Zone of Peace and Development; Lingayen Gulf Coastal Area Management Commission; Mt. Makiling Reserve Area and Laguna de Bay Commission; Presidential Commission on Rizal-Laguna-Aurora-Quezon Growth Area; Banaue Rice Terraces Task Force;

Bicol Tourism Special Development Project Commission; Vigan Heritage Village Commission; Aklan Provincial Tourism Special Development Project Task Force; Sulu Development Task Force; Davao Integrated Development Board; Central Mindanao Development Task Force; Basilan Development Task Force; Cagayan de Oro-Iligan Corridor Special Development Project Steering Committee; Gingoog Bay Development Council; Zamboanga City Council of Elders; Zamboanga Peninsula and Basilan Province (ZAMBAS) Regional Project Development Board; and the Inter-Agency Committee on Land Titling Anomalies in General Santos City.

Bunye said 13 other agencies and task forces under the Office of the President were also transferred to the different government line agencies under E.O. 72.

Sixteen (16) other agencies abolished under E.O. 145 in November 2002 were the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Children's Affairs; National Drug Law Enforcement and Prevention Coordinating Center; Greater Metropolitan Manila Solid Waste Management Committee; National Maritime Safety Coordinating Council; Cabinet Oversight Committee on Peacekeeping and Development Operations; Special task Force on the Winding-Up of the Operations of the Cordillera Administrative Region; Task Force on Additional Incentives Package for Investors; Inter-Agency Task Force for Coastal Environmental Protection;

National Program for Unification and Development Council; National Peace Forum; Presidential Task Force on the 20/20 Initiative; World Trade Organization/ASEAN Free Trade Area Advisory Commission; National Government Center Housing Committee; Duty Free Oversight Committee; Committee for the Education for Peace Program; and the Committee to Conduct the Public Bidding for the Reinsurance of the Properties of the SSS Insured with the GSIS.

Abolished under E.O. 60 on December 2001 were the Presidential Executive Task Force for Relief and Rehabilitation of Central Mindanao; Inter-Agency Committee for Relief, Rehabilitation and Development of Areas Affected by Armed Conflicts in Mindanao (INTERACT-Mindanao); Caraga Development Board and Project Management Office; and the Task Force MALMAR.

Abolished under E.O. 80 on March 2002 after the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) plebiscite on August 2001 were the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD); Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD); and the Consultative Assembly.

Abolished under E.O. 112 on July 2002 was the National Anti-Crime Commission (NACC); while the Information Technology and Electronic Commerce Council (ITECC) was abolished under E.O. 334 only last July 20, this year.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 28, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071027152533/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul28.htm>

The President's Day: July 29, 2004

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- **Statement of the President: Call for Sacrifice**
- **Statement of the President: Responsible Parenthood**
- **Giant multinational drug firm pledges support for GMA's health care program**
- **GMA creates Office of Presidential Adviser for Jobs Generation**
- **SONA report cites positive effects of power sector reform law**
- **Palace backs DFA response to Australian rebuke on RP**
- **Palace to institutionalize 'pulong bayans'**

Statement of the President: Call for Sacrifice

We acknowledge the need for quick financial fuel as well as longer term financial stability.

The quick fuel will be provided by cost-cutting measures, organizational streamlining, going after tax cheats and fighting corruption.

Government will take the brunt of administrative reforms first even before asking the public to take more pain in terms of more taxes for future gains in terms of more jobs and better services.

We are proving to the people that ourselves are worthy of the sacrifices we ask for, and we are confident that Congress will do their share.

This whole nation must do it and every Filipino must be involved.

Statement of the President: Responsible Parenthood

We stand by responsible parenthood, enlightened birth spacing, and free choice.

We have a moral stake in this but we respect the wisdom of Congress and the views of our local leaders.

My priority now is not to deal with overpopulation to overcome the challenges we face in social justice and economic development, but to go directly to the social and macroeconomic issues that strike at the root of these challenges.

I am open to debates on the population issue but I appeal for an agenda of priorities that will deal with foremost issues first, as constrained in my SONA.

Giant multinational drug firm pledges support for GMA's health care program

A giant multinational company has pledged support for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's health sector agenda, especially in reducing the price of essential medicine for the poor.

In a letter to the President, GlaxoSmithKline's Pharmaceuticals International Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Russel Greig noted the Philippines' adherence to democratic ideals and the President's new presidential mandate.

"Following your Excellency's victory, we renew our pledge to continue working with your administration on various social responsibility initiatives which we have started under your auspicious leadership. These include working with government to provide health insurance to indigents," Greig said.

Greig also assured Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo that in the next six years, GlaxoSmithKline would align its corporate social responsibility projects with the President's vision for health care to serve a broader base of the population.

"In particular, we will double our efforts to eliminate disabling and life-threatening disease in the Philippines' rural areas, such as lymphatic filariasis and tuberculosis."

Last January, Greig called on the President to present the company's VALUE Health program which reduces the price of its essential medicines by as much as 34 percent to give more Filipinos better access to health care.

In the last two years, GlaxoSmithKline led a private sector initiative in partnership with PhilHealth to provide free health insurance or "Pinoy Health Pass" to more than 10,000 indigent families. The employees of GlaxoSmithKline earlier volunteered to donate part of their salary to enroll an indigent family to the project.

The priority programs of the President for the poor are the creation of jobs, livelihood, education, health care, essential services, and electricity.

GMA creates Office of Presidential Adviser for Jobs Generation

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has created an Office of the Presidential Adviser for Jobs Generation (OPAJG) tasked to ensure the efficient and successful implementation of her jobs generation program seeking to provide six million jobs over the next six years as enunciated in her inaugural address.

Under Executive Order 333 issued last July 19, the OPAJG is tasked to "coordinate the effective and timely implementation of the government's roadmap for jobs generation."

The Chief Executive has appointed outgoing Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo as her Presidential Adviser for Jobs Generation. Lorenzo will have the rank and emoluments of a Cabinet secretary.

As defined by EO 333, one of Lorenzo's function is to advise the President on the programs, policies and projects to ensure the full realization of her vision to create six to 10 million jobs until 2010.

Lorenzo will likewise oversee the packaging of credit facilities, guarantee programs and other financial assistance packages for small farmers and fisherfolks, small and medium enterprises, micro-business enterprises and other small entrepreneurs.

He is also authorized to oversee other government agencies and government financial institutions, including the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Quedan Rural Credit Guarantee Corp., and private-sector resources to support the overall job generation program.

SONA report cites positive effects of power sector reform law

The government has ensured fair and reasonable energy prices for everyone with its implementation of the power sector reform law.

According to the technical report of the State of the Nation Address of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the law provided large industrial commercial end-users with 50-centavo per KWH discount on incremental electricity consumption through the Special Program to Enhance Electricity Demand (SPEED).

Almost P237 million in total discounts were given on 512 million KWH in incremental consumption in 2003 and from January to May 2004, said the report.

The report also noted the additional 10-centavo per KWH discount to the actual monthly energy consumption of all large energy consumers availing of the SPEED program under the Transco Transmission Incentive Program.

It further noted that the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) also authorized Meralco SPEED discount of P0.12/KWH for incremental consumption of large electricity end-users to take effect until WESM implementation or when there is no available National Power Corp. unutilized generating capacity in Luzon Grid, whichever comes first.

The government has promulgated the rules of the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) where trading of electricity will take place to give consumers the power to choose the cheapest and most reliable electricity suppliers. The WESM rules set the responsibilities of the market operator, system operator, WESM participants and the Philippine Electricity Market Board. WESM market management prototype started operations on May 28 2004.

It also concluded negotiations on 20 of the 35 independent power producers (IPP) contracts with expected savings of up to \$2.95 billion in nominal terms of \$1.036 billion in discounted present value.

The government also implemented a restructuring program for electric cooperatives to improve their performance and efficiency, which reduced systems losses from 16.81 percent to 15.82 percent on the average, translating to additional revenues of P265 million.

The government also granted, through the ERC, provisional authority to 118 electrical cooperatives to reduce existing rates, ranging from 12 to 76 centavos per kilowatt-hour. Average rate reduction in Luzon is 21 centavos per kwh; in Visayas, 16 centavos; and in Mindanao, 23 centavos. Total savings based on average annual sales of the electric cooperatives is P900 million per year.

It has also launched a natural gas vehicle program for public transport in October 2002, outlining the government policies and strategies in developing the commercial use of natural gas to make public transportation less vulnerable to volatility of world oil prices. Among the initiatives to bring down fuel cost for public transport through the use of natural gas are: enhancement of incentive packages for investment in natural gas and grant of franchises for three natural gas bus fleets (one for Batangas-Bicol route and two for Batangas-Manila route).

On providing stable and secure energy supply, the government increased the use of indigenous natural gas resulting in an 8 percent increase in energy self-sufficiency level from 45 percent in 2001 to 53 percent in 2003.

It also formulated a 10-year Philippine Energy Plan (2004-2013) that embodies the government's commitment to institute reforms in the power sector through, among others, the diversification of energy sources.

The government commissioned new power generating plants, such as the use of the idle 850 Megawatt Sucat facility and maximizing the potential for natural gas pipeline; setting up of a new 250 to 400 Megawatt baseload power plant in Luzon to be commissioned in January 2008; setting up of a new 200 Megawatt baseload power plant in Visayas which will be commissioned by May 2008, and operation of the 200 Megawatt Mindanao Coal Power Plant Project by 2006.

It also updated the Oil Contingency Plan to include emergency procedures for ascertaining the security and stability of oil supply, including tapping non-traditional oil suppliers such as Russia and pursuing the development of indigenous oil sources, particularly natural gas, by enhancing incentive packages for investments on this product.

Palace backs DFA response to Australian rebuke on RP

The government used the proper way to tell the world it is not taking the rebukes from Australian high-ranking officials on the pullout from Iraq sitting down, Malacañang said today.

“We have our own decision on this matter and we took into consideration first the safety of our countrymen, especially overseas Filipino workers (OFWs),” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said this morning in a radio interview.

Bunye believes, however, that the good relationship between the Philippines and Australia will remain.

“On the whole, I think our good relationships with Australia will remain. Our countries will continue to cooperate with each other,” Bunye said.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo believes that on a long term basis, our relationships will stay because we have a long-standing partnership and this temporary misunderstanding will be resolved, Bunye added.

Bunye was commenting on the diplomatic protest the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) lodged with Australian Ambassador Ruth Pearce because of harsh statements made by Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer on the Philippine pullout from Iraq, which was later backed by Prime Minister John Howard.

“I conveyed the fact that we strongly object to the broad characterizations made by these officials in these statements, particularly those that question the resolve of the Philippines to fight terrorism,” Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert said after a closed-door meeting with Pearce Wednesday.

Palace to institutionalize ‘pulong bayans’

A positive response to the maiden post-election “pulong bayan” in Parañaque City yesterday has prompted Malacañang to continue holding the small townhall meetings and explain to the masses the government’s 10-point agenda.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in his regular press briefing today that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was encouraged by the warm response of the public to the “pulong bayan” she held with Vice President Noli de Castro at the Don Bosco Park in Better Living, Parañaque City.

“The President felt very positive on the outcome of the first *pulong bayan*,” Bunye said. “As you very well know, she has done this before together with the Vice President and they just intend to continue on with this practice. They have found the *pulong bayan* as very effective mechanism for dealing directly or communicating directly with the public.”

The Palace Spokesman assured the public that the future holding of *pulong bayan* would have bigger representation as compared to the previous gatherings.

Bunye said the President’s vision for the country in the next six years which she outlined in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday will be tackled in future *pulong bayans*.

These are the job creation and economic growth package, anti-corruption and good governance package, social justice and basic needs package, education improvement and youth opportunity package and the energy independence and savings package.

“As far as the venue is concerned, this is flexible. The important things is, the President will try to meet as many of our people in various geographic locations as possible. But the idea is in each *pulong bayan*, the subject will be one of the basic legislative and executive reform packages mentioned by the President during her SONA,” he said.

A new office, the Malacañang Office for Constituency Affairs has been created by Malacañang to oversee the holding of the “pulong bayans,” according to Bunye.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 29, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071027151618/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul29.htm>

The President's Day: July 30, 2004

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- **Statement of the President: Gracia Burnham**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Standard and Poor's Peso Rating**
- **SONA report cites gains in anti-crime drive, peace efforts**
- **Palace announces transfer of 4 OP offices to line departments**
- **GMA lauds PDEA for success in anti-drug campaign**
- **CCI hails GMA's creation of OPAJG**

Statement of the President: Gracia Burnham

I admire Gracia Burnham's courage and faith and her determination to bring terrorists to justice.

The trial of the Abu Sayyaf who abducted her and her husband is living proof of our determined fight against terror in partnership with all nations and peoples.

Her testimony also upholds the integrity and uncommon valor of our Armed Forces, and I thank her for her concern for our people's peace and security.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Standard and Poor's Peso Rating

It should be noted that Standard and Poor's has maintained our long term foreign currency rating while slightly lowering our local currency rating.

Despite our relatively strong economic fundamentals, this is a signal for us to act quickly and decisively to put our fiscal house in order, which is being done.

The President has already spelled out the steps we have to take and the pains we have to endure for long term economic stability.

Standard and Poor's has acknowledged that following the election, the President is in a position to move boldly on reforms, and that is what she is doing.

SONA report cites gains in anti-crime drive, peace efforts

Various reforms in the country's police and military institutions have resulted in creating a climate that is conducive to investment and crucial to the realization of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's 10-point agenda of governance.

A technical report on the State of the Nation Address (SONA) showed that the creation of the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (PACER) and the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTAF) has resulted in the neutralization of most wanted kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) groups in the country.

Among those apprehended were the mastermind and others involved in the Betty Sy case, Abu Sayyaf leader Galib Andang (Commander Robot) and Abu Sabaya, four members of the Abu Sofia group and Nurodjinn Salik, the leader of the Kalong Pened KFR group.

The arrests of these masterminds and their cohorts resulted in the neutralization of 15 of the targeted 20 priority KFR groups in the country while rendering the remaining five groups inactive.

Republic Act No. 9165, the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, created the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) to strengthen the anti-drugs campaign.

Intensified drug operations resulted in the neutralization of eight international and 191 local drug syndicates, and clearing about 5,140 out of the 8,163 drug-affected barangays in the country.

These also led to the arrest of 100,733 financiers, big and small-time drug users and pushers, and the seizure of P35.56 billion worth of illegal drugs and essential chemicals.

The dismantling of 37 shabu laboratories and warehouses, including the largest shabu factory in Antipolo which yielded P2.2 billion worth of illegal drugs, cut the supply of illegal drugs as shown by the increase in shabu price from P800 per gram to between P3,000 to P5,000.

Efforts to eliminate illegal gambling were intensified by Republic Act No. 9287 which increased the penalties for illegal numbers game (jueteng) and defined the responsibilities of local chief executives and police directors in the campaign.

This resulted in the arrest of 88,331 bettors, collectors and “cabos,” the neutralization of 380 financiers, confiscation of P31.2 million cash bets and gambling paraphernalia, and the filing of 31,051 criminal cases against known gambling lords, jueteng financiers and bettors before various courts.

Crime incidents were also reduced by 15.6 percent and a monthly average of 87.3 percent street crime solution efficiency rating was achieved from April 2003 to March this year.

Intensified operations by the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) also decreased by 27 percent the strength of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) from 11,930 in 2001 to 8,763 in March 2004.

The threats posed by international terrorist groups were also reduced through intelligence gathering and cooperation with our partners in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), resulting in the neutralization of Jemaah Islamiyah operative Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi in Sulu and the arrest of wanted terrorist Taufiq Rifqui.

All these were attributed to the enhancement of police and military welfare and capability, including the allocation of P10.8 billion for the modernization of the AFP and the upgrading of the salary of PNP and the AFP personnel that is now at par with the salary grade level of public school teachers.

Added to these are monthly allowances and housing and scholarship programs to promote the welfare of the policemen, soldiers, and their families.

The government also initiated reforms to address the recommendations of the Feliciano Commission on the legal grievances of young military personnel involved in the Oakwood incident. These include the creation of an Enhanced Grievance System, a Special Task Force to monitor the cases involving the AFP retirement and pension scam, and a single Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) to handle contracts worth over P50 million and simplify logistics and procurement process in the AFP.

To professionalize the PNP, the curriculum in the Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA) was revised from the old para-military training system to a disciplined and community-based system in order to have technically proficient law enforcement officers imbued with integrity, and moral and ethical standards.

The government has pursued peace negotiations with the CPP-NPA-NDF and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which was stopped for almost two-and-a-half years by the previous administration in favor of an all-out war.

To move the peace process with the CPP-NPA-NDF further, preparations are being undertaken by the government panel for the drafting of a Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER). The government is also processing the release of a number of alleged political offenders or prisoners as a confidence-building measure.

Renewed peace negotiations with the MILF, under the “President’s Peace Initiative for Mindanao,” resulted in a bilateral ceasefire in July 2003 that continues to hold on the ground, the signing of an interim peace agreement on relief and rehabilitation of war-torn communities, and a commitment from the MILF, in a show of good faith, to assist the government in the interdiction and isolation of terrorist groups seeking refuge in MILF communities.

At the same time, the government ensured that the final peace agreements with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Revolutionary Proletariat Army (RPA-ABB) in Negros province, and the Cordillera People’s Liberation Army (CPLA) are substantially complied with.

To advance the government’s advocacy and promotion of a culture of peace, institutionalized inter-faith dialogues were held in partnership with the local governments and the private and public educational institutions as a peace process mechanism to strengthen solidarity among Christians, Muslims, and the indigenous peoples.

Palace announces transfer of 4 OP offices to line departments

Malacañang today announced the transfer of four agencies under the Office of the President (OP) to several departments, paving the way for a tighter supervision, according to Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye.

From OP, the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) and the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) will now be under the Department of Finance (DoF).

From the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Public Estates Authority (PEA) will also now be under the DoF.

Meanwhile, the Manila Economic and Cultural Office Inc. (MECO) and the Philippine National Construction Corp. (PNCC) have been transferred from OP to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

“The idea of putting these agencies to the respective departments is for them to have a tighter supervision,” Bunye said.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, through Executive Order No. 330, said it is necessary to place PAGCOR under the DoF to facilitate coordination of policies and programs between the agencies.

The President said that the DoF is responsible for the generation and management of the financial resources of government, ensuring that said resources are generated and managed judiciously and in a manner supportive of the development objectives of government.

The CDA, on the other hand, has been placed under the DoF, according to E.O. No. 332, because the latter’s mandate is to formulate, institutionalize and administer fiscal policies.

The transfer of the PEA from OP to the DoF is provided for under E.O. No. 320.

In E.O. No. 331, the President placed the PNCC under the DTI since the development of expressways requires huge investments, which is in the realm of the DTI.

The President said the DTI is the “primary coordinative, promotive, facilitative and regulatory arm of the Executive branch of government in the area of trade, industry and investment.”

The operational supervision of MECO has been transferred to the DTI through E.O. No. 328 since the office was established to promote cooperation in the fields of economic, trade, cultural and economic matters between the Philippines and Taiwan on a people-to-people basis, a domain of the DTI.

All the executive orders of the President took effect two weeks ago.

GMA lauds PDEA for success in anti-drug campaign

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today expressed confidence the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) will continue the fight against the drug problem with the same zeal, diligence and vigilance as the country moves closer towards the realization of a drug-free Philippines.

In a message on the occasion of the PDEA's second anniversary, the President noted that the relentless anti-drug campaign under the operational supervision and control of the PDEA has resulted in the substantial reduction of the illegal drug trade in the country.

The President said the anti-drug campaign has resulted in the following:

- the discovery and dismantling of several clandestine shabu laboratories and warehouses;
- the arrest of big fishes in the illegal drug trade;
- the seizure of billions of pesos worth of illegal drugs, controlled precursors, essential chemicals and laboratory equipment; and
- the clearing of drug-infected barangays.

According to the President, since its activation, the PDEA has dutifully discharged its responsibilities as the lead agency and implementing arm of the Dangerous Drug Boards in anti-drug operations and coordinator of all drug-related activities.

The President then appointed Interior and Local Government Undersecretary Anselmo Avenido as the first director general of the PDEA.

The PDEA was mandated to implement R. A. 9165, or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, which President Macapagal-Arroyo signed on June 7, 2002.

CCI hails GMA's creation of OPAJG

An organization of cottage industries hailed today a move by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to create the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Job Generation (OPAJG) to ensure the success of her ambitious jobs generation program.

The formation of the OPAJG "will really help leapfrog the country into a more progressive nation," the Chamber of Cottage Industries (CCI) said in a statement.

"We appreciate President Macapagal-Arroyo's establishment of OPAJG since this will ensure that at least six million jobs are generated for Filipinos during the next six years," CCI executive director Felix Sario said.

Sario added that the President has made a lot of progress in improving the Filipinos' standard of living. "President Arroyo is determined to make her government program aimed at improving the quality of life of Filipinos an institutional legacy of the entire government."

In her inaugural address, President Macapagal-Arroyo promised to create six to 10 million jobs before she steps down in 2010.

The President issued last July 19 Executive Order 333 creating the OPAJG and appointed outgoing Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo to head the new office.

The CCI also cited the potential “fruitful impact” of the President’s guarantee programs, packaging of credit facilities and other financial assistance for small farmers and fisherfolk, small and medium enterprises and other micro-business enterprises.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: July 30, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028191825/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul30.htm>

The President's Day: July 31, 2004

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- **Statement of the President: UNDP report**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Foreign relations**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Salvaging**
- **The Good News: Special ecozones exports soar to P15.344 billion**
- **SONA report: GMA has been a reformist President since 2001**
- **GMA continues to receive congratulatory messages from various heads of government**
- **Health services sector could be a \$1-B industry, says DTI**

Statement of the President: UNDP report

Quality of life as much as the alleviation of poverty is our aim for the next year.

The synergy of our five reform packages and our 10-point agenda will elevate the quality of life of our people by delivering the totality of jobs, good governance, justice, education and basic needs.

The UNDP (United Nations Development Program) report mirrors a slight improvement but our gains are threatened by economic and fiscal constraints.

We must break through these constraints and find the bold and creative opportunities to overcome cyclical poverty and bring all our people to the threshold of dignified life.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Foreign relations

We have expressed our sentiment through diplomatic means.

We follow this road and we expect others to do so.

We learn lesson from every international controversy.

It is time to move on.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Salvaging

Salvaging has no place in a civilized society where we value human life and protect human rights.

Further, it demeans the uniform and is a surefire recipe for others taking the law in their own hands.

The President has already ordered the speedy investigation and prosecution of those involved in this barbaric act.

The Good News: Special ecozones exports soar to P15.344 billion

Special economic zones exports reached \$15.334 billion in the first half of 2004, a 19.44 percent increase over the same period last year, according to the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA).

PEZA Director-General Lilia B. De Lima said most of the exports came from private ecozones whose first semester figures reached \$11.944 billion, an impressive 22.05 percent growth over the January-June 2003 exports of \$9.750 billion.

The four public ecozones added \$3.304 billion, a moderate growth of nine percent over the comparable period last year.

“As we put the elections behind us, we are confident that the investment inflows will be sustained for the rest of the year,” said De Lima as she expressed confidence in the country’s continued ability to attract investments.

Of the P27.245 billion investments for the first semester this year, P4.03 billion went to the information technology industry, jumping over last year’s investment for the same six-month period of only P1.686 billion.

The investments that came in during the first half of the year, de Lima said, created direct employment for 394,237 workers and indirect employment for 591,355 workers.

The country’s information technology (IT) buildings and parks contributed \$85.225 million in exports of services, growing 51.962 percent over the first half exports last year of \$58.03 million.

A sign that it is now an integral part of IT and telecommunications development in Asia, the Philippines was recently cited as Asia’s leader in short message service (SMS) technology during the recent CommunicAsia 2004, an industry-wide communications and IT-trade event in Asia held in Singapore, according to the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM).

With over 23,000 visitors and 18 participating countries, including the Philippines, the trade event recognized the Philippines as a reliable provider of export products in electronics as well as an emerging leader in telecommunications, both for mobile communications and fixed line subscription.

The Philippines bested the other countries due to its existing automated information on demand via SMS available to its subscribers over the other countries’ basic send and receive SMS.

Trade Undersecretary for International Trade Thomas Aquino said that Philippine content providers are already very much ahead of their ASEAN counterparts in terms of SMS gateway technology, messaging, gaming, location-based services and mobile commerce applications.

To date, the Philippines’ telecommunications industry boasts of progressive ICT infrastructure and policies, competitive rates and a very active mobile market, with an estimated 25 percent penetration rate in Metro Manila alone.

There are 23 million active mobile subscribers in the country, statistics say, and this figure is attributed to the affordable and accessible mobile services in the Philippines.

Already dubbed as the ‘world’s texting capital,’ the country’s SMS or text messages dominate the traffic by a factor of 8 to 1 (text to voice calls) and is expected to accelerate further in the next few years.

“We see a growing trend towards third generation applications and mobile commerce and this presents an opportunity to Philippine developers in the telecommunications industry,” Aquino said.

Third generation applications enable users to send and receive videos, short film clips and conduct videoconferences at the speed of 128 to 265 mbps while m-commerce uses phone to pay bills, buy grocery and pay for cab or bus rides.

SONA report: GMA has been a reformist President since 2001

Using the gains in job creation of her previous three-year administration, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s targeted six million jobs over the next six years of her fresh mandate seems attainable contrary to apprehensions by critics and skeptics alike.

The technical report of the President's State of the Nation Address (SONA) said that from January 2001 when President Macapagal-Arroyo took over the presidency following the collapse of the Joseph Estrada administration to December 2003, the government generated 3.4 million local employment compared to only one million for three years under the Estrada leadership.

The report showed that the government facilitated the deployment of 3.1 million overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to over 200 foreign destinations from July 2001 to June 2004. These workers remitted a total of \$22.77 billion to help prop up the national economy.

To reciprocate, the government strengthened further the OFW protection mechanisms, particularly in the light of the US-Iraq conflict. This involved the creation of the Middle East Preparedness Team and the allocation of P1 billion as standby fund from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration for the implementation of the preparedness plan.

The government also organized 964 OFW families into Family Circles that shall serve as a vehicle for the delivery of government services.

Not to be left out, out of school youths were also beneficiaries of a package of social services ranging from skills training and financial assistance, vocational education, livelihood projects, and introduction of agri-fishery technology.

Over the past three years, the Macapagal-Arroyo government also provided micro-credit to the tune of P3.54 billion to over one million women. Even the banking sector was encourage to open its lending windows wider, with micro-credit provided by six finance-oriented banks reaching P2.9 billion as of May 2004.

The Self Employment Assistance-Kaunlaran (SEA-K) also chipped in P201.6 million in capital assistance for micro-businesses, home improvement and housing construction.

In the health care department, the government enrolled a total of 30.6 million urban and rural poor beneficiaries in the National Health Insurance Program, ensuring them access to quality health services through an enhanced Medicare system. The people were also assured low-priced but quality essential drugs under the GMA 50 (Gamot na Mabisa at Abot-kaya) program.

To ensure a better future for the youth, the government enhanced access to quality education by building more classrooms and providing instructional equipment and materials. In spite of the yearly increase in student population, the government managed to reduce teacher-pupil ratio to 1:50 from 1:60 under the previous administration.

A total of 964 school buildings were put up in remote barangays from July 1 to June 2004.

The government also set in motion the Student's Assistance Fund for Education for a Strong Republic (SAFE-4-SR) which offered P300 million in loans to some 50,000 graduating college students.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also launched the Iskolar para sa Mahirap na Pamilya program whereby one child each from five million indigent families would be granted a four-year college scholarship or free technical-vocational course for two years.

GMA continues to receive congratulatory messages from various heads of government

A month after her inaugural, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo continues to receive congratulatory greeting cards, messages and correspondence from various heads of state, heads of government, heads of missions and international organizations.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) reported that among those who sent their congratulatory correspondence were H.M. King Juan Carlos I of Spain who has been known to be a champion of democracy in his country; President Vicente Fox Quesada of Mexico, whose country is currently exploring the exercise of Overseas Absentee Voting for the next scheduled elections; and from the Royal House of Cambodia, H.M. King Norodom Sihanouk and his son H.R.H. Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who is the President of the National Assembly of Cambodia.

Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, Secretary of the World Islamic Call Society, also expressed his warm congratulations to the President.

Other prominent leaders from predominantly Muslim countries such as President Seyed Mohammad Katami of Islamic Republic of Iran, President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer of Turkey, President Bashar al-Assad of the Arab Republic of Syria, and Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, also sent their warm congratulatory messages to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Israeli President Moshe Katsav also expressed his felicitations for the President and, through Israeli Ambassador to the Philippines Yehoshua Sagi, expressed his wish for limitless opportunities for advancement during her second term of office and the continuing enhancement of Philippine-Israeli bilateral relations.

The city mayor of Los Angeles, James Hahn, sent a congratulatory message extending good wishes on behalf of the City of Los Angeles. In his message he expressed his wish that her wisdom and leadership “reap fruitful rewards in your efforts to establish an improved institution of government and in enriching the quality of lives of Filipinos throughout the world”.

He also commended the Macapagal-Arroyo administration’s efforts in combating terrorism and for preserving democratic ideals. Los Angeles is home to the largest number of Filipino-Americans in the entire North America.

Health services sector could be a \$1-B industry, says DTI

Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar V. Purisima said the country’s health services sector could become a US\$1 billion industry.

In a report, Purisima noted that the country’s medical professionals are world class, capable of performing and delivering complicated medical treatment and that “by supporting the development of this industry, the country can offer cheaper but world-class medical services to overseas patients from the United States, Europe and Japan.”

The DTI Secretary explained that rising health care costs and the aging population have put a heavy burden on the public health system in many developed countries.

Purisima noted that in Japan alone, 20 percent of the population is over 65 years old and is projected to reach 26 percent by 2015. Germany, on the other hand, has 1 out of 4 of its people over 65 years old and by 2040, the ratio will be 2 to 1.

The aging population is adding strain to the pension system while the younger generation is beginning to resist paying cost for caring for the elderly. These factors are driving people from developed countries to look for cheaper sources of medical care, Purisima said.

He further explained that this puts pressure on governments to consider using public funds for outsourcing health and medical care overseas. Thus, private health insurance such as US Blue Shield and Blue Cross are accrediting foreign medical facilities for their insured.

On the potential of the country’s health services sector, Purisima cited Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore as countries that have already taken the lead in offering world-class medical services to overseas patients.

Last year alone, these three countries were able to attract more than 600,000 patients and earn US\$500 million in revenues, he said. Purisima said Singapore projects that it can bring in as much as one million patients by 2010 while India projects that it could earn US\$1 billion.

To make the industry viable, Purisima said medical institutions need to upgrade their facilities to meet world-class standards. "Philippine hospitals also have to be accredited with public health care system in the US, Europe and Japan and with private sector health insurance providers," he added.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) announces that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia needs at least 2,000 nurses and other medical personnel for immediate employment.

The POEA said the Saudi Ministry of Health is in urgent need of:

- 1,500 female nurses,
- 100 female ICU/NICU (intensive care unit/neonatal intensive care unit) nurses,
- 50 male/female CT (computed tomography) Scan technicians,
- 50 male/female MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) technicians,
- 50 nuclear medicine technicians,
- 50 Angiography and Interventional Radiology technicians,
- 100 female dental assistants,
- 50 male/female technicians, and
- 50 female respiratory therapists

According to POEA, applicants must be a graduate of nursing, dental, or the appropriate technician courses; licensed, except for dental technicians and Muslim applicants; and, they must have at least two years hospital experience, except for female nurses or Muslim applicants.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: July 31, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028002756/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/jul31.htm>

The President's Day: August 1, 2004

01 AUGUST 2004

- **The Good News: Agriculture, manufacturing, exports spur economic growth**
- **DFA realigns programs with GMA's 10-point agenda**
- **SONA report on communications, transport projects**
- **Palace observes Day of God the Father**

The Good News: Agriculture, manufacturing, exports spur economic growth

Positive growth in April and May has made the government upbeat on the economy, according to the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA).

NEDA assistant director-general for National Planning and Policy Staff Scholastica D. Cororaton said the economy was expected to have grown by 5 to 5.5 percent in the second quarter on the back of higher export earnings, a recovery in the manufacturing sector and sustained agricultural growth.

"Agriculture will continue to be a source of growth, there's an improvement in the manufacturing sector and our exports are moving up," Cororaton said.

Based on forecasts of the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, Cororaton said palay and corn production would grow by about 9 to 14 percent.

For January to March, the farm sector posted a 7.7 percent growth given upturns in the crops, livestock and poultry and fishery sub-sectors.

The government, Cororaton said, is confident that increased earnings registered in April and May will contribute significantly to gross domestic product (GDP) for the second quarter.

April exports, according to the National Statistics Office, rose by 8.9 percent while May exports jumped 15.3 percent year on year, mainly due to an increase in shipments of electronic products.

The government, according to Cororaton, is confident that despite a ten percent drop in production last March, the manufacturing sector will continue to show signs of recovery in the coming months.

"With a 5 to 5.5 percent growth expectation for the second quarter and indications of a stronger performance for the rest of the year, the country can easily achieve a 4.9 percent growth for 2004.

For 2005, she said the government is optimistic that the economy will expand by 5.3 percent due mainly to higher export earnings, the sustained growth of the agriculture sector and the continued expansion of the services industry.

"Our GDP forecast remains at 5.3 percent for next year," Cororaton said. "Indicators point to the strengthening of the economy."

She cautioned, however that the forecast growth is dependent on the government's continued support of agriculture, addressing the fiscal deficit and continued backing of growth areas such as information and communication technology related services.

DFA realigns programs with GMA's 10-point agenda

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has started to realign its programs with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's 10-point agenda.

"It will be our challenge to give life to the 10-point agenda. We have already began the process of identifying our place in this agenda but it will take all our collective efforts to succeed," DFA Secretary Delia Albert said.

Albert cited the initiatives of the Philippine foreign service posts in China that have recommitted themselves to vigorously promote tourism and trade with the country, attract investments to the Philippines and continue to protect and enhance the welfare of Filipinos in mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau in line with the DFA's realignment.

The heads of the Foreign Service posts from the embassy in Beijing and consulates in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xiamen and Hong Kong SAR made the commitment after a two-day consultation last week.

Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan and DFA Assistant Secretary for Asia and Pacific Affairs Alicia Ramos were present to guide the posts. Also present were service attaches of the Departments of National Defense, Trade, Tourism, Labor and Agriculture.

Philippine Ambassador to China Willy Gaa called the consultation to assess the current state of RP-China relations, establish priorities and future areas of bilateral cooperation and align the plans and programs of the posts to the President's agenda.

Pagdanganan emphasized the importance of tourism in poverty alleviation and job creation. "One tourist arrival creates one job," he said.

The thrust is to attract more of the growing number of Chinese tourists to the country. Initial target is to double the number of Chinese tourists by the end of the year from that of last year.

Only one of every 600 tourists from China visited the Philippines last year in contrast to more than 600,000 from Japan and South Korea, Pagdanganan said.

Besides tourism, the meeting also noted the need to further promote Philippine products and services such as electronics and semi-conductor products/devices, fresh fruits, aquatic and marine products, resource-based products, high-end jewelry, furniture, professional services, medical tourism and logistics management.

The meeting also agreed to intensify efforts to attract Chinese investments to the Philippines, especially on infrastructure.

It also discussed ways to better resolve consular and labor issues affecting Filipinos and provide more effective service to them in China and HKSAR.

"Such consultative meetings are encouraged among our foreign posts so that we may assess and re-allocate our resources in order to better perform our mandate to protect and promote our country's interests abroad in their respective areas of responsibility," Albert said.

SONA report on communications, transport projects

Transport facilities and services have greatly improved with the implementation of the 919-kilometer Strong Republic Nautical Highway, an inter-modal transport system connecting the islands of the entire archipelago using roll-on roll-off vessels.

The system, which seeks to spur inter-island farm trade and improve distribution of food and agricultural products in the countryside and promote local tourism, has three routes.

These are: Manila-Batangas-Calapan-Roxas-Caticlan-Iloilo-Bacolod-Dumaguete-Dapitan, Manila-Batangas-Dumaguete-Cagayan de Oro, and Manila-Orion, Bataan.

According to the technical report on the President's State of the Nation Address, the RoRo system decreased transport cost by 37 to 43 percent for passengers and 24 to 34 percent for cargo. It also reduced travel time by 12 hours for the first route and 10 hours for the second route.

To energize this transport system, the government provided incentive packages and cheaper ship financing to entice shipping companies to expand and modernize the RoRo vessel fleet and constructed RoRo ramps in 53 percent of ports under the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA).

On land transport, the government has reduced traffic congestion in Metro Manila by increasing travel speed from 13.5 kph in July 2001 to 26.85 kph in February 2004 through efficient traffic flow management and provision of infrastructure and other support facilities.

The government has also implemented the following: the use of yellow lanes by buses plying EDSA, the establishment of six Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) road emergency stations to accelerate response to traffic accidents and unexpected traffic gridlock, the establishment of 30 U-turn slots in Buendia/Roxas Boulevard-Taft Avenue, Katipunan Ave., along C5 Libis, Commonwealth Philcoa, Mindanao Ave./Rd. 20, Mindanao Ave./Congressional Ave., C5 Julia Vargas to Kalayaan and Commonwealth to COA, the installation of 9,543 traffic signs all over the metropolis, the construction of interchanges along C5/Ortigas Ave., EDSA/Quezon Ave. Extension, EDSA/Quezon Ave., C5/Boni Serrano/Katipunan Ave., Interchange and Ortigas Ave. Extension (C5 to Tikling) and 12 footbridges in Metro Manila, traffic management activities such as road widening and sidewalk clearing, parking discipline program, registration and monitoring of tow trucks, "no-contact apprehension," upgrading and professionalization of traffic enforcers.

It has also developed the Motor Vehicle Inspection system and the Vehicle Modernization Program to improve vehicle roadworthiness.

Meanwhile, the government completed the Metro Manila commuter train loop from Blumentritt to Pasay through Light Railway Transit (LRT) 2 and back to Blumentritt through the Philippine National Railways line.

On air transport, the government pursued the policy of continued liberalization of the airline industry. It held air services consultations with Singapore, South Korea, Macau, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Palau and Japan, which resulted in increased passenger and cargo capabilities, additional frequencies, and flexibility in routes and airline designation.

It also espoused multi-carrier, multi-point policy in air talks, started operations of Asiana Airlines at Diosdado Macapagal International Airport on October 30 2003, initiated development of new airports in Iloilo and Laguindingan, Misamis Oriental and completed facilities in the Laoag International Airport and Vigan Airport. Existing airports in Mactan, Antique and Jolo were also improved.

It also improved safety and efficiency of the air transportation system and retained the Category 1 rating of the Philippines based on the re-assessment of the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration on the Air Transportation Office's oversight capability. Proficiency training for air traffic controllers was also conducted.

Palace observes Day of God the Father

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo attended a Holy Mass for the celebration of the Day of the Good the Father and the Novena for the Holy Octave of consecration to God the Father.

The religious rites, held in the Ceremonial Hall of the Palace this afternoon as part of the culmination of the 8-day octave, was attended by different religious groups, lay men, and government officials.

“Most loving caring and merciful of Fathers, in Your Divine presence, In sincerely proclaim my love for you; I give myself and my family to You; and I solemnly consecrated myself, my family and my country—the Philippines to You—now and forever,” President Arroyo said reading the 8th major Octave during the consecration prayer.

Among the consecration prayer readers were DSWD Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Official Development Assistant (ODA) Secretary Mai Jimenez, outgoing Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, Jr., Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, former Senator Heherson Alvarez and Cerge Remonde.

Inspirational songs were performed by Isay Alvarez, Robert Seña, Raymond Manalo, Roselle Nava, Nolyn Cabahug, international artist Keith Martin, Jeffrey Hidalgo, Bethesda Springs of Hope Music Ministry, the Madrigal Singers and Nora Aunor.

The main celebrant of the Holy mass was Lipa Archbishop Ramon Arguelles, concelebrants were Bishop Emeritus of Novaliches Bishop Teodoro Bancani and Reverend Father Domingo Felipe and other priests namely Monsignor Domingo Erfe, Rev. Fr. Efren de Guzman, Rev. Fr. Paolo Pirlo, Rev. Fr. Lito Barbers, Rev. Fr. Saul Maquinto, Rev. Fr. James Gaa and Rev. Fr. Teo Rustia.

Also resent during the novena and the Mass were Senate President Franklin Drilon, Senate Minority Leader Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles and other government officials.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: August 1, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071117112618/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/aug01.htm>

The President's Day: August 2, 2004

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- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: National Budget**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: National Government Payroll**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Anti-Terrorism**
- **Palace cites steps to reduce dependence on imported fuel**
- **Business groups heed GMA call, pledge to keep prices of major items stable**
- **Palace says Lorenzo's appointment to new post final**
- **RP stands firm in commitment vs. terrorism – Palace**
- **Palace sees silver lining in budget-setting process**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: National Budget

We consider the budget process as an opportunity to build upon the executive-legislative partnership to meet the priority agenda of the President.

The Palace proposes, Congress disposes.

This is a principled relationship based on the interest of the people.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: National Government Payroll

We have to acknowledge that the national government is saddled by a huge payroll that can be reduced in certain places, except in those that are actively involved in the delivery of vital public services.

The President has made a clear start in the abolition and consolidation of some government agencies and offices, but the larger effort will have to be participated in by all departments and agencies.

Those up for reengineering will be offered incentive and alternative employment packages that will not impact heavily on the budget.

This will be reinforced by other cost-cutting measures which are also underway.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Anti-Terrorism

Our commitment to the campaign against international terrorism is firm.

The gains we continue to achieve in the anti-terrorism campaign is a result of the vigilance of Filipinos, our alliances with other nations and our strategic partnership with the United States.

Palace cites steps to reduce dependence on imported fuel

The government has been engaged in the search and development of locally available alternative fuel sources to lessen dependence on crude oil, Malacañang said today.

Energy independence and savings is the one of the five economic reform packages of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that she unveiled in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last week.

The government is propagating the widespread use of natural gas, which can be used to fuel buses and coco-diesel as an additive, Deputy Presidential Spokesman and Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo said in a radio interview this morning.

There are also the construction of small hydro-electric plants, the use of bio-gas or bio-mass and even wind or solar power.

These will slowly lessen the country's dependence on crude oil even if most are on a long-term basis, Saludo explained.

Saludo stressed that the use of natural gas for buses can help much in attaining energy independence.

The country has rich natural gas deposits in the Malampaya fields in Palawan which have been operational for some time.

Saludo also pointed out that the price of natural gas is more stable and its use will result in a cleaner environment.

The Department of Energy is at the forefront of these government efforts to harness locally available alternative fuels and lessen dependence on crude oil, according to Saludo.

Also involved are the Department of Science and the Department of Agriculture, especially the Philippine Coconut Authority which has been propagating the use of coco-diesel.

Oil importing countries received another rude shock with oil prices rising to record levels last week in New York primarily because big Russian oil firm Yukos is in financial straits and likely to reduce production.

Business groups heed GMA call, pledge to keep prices of major items stable

Manufacturers, traders and retailers have signed a resolution heeding the call of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to keep the prices of basic necessities and prime commodities stable for the benefit of consumers.

The resolution, signed last Wednesday at the National Price Coordinating Council regular meeting in Makati City, expresses the solidarity of tin can manufacturers, coconut oil refiners, flour millers, canned goods manufacturers, bakers association and retailers with the government in exploring other ways to improve their productivity and efficiency.

Recognizing the problems besetting the economy and their impact on all consumers, the signatories vowed to participate actively in the government's price stabilization program through price monitoring, policy reform recommendations, innovative programs and projects.

They also promised to exercise restraint and reasonableness in adjusting prices of basic necessities and prime commodities when warranted.

In their resolution, the signatories cited President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's reform program and call for unity to improve government services and save the economy.

"The President has made it crystal clear that her aim is to create economic opportunity at home and abroad... but it can only be done with focus, with energy, and with a common purpose to do that which still lies within our power, put our economic house back in order before it finds itself beyond hope or repair and doomed to share the fate of failed nations," the resolution said.

“We therefore heed the call of the President for unity of purpose for a common goal and for self-sacrifice and express our solidarity with her administration,” it added.

Signing the resolution were Henry Tañedo for the Tin Can Manufacturers Association; Jesus Arranza, Coconut Oil Refiners Association; Ric Pinca, Philippine Association of Flour Millers (PAFMIL); Alex Lim, Chamber of Philippine Flour Millers (CHAMP); Lucito Chavez, Phil. Federation of Bakers Association (PFBAI); Atty. Federico Ples, Philippine Association of Supermarkets (PASI); Steven Cua, Philippine Amalgamated Supermarkets Association (PAGASA); May Gonzales, National Association of Market Vendors Confederation of Cooperatives (NAMVESCO);

Tay C. Tan and Lawrence Kiok, Permex Producer and Exporter Corp; Francis Lim, Bagumbuhay Industrial Corp.; Ricardo Po and Ted Po, Century Canning Corp.; Gregory Tung, ATC Trading; Francisco Buencamino, Philippine Association of Meat Processors (PAMPI) and Geraldine Yu, Philips Food Corp.

Palace says Lorenzo’s appointment to new post final

Malacañang today said the decision of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to appoint outgoing Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo as Presidential Adviser for Jobs Generation is final.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye, in his regular press briefing at the Palace, said the President deliberated on whether or not to retain Lorenzo at the Agriculture department before announcing his new designation.

“This is something that is more or less final,” Bunye told reporters at the Palace.

The Chief Executive has named National Food Authority Administrator Arthur Yap as Lorenzo’s replacement.

As Presidential Adviser for Jobs Generation, Lorenzo is mandated to ensure the successful and efficient implementation of the President’s jobs generation program targeting the creation of six million to 10 million jobs within the next six years.

Under Executive Order No. 333 issued recently by the President, Lorenzo is tasked to coordinate an effective and timely implementation of the government’s roadmap for jobs generation.

Lorenzo is also tasked to apprise the President on programs and financial assistance packages for small farmers and fisherfolk, as well as small and medium enterprises, micro-business and other small entrepreneurs.

He is likewise empowered to oversee the lending programs of such government financial institutions as the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Quedan Rural Credit Guarantee Corp. (QUEDANCOR) and private sector resources in support of the overall jobs generation program.

RP stands firm in commitment vs. terrorism – Palace

The Philippines stands firm on its global and regional commitments against terrorism.

In a press briefing this afternoon at the Palace, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye affirmed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s staunch stand in the fight against terrorism.

“We have made significant gains, especially during the last few weeks, the last few days and we will continue to be active fighting terrorism in this part of the world,” Bunye said.

“We will continue to cooperate with our neighbors, regionally and internationally and definitely we expect to lick the problem of terrorism in the country,” Bunye continued.

He added the Philippines will continue cooperating with its allies and strategic partners in dealing with international terrorist groups and its relationships with its allies will remain strong.

“We are saying that we will fight terrorism the best way we can, the best way we know how. We are confident our relationship with our strategic partner, which is the United States, will continue to remain strong,” Bunye said.

Bunye lauded the active support of the Filipinos in the recent gains in the war against terrorism.

“The gains we continue to achieve is a result of the vigilance of Filipinos, our alliance with other nations and our strategic partnership with the United States,” Bunye said.

Palace sees silver lining in budget-setting process

Malacañang considers the budget process as an opportunity to build upon the partnership between the executive and the legislative to meet the priority agenda of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said today that insofar as the budget is concerned, “the Palace proposes, but Congress disposes.”

“This is a principled relationship based on the interest of the people,” Bunye said.

In his regular press briefing, the Secretary said Malacañang is trying to come up with a well-studied budget proposal that would give maximum flexibility to the different departments.

He assured that the Palace would submit the budget proposal well within the thirty days allowance after the opening of Congress.

“As far as the budget is concerned, according to Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, we have thirty days within which to submit the budget for consolidation,” Bunye said.

Last year, Malacañang submitted a budget proposal for P865 billion but Congress failed to pass the measure, forcing it to make do with the reenacted 2003 budget of P804 billion.

The President is seeking the passage of several tax measures, including the indexation of excise taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, as well as a shift to gross income taxation.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: August 2, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028090758/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/aug02.htm>

The President's Day: August 3, 2004

03 AUGUST 2004

- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Terror alert**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: RP-US relations**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Reported arms shipment**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Oil price situation**
- **Peso strengthens, follows appreciation of regional currencies**
- **Palace urges Filipino in U.S. to be extra cautious amidst new terror threat**
- **Palace justifies transfer of agencies to line departments**
- **GMA to head commission on values formation**
- **Reported arms shipment won't affect peace gab with MILF**
- **GMA to strengthen fight vs. corruption**
- **Gov't mulls increase in number of prosecutors to strengthen anti-graft drive**
- **Gov't re-engineering to do away with inutile posts, officers**
- **Second post-election 'Pulong Bayan' held tomorrow in Caloocan City**
- **Statement of the President: Re Former Senator Arturo Tolentino**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Terror alert

The Philippine government does not take this new threat lightly.

All Filipinos abroad are best forewarned to undertake extra precautions for their safety and that of their families.

Here at home and in the region, our vigilance and fight against terrorism will be unrelenting.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: RP-US relations

We never doubted the steadiness and firmness of the strategic partnership of the Philippines and the United States.

The bridge of understanding and solidarity between Americans and Filipinos has been built through more than a century and has withstood the test of time.

It will continue to stand as a platform of our common fight against terror and for the defense of democracy.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Reported arms shipment

We shall allow the GRP-MILF peace panel to look into these issues.

But this will not prevent our police and military from directly going after criminal and terrorist elements.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Oil price situation

The Cabinet is doing all it can to cushion the adverse effects of the new round of oil price hikes.

The main points of focus are the transport, manufacturing and consumer sectors.

Price monitoring of prime commodities is in place.

Active dialogues with manufacturers and producers are ongoing to temper price increase.

Peso strengthens, follows appreciation of regional currencies

The peso gained strength today as it closed firmer at P55.760 compared to yesterday's close of P55.780.

According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), this was mainly due to the continued appreciation of other regional currencies against the US dollar.

"Dollar inflows from overseas Filipino workers remittances, as well as some banks' dollar short selling, likewise supported the local unit," the BSP said.

However, some banks' dollar buying for their maturing obligations and short positions later weighed on the peso, it added.

For the morning session, the peso moved within the range of P55.730 to 55.830, with the last transaction dealt at P55.820. Volume of transactions amounted to \$104.8 million.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Customs reported a total collection of P10.724 billion for July, P1.569 billion more than the target of P9.842 billion for the month.

The bureau continued to exceed its assigned monthly tax collection target despite the low volume of importation during the first few months of the current year on account of the high rate of exchange between the dollar vis-à-vis the peso.

Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo is optimistic that the coming months would be good for the government in terms of increasing the revenues through tax collections. "The last six months of every year is where the volume of importation is high," he added.

He said that the Department of Finance has increased to three times the assigned tax collection target of the bureau from its original target of P107 billion to P110 billion and to P112 billion for the year 2004.

Palace urges Filipino in U.S. to be extra cautious amidst new terror threat

Malacañang today advised all Filipinos abroad, particularly those in the United States, to undertake extra precautions for their safety and that of their families in light of the latest terror alert raised by the US government.

"All Filipinos abroad are best forewarned to undertake extra precautions for their safety and that of their families," Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said in his regular briefing this afternoon.

He said that Philippine government does not take the new terror threat lightly.

According to the US government, Al-Qaeda militants in the US plan to target the country's most powerful symbols of Western capitalism, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington, D. C.

Bunye said that here at home and in the region, "our vigilance and fight against terrorism will be unrelenting." "It is better for us to be prudent," he added.

Meanwhile, Bunye noted the strong partnership between the Philippines and the US.

"We never doubted the steadiness and firmness of the strategic partnership of the two countries," he said.

Bunye said the bridge of understanding and solidarity between Americans and Filipinos has been built through more than a century and has withstood the test of time.

“It will continue to stand as a platform of our common fight against terror and for the defense of democracy,” Bunye said.

Palace justifies transfer of agencies to line departments

Malacañang today said that the objective of transferring existing agencies under the Office of the President to line departments is to have tighter supervision and smoother operations.

In a radio interview this morning, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said objections will always be a part of any reorganization but in the end, it would be for the good of the bureaucracy.

“Ang No. 1 objective dito ay magkaroon ng mas mahusay na superbisyon ang mga government agencies. Alam naman natin na marami na ang mga ahensiya na nakadikit o naka-attach sa Office of the President (The No. 1 objective here is to have a better supervision of government agencies. We all know that there are already so many agencies attached to the Office of the President),” Bunye said.

He said these agencies would be better off in departments “where their services are allied with what they do.”

Recently, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the transfer of several agencies under the Office of the President, among them the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (PAGCOR) and the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), to the Department of Finance.

Also placed under the DoF from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) was the Public Estates Authority (PEA).

The Manila Economic and Cultural Office Inc. (MECO) in Taipei, Taiwan and the Philippine National Construction Corp. (PNCC) have been transferred from OP to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The President, through Executive Order No. 330, said it is necessary to place PAGCOR under the DoF to facilitate coordination of policies and programs between the agencies.

The President said that the DoF is responsible for the generation and management of the financial resources of government, ensuring that said resources are generated and managed judiciously and in a manner supportive of the development objectives of government.

GMA to head commission on values formation

Malacañang today announced that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will head the new Presidential Commission on Values Formation.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said that the President herself bared her new job during today’s Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) meeting in Malacañang.

“The President mentioned that she herself will be chairing the Commission,” Bunye said in his regular briefing.

Bunye said that the President mentioned some high-profile religious leaders she had invited to join her in the commission. Aside from the chairman, the commission has six members, which would be co-terminus with the President.

According to Bunye, the President had mentioned some possible names as members, “but again at this time, we do not have any exact status of whether these personalities have actually accepted the invitation of the President.”

“The President feels that we have to come up with an integrated approach. If you want to solve the problem of corruption, which has been with us for a long time and you cannot solve it by just enforcement of laws. You cannot solve it by just improving the system. You really have to improve the orientation of the people who are running the system,” Bunye added.

Bunye said the President decided to head the commission herself because she feels that “this is a very important agency and the program is really the priority of the President.”

The President earlier signed Executive Order No. 314 creating the Presidential Commission on Values Formation.

According to the E.O., the commission shall serve as the lead agency by which government may work hand-in-hand with civil society and the private sector in the establishment of a strong foundation for moral value formation in the government bureaucracy.

The commission shall also prepare the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the E.O. It shall then subsequently proceed to design and implement programs such as seminars and congresses directed to values such as honesty, modesty, integrity and good work ethics in the government bureaucracy.

The commission will likewise make periodic recommendations to the President with regard to any duly supported and substantiated information on incorrigible and undesirable government personnel. Upon the written approval of the President, the commission may appear as complainant in any case filed pursuant to such recommendations before the appropriate government agency.

Lastly, the commission shall coordinate with, and support, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector in the effort to eradicate from the government bureaucracy every form or manner of graft and corruption, patronage politics, apathy, passivity, mendicancy, factionalism and lack of patriotism and to replace them with honest public service and love of country.

Reported arms shipment won't affect peace gab with MILF

Malacañang today said the reported arms shipment to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) would not imperil the ongoing peace negotiations between the government and the secessionist group.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye made the assurance after newspaper reports said that a large shipment of automatic rifles and ammunition to the MILF was discovered two weeks ago by security officials in a coastal town in Mindanao.

In a regular press briefing, Bunye told Malacañang reporters that the government is very optimistic that the ongoing peace talk will continue after both GRP and MILF panels decided to conduct an investigation in this particular issue.

“This is something that has been brought to the attention of the joint GRP/MILF panels. And the panels have decided to look into this specific allegations,” Bunye said.

Bunye said the Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines will continue to conduct operations against lawless elements and bandit groups and terrorists.

He noted that even without the threat of terrorist attack, the government is prepared and ready to implement its own program to counter the terror threat in the country.

“It has been our program. It has been our intention to fight terrorism here in our country, and in the region, and we are cooperating with our friends and allies as far as the anti-terrorism campaign is concerned,” Bunye added.

GMA to strengthen fight vs. corruption

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo set in motion today a mechanism designed to eradicate corruption in the bureaucracy, instill moral values and discipline among state workers and retool government service.

Presiding the second Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) meeting at the State Dining Room of Malacañang, the President urged leaders of Congress to pass measures strengthening the Office of the Ombudsman and government re-engineering.

The Chief Executive opened the LEDAC meeting by giving its members a brief overview of the three-pronged approach she intends to pursue to flesh out the reforms she has enunciated in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last month.

In his regular press briefing at the Palace following the LEDAC meeting, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye outlined three objectives of the President's anti-corruption campaign. These are: effective law enforcement with the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Internal Revenue as showcases; continuing lifestyle check on ranking government officials; and strengthening of the Ombudsman using Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Crime as a model.

The President also eyes the improvement of government frontline services, automation of elections, strengthening the government's procurement law and giving the influential Bishop-Businessmen's Conference wider participation in policy-making processes.

During the meeting, Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also cited the need for specially trained prosecutors and investigators to handle graft cases, and enhance transparency and accountability in transactions pertaining government projects.

The President reiterated her statement in the SONA that she wants a downsizing of government personnel, but providing what she termed "silver parachute" or adequate bailout assistance for those affected by the retrenchment.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo also told the LEDAC members that she would chair the Presidential Commission on Values Formation created to institutionalize morality in the bureaucracy.

Those who attended today's LEDAC meeting were Vice President Noli de Castro, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., Senators Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Richard Gordon, Manuel Villar, Juan Flavio and Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Congressmen Teodoro Locsin, Jr., Agapito Aquino, Jesli Lapuz, Benigno Aquino II and Guillermo Luz of the Makati Business Club and Cabinet members.

Gov't mulls increase in number of prosecutors to strengthen anti-graft drive

Presidential Chief of Staff Secretary Rigoberto Tiglao has proposed an increase in the number of well-trained investigators and prosecutors to handle cases involving graft and corruption during today's meeting of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) in Malacañang.

Under his "A Roadmap for the Campaign Against Corruption," Tiglao proposed the amendment of Republic Act No. 6770 (Ombudsman Law) to increase the number of prosecutors and investigators until a sufficient ratio is reached for the government's anti-graft campaign to be fully successful.

Tiglao noted that the main weakness in the country's fight against corruption is the high incidence of dismissal of anti-graft cases due to insufficiency of evidence.

At present, Tiglao said that the Philippines has only 145 graft investigators for its 1.4 million bureaucracy or a ratio of 1:10,000 civil servants.

Tiglao said this pales in comparison to Hong Kong which has 800 graft investigators for 150,000 government workers or a ratio of 1:2,000 civil servants.

Tiglao noted that Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), which the Philippines is trying to imitate, has a budget of P5 billion compared to the total P515 million budget of the Ombudsman, the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC), and other anti-graft bodies.

It was also noted that Hong Kong's Department of Justice with a budget of P2.7 billion has a conviction rate of 79 percent or 330 out of the 416 cases it handled in 2003.

During her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last month, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo asked Congress to pass a law making the Ombudsman as effective as Hong Kong's ICAC.

The President also challenged government officials to craft enforceable, doable and not motherhood anti-corruption programs to speed up the country's economic development and reduce poverty.

Thirty years ago, Hong Kong was considered one of the most corrupt countries in Asia before the establishment of the ICAC in 1974.

Today, Hong Kong is perceived as the 2nd least corrupt country in Asia.

Gov't re-engineering to do away with inutile posts, officers

Government offices and agencies that have outlived their usefulness will have to go.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin announced this during the second meeting of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) presided by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang today.

In her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 26, the President said she would trim down the bureaucracy and asked the leaders of Congress to pass a bill on government re-engineering.

"We will downsize the government, motivate excess employees to become entrepreneurs, and increase the pay of a lean and mean bureaucracy," the President stressed in her SONA.

In her presentation during the meeting, Boncodin outlined the three main objectives of the President's government retooling program. These are:

1. Abolition of functions or agencies whose activities are no longer relevant. Most of these agencies have been created a long time ago and their functions have become unnecessary at this time.
2. Consolidation of the redundant functions.
3. Strengthening of offices and agencies that need additional resources. An example is the Department of Education.

Under a voluntary separation program, Boncodin said affected employees would be given the option of early retirement, in which case they would be provided with what the President called a "silver parachute."

Apart from the normal retirement benefits being provided by the Government Service Insurance System, the retired employee would also receive an additional benefit from the national government.

Boncodin said the additional incentive could be as high or twice the employee's monthly basic salary if the worker has been in the service for forty years or more.

For those who opt to stay in the service, Boncodin said the Civil Service Commission would implement a system designed to attain a balanced and fair redeployment.

Boncodin assured the public that there would be no mass lay-off of government employees.

In the 2004 national budget, Boncodin said Congress has appropriated P15 billion for the incentive package to be given to employees who may want to retire.

Second post-election ‘Pulong Bayan’ held tomorrow in Caloocan City

The government’s anti-graft campaign takes center stage at tomorrow’s second “*Pulong Bayan*” of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to be held at a public market in Caloocan City.

Malacañang said the President wants to sustain this process of close interaction with the masses to feel their pulse about significant issues, as well as to provide quick response to the people’s complaints.

A salient point of the President’s series of small town meetings is discussion on the government’s 10-point agenda set for implementation over the next six years of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration as outlined in her State of the Nation Address last July 26.

Forthcoming *pulong bayan* or public consultations would be thematic in nature, and would make government officials have a clearer focus on addressing the needs and concerns of the people.

The first post-election *pulong bayan*, held last week in Parañaque City, focused on social justice and basic needs package. The affair received positive responses prompting Malacañang to institutionalize it.

Other visions of President Macapagal-Arroyo’s as elaborated in her SONA, are jobs generation and economic development, education improvement and youth opportunity, and energy independence and savings.

In tomorrow’s *pulong bayan*, Vice President Noli de Castro will assist the President and newly elected Caloocan City Mayor Enrico Echiverri in elaborating on the government’s thrust to weed out corruption

Before the interaction, Mayor Echiverri will present to the President at Caloocan City Hall 20 units of confiscated video karera machines.

The newly created Malacañang Office for Constituency Affairs (MOCA) has been tasked to oversee the holding of the *pulong bayan*.

Statement of the President: Re Former Senator Arturo Tolentino

We mourn the passing of former Senator Arturo Tolentino, a towering political figure, scholar, writer and diplomat.

I have always respected Ka Turing’s erudite views on issues confronting the country.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: August 3, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028003602/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/aug03.htm>

The President's Day: August 4, 2004

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- **Statement of the President: Anti-Terrorism**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Protection of Children**
- **No letup in government drive vs. terrorism**
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- **Gov't, MILF agree to conduct joint probe on alleged arms shipment — Palace**
- **Romulo expresses personal grief over 'Ka Turing' death**

Statement of the President: Anti-Terrorism

The arrest of the two JI suspects behind the Rizal Day bombings is a clear indication of the undiminished and unrelenting vigilance of our people in the global alliance versus terror.

We will continue waging this fight to clean up our shores of terrorists and alongside our neighbors, to sweep the region of their clandestine cells.

We will do our best to bring the battle against terror forward, and we will continue to be a strong link in the global chain of constricting terrorism.

I commend our Armed Forces for this accomplishment.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Protection of Children

The government has been vigilant against exploitation of children.

The basis of the UNICEF report was the rescue of 70 exploited children in Laguna last month.

We are addressing this problem, but the cooperation of the parents and the local community is imperative.

Stamping out child exploitation is part of the fight against crime and poverty.

No letup in government drive vs. terrorism

Malacañang said today that the government has not wavered on its drive to stamp out terrorism on the home front, as well as help fight it in the global arena.

This relentless campaign gained added impetus when President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo created last March 22 an inter-agency Anti-Terrorism Task Force (ATTF) under the general supervision of the Department of National Defense.

Records of the multi-agency ATTF showed that during the first five months of its existence, the task force has proved to be a deadly nemesis of organized terrorism. From March to July this year, ATTF operatives, backed up by the police and other law enforcement units, captured a total of 67 suspected terrorists, seven of them foreigners believed to be elements of the dreaded Al-Qaeda and its Asian cell, the Jemaah Islamiyah.

Most of those arrested were believed to be members of the Muslim fundamentalist Abu Sayyaf group which is blamed for a spate of bomb attacks, kidnappings and other terrorist acts in the country.

The Abu Sayyaf also pulled off the kidnapping of more than 20 tourists, most of them Europeans, from the Malaysian resort of Sipadan. Most of the hostages were freed allegedly upon payment of undetermined amount of ransom.

At least 10 suspected Abu Sayyaf gunmen were killed last April in encounters in separate incidents in the island province of Basilan.

The ATTF operations also resulted in the confiscation of large cache of explosive materials ranging from blasting caps, detonating cords to ammonium nitrate.

The 15-agency ATTF is headed by Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita as National Anti-Terrorism Coordinator, with Defense Undersecretary Edgardo Batenga as his deputy.

As an anti-terrorism superbody, the ATTF formulates strategies, policies, plans and measures necessary to prevent and suppress acts of terrorism.

It also coordinates with ASEAN-member countries and other nations to promote intelligence sharing in the global fight against terrorism.

The task force is also authorized to organize or tap government officials including retirees, private individuals, corporations and other stakeholders to serve either as advisers, resource persons or active participants.

Palace cites 2-pronged approach in the fight vs. graft in public offices

While the function of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission is punitive, the Presidential Commission on Values Formation (PCVF) recently created by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will be preventive in nature.

This was explained today by Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye in a radio interview as he expounded on the two-pronged approach of the government in implementing its anti-graft campaign.

“Magiging dalawa ang approach natin (We will approach the problem two ways),” he said. “The anti-graft commission will investigate and prosecute suspected corrupt officials while the Values Formation Commission will teach values, to change the way we see things, and prevent corruption in government.”

The creation of PCVF, according to Bunye, was one of the things expounded by the President in her State of the Nation Address (SONA). It is one of the executive efforts that will go hand in hand with the legislative efforts in Congress.

In her recent meeting with the Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC), the President announced that she herself would head the PCVF.

Bunye said the President decided to head the commission herself because she feels that “this is a very important agency and the program is really the priority of the President.”

He said one of the pro-active measures in the drive against corruption is the President’s invitation to the business group to be active in various pre-bid awards and awards committee (PBAC).

“Tatal naman yang mga PBAC ay kasalukuyang umiiral sa iba’t ibang local governments, iba’t ibang ahensiya. Ang gustong mangyari ng ating Pangulo ay almost automatic, mayroong kinatawan ang business group. (Anyway the

PBAC is already in the local governments and different government agencies. What our President wants is for a representative from the business group to be part of the PBAC),” he said.

According to Executive Order No. 314 creating the Presidential Commission on Values Formation, the commission shall serve as the lead agency by which government may work hand-in-hand with civil society and the private sector in the establishment of a strong foundation for moral value formation in the government bureaucracy.

The commission shall also prepare the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the E.O. It shall then subsequently proceed to design and implement programs such as seminars and congresses directed to values such as honesty, modesty, integrity and good work ethics in the government bureaucracy.

Caloocan City mayor vows to support GMA’s programs

CALOOCAN CITY – Caloocan City Mayor Enrico Echiverri today vowed to support President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s program of improving the quality of life of every Filipino during her six year term.

In a chance interview at the Caloocan City Hall Plaza after the “pulong bayan” held here, Echiverri said he has thrown his support to economic reforms and vision the President has elaborated in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 26.

Echiverri, who ran under the opposition party Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP), said that it is now time to set aside politics and everybody should instead focus in supporting government’s plan for economic recovery.

“In a political party, we have a president or a chairman of the political party and as soon as the election is over I believe there should only be one party and that’s the party of the Republic of the Philippines. So the common goal or objective here is improving the life of every Filipino,” Echiverri said.

Although he maintained that under a democratic country, there is a need for constructive criticism, Echiverri said important measures of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, especially if they are for the good of the people, should be supported.

“Each has his own belief and platform but after Election Day and when the people has spoken, we only have one politics and that is for the country,” said Echiverri, adding that too much politicking would only cause divisiveness in the country.

The President was warmly received here in her first post-election visit to the city, where she held her second “pulong bayan” which tackled measures aimed at eradicating graft and corruption in public offices.

Curbing corruption and good government tackled in 2nd post-election ‘pulong bayan’

Improvement of front line services in national and local government agencies is one way by which President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo intends to curb corruption and provide good governance to the people.

In her second post-election “pulong bayan” with Vice President Noli de Castro and Caloocan City Mayor Enrico Echiverri, the President said that the implementation of “pro-speed” or anti-red tape law would improve government services such as issuance of permits, civil registry records as well as payment of real estate taxes.

She explained that during her visits to underprivileged communities in early 2003 along with Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman, she learned that poor front line services was on the top of the list of grievances among the masses.

“One of the most important measures for speedier service that was tackled during yesterday’s LEDAC (Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council) meeting was to have a transaction manual as raised by Senator Miriam

Santiago,” the President said in the “pulong bayan” held at the Poblacion Public Market along 10th Avenue in Caloocan City.

President Macapagal-Arroyo pointed out that this manual would be used in local and national government agencies to improve the services of the line agencies.

The government is also pushing for the creation of facilitation express lanes that will check business transaction with the fixers that proliferate in some government agencies.

Caloocan Representatives Oscar Malapitan and Luis Asistio assured the President that they would sponsor a bill in the Congress that would set up express lanes in government agencies to speed up transactions and fees collected used to increase allowances for government employees so that they will not be tempted to resort to some shenanigans.

After the thematic small town meeting, President Macapagal-Arroyo had a light luncheon with de Castro, Malapitan, Asistio, Metro Manila Development Authority Chairman Bayani Fernando, event organizer Secretary Conrado Limcaoco, Mayor Echiverri and wife Purificacion, Barangay Captain Miguelita Limpo, Market Vendors Association president Lito Buenaobra, Neighborhood Association President Edgar Ybanez and Tricycle and Operators and Drivers Association (TODA) president Renato Buaceno.

Other officials present in the “pulong bayan” were Secretary Soliman, incoming Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and heads of government agencies.

Earlier, the President and Vice President de Castro made a brief visit at the Caloocan City Hall Plaza, where they were presented 20 units of confiscated video karera machines by Mayor Echiverri.

The first “pulong bayan” held in Parañaque City focused on social justice and basic needs package.

Forthcoming small town interactions would deal with the President’s other reform packages that she elaborated in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) like jobs generation and economic development, education improvement and youth opportunity, and energy independence and savings.

No travel advisory but only advice for extra precautions for Filipinos traveling to U.S.

Malacañang today reiterated its advice to Filipinos who are already in the United States or are planning to go there to take “extra precautions” amid new terror threats in some US cities.

In his regular press briefing this afternoon, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye also said that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has not issued any formal travel advisory for Filipinos to travel to the United States.

“What we said yesterday is that we are asking our compatriots who are in the United States to take the necessary precautions. We know that some of them are working in areas which have been identified as possible targets but there has been no formal travel advisory as far as traveling to the United States is concerned,” Bunye said.

Bunye added that traveling to the United States is an individual “judgment call” by Filipinos but still advice them to take necessary precautions for their safety while in the United States or any part of the globe.

Bunye said that if ever the DFA decides to issue a travel ban, it should have a sufficient justification for issuing such an advisory.

GMA bats for e-payroll to curb graft

Caloocan may soon be the first city government to implement electronic payrolls in line with the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's program of using information technology (IT) to curb corruption in government.

This surfaced today during the second post-election "pulong bayan" hosted by the President along with Vice President Noli de Castro and Caloocan Mayor Enrico Echiverri at the Caloocan City hall.

Echiverri said the city government plans to enter into agreement with the banking institutions to pave the way for the use of electronic payrolls through automated teller machines (ATMs).

"Ang tutoo niyan, last Friday kausap ko iyong ibang bangko na gusto ko sana upang hindi na mahirapan ang mga empleyado namin dito at hindi na mabawasan ang kaunting suweldo (The truth is, last Friday I've already talked with some banks on the possibility of using ATMS for their payrolls to help the employees)," Echiverri said.

The issue stemmed from a complaint by an employee that most of the time, they don't get their complete salaries from the cashiers. Echiverri said the use of the ATMs will eliminate this.

The President said that the use of the e-payroll would benefit the entire government bureaucracy, particularly line departments like the Department of Education, which has thousands of employees.

The Chief Executive revealed that nearly half of the one million government employees are from the DepEd, mostly teachers.

"Yes, kaya DepEd din ang nagpa-pioneer dito sa e-payroll. So makukuha na nila ang kanilang pera, halimbawa iyong mga teacher sa Bacolod City, makukuha na by electronic means (That's why the DepEd is pioneering on the e-payroll. So teachers, say from Bacolod City, can now get their pay through electronic means)," she said.

De Castro said that by using ATMs, employees would also be spared from the risk of getting held up during payday by unscrupulous elements because they can only get money that they need and not the entire amount as in the case of manual payrolls.

The President and the Vice President were warmly received in the "pulong bayan" which tackled measures aimed at eradicating graft and corruption in public offices.

Palace reiterates: No forced retirement of gov't employees

Government workers are free to choose if they want to remain in public service or avail of the optional retirement package being offered by the government.

This was emphasized in a radio interview this morning by Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin as she assured that there would be no forced retirement in the proposed reengineering plan of the government.

"Hindi natin sila pupuwersahin. Katulad nang parati kong binabanggit, it is a voluntary means (We will not force them. It is voluntary as what I have always reiterated)," Boncodin said.

Under the reengineering plan, Boncodin said employees who would be given the opportunity to retire are those working under an office whose functions would be determined by Congress as either for abolition or no longer relevant.

Boncodin cited as an example teachers who are not included in the early retirement program as the government is still hiring teachers to fill in the backlog.

She said that the government could save between P6 to P7 billion a year from the reengineering program that she hopes could take off this year.

Boncodin assured those who would avail of the retirement package that they would get their retirement pay on their last day of office aside from other incentives, such as alternative livelihood and one-half to 2 months premium, depending on the length of service.

Boncodin also gave assurance that the Civil Service Commission (CSC) would take care of the rights of government employees in the event that their offices would be abolished or merged with other line agencies upon the approval of Congress.

Gov't, MILF agree to conduct joint probe on alleged arms shipment — Palace

The government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) are now jointly conducting a probe on the reported arms shipment allegedly received by the MILF some two weeks ago in Mindanao.

In his regular briefing in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the joint probe by the government and MILF peace panels means that both sides want the peace process to continue.

“The fact that the joint GRP-MILF panels are looking into this jointly is already a confidence building measure. It means that both sides want the peace process to continue and not be hindered by any isolated incidents,” Bunye said.

It was reported that the MILF allegedly received a large shipment of smuggled arms in the coastal towns of Lanao del Sur and Sultan Kudarat provinces some two weeks ago.

“Itong napabalita na arms shipment ay sinusubaybayan o sinusuri ngayon ng isang joint panel kaya ang mga alleged violations ay open at puwedeng suriin ng joint probe team (The reported arms shipment is now being looked into by a joint panel and the alleged violations are open for scrutiny by the joint probe team),” Bunye said.

Renewed peace negotiations with the MILF resulted in a bilateral ceasefire signed in July 2003 that continues to hold on the ground.

It also resulted in the signing of an interim peace agreement on relief and rehabilitation of war-torn communities, and a commitment from the MILF to assist the government in the interdiction and isolation of terrorist groups seeking refuge in MILF areas.

Romulo expresses personal grief over ‘Ka Turing’ death

Executive Secretary Alberto G. Romulo, in a press statement, today expressed his personal grief over the death of former Senator Arturo Tolentino, who he considered as a personal friend having worked closely with him in the Senate from 1992 to 1995.

Romulo’s statement in full:

“I was the majority leader during the term of the late Senator Tolentino and I recall always seeking his advice on parliamentary rules and procedures because he was considered the sage of the Senate.

“His bereaved family is assured that Arturo Tolentino has now achieved immortality. Our people shall remember him with reverence and affection. After all, his record as a legislator and constitutionalist is perfection personified.

“The challenge remains for our legislators to live up to the intellectual standards set by the humble ‘Ka Turing’ who despite his genius, was a voracious reader and assiduous student of both history and current affairs.”

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: August 4, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026142752/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/aug04.htm>

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- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Anti-Terrorism**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Revenue Measures**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Executive-Legislative Partnership**
- **G-CSIRT: Cyber watchdog launched**
- **Statement of the President: Olympic team**
- **GMA's lead role in PCVF shows her firm resolve to wipe out graft in public offices**
- **GMA presents awards to 5 model barangays for their Eco-Waste Management Programs**
- **GMA sends off small RP contingent to 2004 Athens Olympic Games**
- **Price of unleaded gasoline, diesel in RP still lowest in Asia, says Perez**
- **Perez says gov't willing to assist transport groups put up own gasoline stations**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Anti-Terrorism

The gains we have achieved are of great help in crippling the operation of Al-Qaeda-linked terrorist cells in the Southeast Asian region.

Terrorist linkages across the country are being crippled one by one.

But we are not taking any chances for there are still a few who have to be accounted for.

Proactive intelligence measures will continue to ensure that our people are safeguarded.

The manhunt will never relent until terrorists are brought to justice and the world is a safer place to live in.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Revenue Measures

The administration is pushing for new revenue measures as a matter of national interest and survival.

We expect stiff opposition to these measures but we hope that the detractors of the administration will stick to reasoned debate and sobriety.

Grandstanding and obfuscation will defeat our common objective of socioeconomic progress and political stability.

We are depending on the allies of the President in Congress to lead and win this fight and the executive branch is prepared to do its part by stepping up fiscal disciplinary measures while pursuing our pro-poor agenda, and sustaining the effort against corruption and waste.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Executive-Legislative Partnership

The President has never interfered with the internal prerogatives of Congress but extends support and counsel as part of the executive-legislative partnership for the interest of the people.

Any interaction between the Presidency and Congress has something to do with carrying forward the social and economic reform agenda that the entire administration is committed to work for, both at the executive and legislative levels.

G-CSIRT: Cyber watchdog launched

The Task Force for the Security of Critical Infrastructures of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security under Undersecretary Abraham Purugganan will formally launch the Government Computer Security Incident Response Team (G-CSIRT) today.

It will be inaugurated by Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo at the Crime Investigation and Detection Group Headquarter in Camp Crame.

The G-CSIRT will be the focal point for reporting computer attacks intrusions on information and communications system. It will also provide a coordinated support system in response to such incidents.

In line with President Arroyo's campaign to protect the nation's critical infrastructures against terrorist organizations, the G-CSIRT is launched in response to the growing threats in Philippine cyberspace. Its launching marks the beginning of a coordinated and integrated effort to build the nation's capabilities in responding top threats in cyberspace.

"Our increasing interdependence on information and communication technology (ICT) and the interdependence of critical infrastructures coupled with the increasing value of information, and the convenience of using ICT to wage war have increase the risks in Philippine cyberspace," explained Purugganan.

The "I Love You" virus has extensively damage countless computer systems all over the globe. It has caused US-based telecom giant AT&T an estimated \$10 billion loss in revenues not to mention the losses incurred by several local companies and firms.

Purugganan stressed the need in preventing and mitigating electronic crimes particularly network intrusions and hacking, telecommunication fraud, malicious virus transmission and other forms of cyber crimes that can affect critical infrastructures.

The G-CSIRT will focus on intrusions into information and communication systems of the twelve key sectors mentioned in the National Critical Infrastructure Protection Plan (NCIPP) namely: government, food and agriculture, transportation and communication, water, energy, health, emergency response services, manufacturing, banking and finance, strategic commercial centers, and cultural and religious sites and facilities.

One of the key factors in the success of this campaign to protect the Philippine cyberspace is the active participation of the private sector, the business community, the academe and the citizenry in general.

Jointly managed by the TFSCI and the Philippine National Police (PNP) through the Anti-Transnational Crime Division (ATCD), it will be supported by other agencies and the private sector who will comprise the executive and advisory boards respectively.

Critical infrastructures, as defined in the NCIPP, are comprised of two aspects—the physical and the cyber. The G-CSIRT is a manifestation of the Macapagal-Arroyo government's effort to address security requirement of the cyber aspect of critical infrastructures.

The G-CSIRT is one of the initial programs of the TFSCI that will trigger other programs for securing the Philippine cyberspace, such as the conduct of vulnerability assessment and security audits, building databases and capacity-building namely training and advocacy, to name a few.

Statement of the President: Olympic team

I am proud to send off our small contingent to the forthcoming Olympic Games in Athens.

They sally forth in a mission of friendship and goodwill at a time when these values must take precedence in a troubled world.

Like millions of Filipinos abroad, our athletes will be a symbol of Filipino excellence and competitiveness in all fields, and our commitment to the universal values of peace and solidarity among all nations and peoples.

May they reap the glory that they and our people deserve.

GMA's lead role in PCVF shows her firm resolve to wipe out graft in public offices

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will personally head the Presidential Commission on Values Formation (PCVF) to lead the efforts in the fight against corruption as she has done with the National Anti-Poverty Council (NAPC), Malacañang said today.

The PCVF is a very important body, being one of the primary weapons of government to combat corruption so that the President will head it herself, Presidential Deputy Spokesman and Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo said in a radio interview this morning.

She will spearhead the efforts of the PCVF to inculcate moral values through programs that will elevate the standards of service of government employees and to get feedback from the citizenry and the private sector on government officials who are allegedly engaged in corrupt activities, Saludo said.

As head of the PCVF, the President herself can order the transfer or immediate prosecution of errant officials if the lawyers of the Office of the President deem there is enough evidence to warrant it, Saludo explained.

During the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) that tackled the anti-corruption and good governance part of the President's five economic reform programs, it was proposed that a law be enacted to protect "whistle blowers," those who report corrupt actions of officials, and to strengthen the office of the Ombudsman to make the PCVF truly effective.

The proposal to strengthen the Ombudsman will give it more funds, more personnel like investigators and more power like Hong Kong's Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) that was instrumental for the success of the former British colony's fight against corruption.

Saludo noted that during his stay in Hong Kong, the ICAC had the authority to appoint lawyers to defend witnesses.

They are also studying the possibility of placing the investigators of the Presidential Anti-Graft Committee under the Ombudsman, Saludo said.

GMA presents awards to 5 model barangays for their Eco-Waste Management Programs

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today honored this year's top five winners in the nationwide search for Model Barangays for Eco-Waste Management in a simple ceremony held this morning at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang.

The five barangays have the most efficient solid waste management program among the 42,000 barangays nationwide and out of more than 500 barangays that participated in the search.

This year's P1-million five-star Gold Award winner was Barangay Linomot, Jones, Isabela for being a role model for having an innovative ecological waste management (ESWM) program.

The ESWM program of Barangay Linomot includes maintaining a vegetable and flower garden in schools and households, using bamboo as aerator for compost piles and sack hanger to segregate usable materials from the collected garbage.

The 500,000 four-star Silver Award went to Brgy. Panoypoy, Calbayog City; the P250,000 three-star Bronze Award to Brgy. Holy Spirit in Quezon City; the P100,000 two-star awardee was Brgy. Bued, Calasiao, Pangasinan; and the P50,000 one-star winner was Brgy. Sta. Cruz, Sto. Tomas, Batangas.

According to Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Elisea Gozun, only 181 barangays had qualified for the final evaluation of the screening committee and this was further trimmed down to 35 barangays as finalists in this year's search.

Aside from providing the P1 million top purse from the Office of the President (OP) through the Office for Special Projects, President Macapagal-Arroyo also donated 10 presidential trophies for this year's winners.

The President's personal interest in the project stems from the fact that Republic Act (R. A.) 9003, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, was the first bill she signed into law after EDSA II.

The donors in the nationwide search were Senator Manuel Villar, who gave P1 million, and Sen. Francis Pangilinan, who gave P500,000.

Assisting the President during the awarding of prizes were Gozun, former First Lady Amelita Ramos, Interior and Local Government Undersecretary Agnes Devanadera, Misamis Oriental Representative Augusto Baculio and Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas.

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, Jr., attended the ceremony to receive the bronze award and the special recognition for Quezon City which got an award for dumpsite conversion with power generation.

Other barangays that received special recognitions were Brgy. Calao-an, Candon, Ilocos Sur, Model Barangay for Household Composting; Brgy. Lubiano, Pilar Sorsogon, Model Barangay for Broad-Based Community Participation; Poblacion (Patay), Sagada, Mountain Province, Model Barangay for Eco-Volunteerism; and Purok II, San Joaquin, Iloilo, Model Barangay for Eco-Entrepreneurship and Youth Participation.

GMA sends off small RP contingent to 2004 Athens Olympic Games

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today sent off with pride the small Philippine Olympic Team set to leave this week to participate in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

The 34 members of the Philippine Olympic Team, composed of 18 officials and 16 athletes, paid a courtesy call on the President this morning at the Malacañang's Heroes Hall.

"Like millions of Filipinos abroad, our athletes will be a symbol of Filipino excellence and competitiveness in all fields, and our commitment to the universal values of peace and solidarity among all nations and peoples," the President said.

"May they reap the glory that they and our people deserve," she added.

At the brief courtesy call, the President presented the Philippine flag to Stephen Hontiveros, *chef de mission* of the Philippine Olympic Team as her gesture of total support.

The delegation presented the President an Olympic jacket as a souvenir for the centennial Olympic Games starting on August 13.

Celso Dayrit, President of the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC), said the 16 athletes were chosen based on their performances and for passing the standards set by the International Olympic Committee.

Philippine Sports Commission Chairman Joseph Eric Buhain said Filipinos will positively watch a full television coverage of the 2004 Olympics through the government's NBN-channel 4, thanks to the President's timely intervention.

Buhain added that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has offered a P5 million incentive from the government for each athlete who will win a gold medal. This has been augmented by P1 million by the private sector and another P1 million by South Korean firm Samsung.

"It is something to look forward to and I believe the athletes have paid their dues already and they deserve this one moment in time so to speak," Buhain said.

Four boxers, three taekwondo jins, two tracksters, five swimmers, one archer and one shooter make up the 16 athletes.

Aside from Dayrit and Buhain, officials present included POC Secretary General Romeo Ribano and Bacolod City Congressman Monico Puentevella, designated Olympic attaché.

Members of the Philippine Olympic Team present were Miguel Molina, Miguel Mendoza, Jackie Pangilinan, Elmer Dipuso, Mary Ann Rivero, Jose Santos, Rafael Chua, Jasmine Figueroa, Eduardo Buenavista, Lerma Babito, Donald Geisler III, Tshomlee Go, Jose Andoni Santos and Leah Coline Langit (athletes) finance officer Benjamin Ramos, Jr., finance officer Carlos Viola, swimming team leader Francisco Rivera III, swimming coach Anthony Lozada, archery coach Henry Manalang, athletics team leader Go Teng Kok, athletic coach Joseph Sy, boxing team leader Gemiliano Lopez, Jr., shooting coach Jose Ramon Corral, taekwondo head coach Jesus Morales III, taekwondo coach Tae Hyung Kim, boxing president Manuel Lopez, taekwondo president Roberto Aventajado, and taekwondo vice-president Sung Chun Hong.

Price of unleaded gasoline, diesel in RP still lowest in Asia, says Perez

Despite the unabated oil price increases in the world market, the Philippines still enjoys the lowest pump price of unleaded gasoline in Asia.

Energy Secretary Vince Perez revealed this today in a press briefing in Malacañang in the midst of the uncomfortable situation of oil prices in the international market.

"Yes, it is still no comfort to the riding public, but at least, it's maybe a consolation that price (of oil) in the country is still one of the lowest in the region," Perez said.

Perez said that based on the comparative oil prices dated August 3, 2004, the Philippines still has the lowest pump price of unleaded gasoline compared to its neighboring countries.

Aside from this, Perez revealed that the country ranks number two among those with the lowest pump price of diesel in the region.

He said Hong Kong tops among the countries with the highest prices of unleaded gasoline in peso per liter at 84.74 and diesel 49.08; next is Korea, 65.27 in unleaded gasoline and 41.42 in diesel; Singapore, 48.99 in unleaded and 27.86 in diesel; New Zealand, 44.81 and 24.07; Australia, 41.33 and 40.74; Cambodia, 36.25 and 24.65; Thailand, 26.10 and 19.64; and the lowest is the Philippines at 25.73 in unleaded gasoline and 20.23 in diesel.

Perez insisted that the uncomfortable phenomenon in world oil prices should not be a reason for Filipinos to be alarmed because the country is enjoying the lowest pump price of unleaded gasoline and diesel products.

He warned the public, especially the oil companies, not to engage in any unscrupulous activities nor use the situation to raise their oil prices because the government is ready to use the full force of the law to prosecute them.

Perez also assured that the country will not have an oil crisis because it has ample supply of oil products.

Perez explained that among the reasons why oil prices hit an all-time high are the limited spare production and refining capacity, the terror alerts in the United States, unresolved tax problems between Yukos, Russia's biggest oil exporter, and the Russian government, and the sabotage on Iraqi pipelines which have caused crude prices to appreciate 72 percent over the past 14 months.

The situation has further worsened after the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) proved powerless in halting the oil price surge, Perez said.

Perez says gov't willing to assist transport groups put up own gasoline stations

Qualified transport group cooperatives can now avail of training and financial assistance from the government in putting up their own gasoline stations amid the continuing hike in the prices of crude oil in the world market.

In a press briefing this afternoon in Malacañang, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez, Jr., disclosed the assistance package that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration is extending to public transport groups.

The assistance will help transport cooperatives become entrepreneurs by buying wholesale diesel and selling it at a low price to their members through their own pump stations.

“The second assistance we could have is the P30 million to P50 million from PAGCOR (Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation) that we could lend to qualified groups of transport cooperatives or even a transport association. We could also lend money through DBP to allow them to build and construct their own gasoline stations,” said Perez.

However, Perez cited some government conditions to be followed by the groups in having their own gas stations — that they only buy un-smuggled diesel product and meet the minimum safety environment standards that also comply with the Department of Energy (DOE), Bureau of Fire Protection and Local Government Code.

Aside from the financial assistance, the government could also help qualified groups through training programs which include pump station operation, marketing and financial trainings.

“The President has made it very clear that she's very sympathetic to the plight of the transport sector. And the DOE is willing to assist the jeepney cooperatives or the bus cooperatives if they wish to form a business to run their own gasoline station,” he added.

Perez appealed to the transport groups not to push through with their planned transport strike because it would only bring inconvenience to the commuting public and would not change the prices of petroleum products in the world market.

He said the government is monitoring companies that might be doing unauthorized calibration of pumps, selling adulterated diesel and other illegal practices.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: August 5, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026142323/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/aug05.htm>

The President's Day: August 6, 2004

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- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Iraq aftermath**
- **Gov't taking all steps to keep prices of fuel, other main items from getting too high**
- **GMA orders PNP to get killers of Batangas newsman**
- **Community press rallies behind GMA's 10-point agenda**
- **GMA bares 5-point framework in achieving energy independence and savings**

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Iraq aftermath

The President has stuck to her oath, taken responsibility, and has no apologies.

If this is the price to pay for being a Filipino and for leading the Filipino nation, so be it.

There are other, perhaps even more meaningful, ways to sustain and strengthen our strategic relationship with the United States.

We shall always work to keep the relationship firm in propelling the common commitment to fight terrorism domestically, regionally and worldwide.

Gov't taking all steps to keep prices of fuel, other main items from getting too high

The government is taking all steps to keep the prices of fuel and prime commodities from getting too high, Malacañang said today.

On the price of fuel, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the Department of Energy (DOE) is ready to offer training, and if possible, seed money to the transport sector so they can set up their own fuel outlets or avail of wholesale prices from suppliers.

If that happens, that will be a big help to the transport sector and may defer the request of some to increase fares, Bunye explained.

Energy Secretary Vince Perez is also having dialogues with the oil companies to make gradual their price adjustments when they have to.

On prices of prime commodities, Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima has also been having dialogues with manufacturers, retailers and distributors.

The good news, according to Bunye, is that they have promised to cooperate with the government by keeping their prices within reasonable range.

The Department of Trade and Industry is also linking up with local government units, which have price committees, to keep close watch on the prices of prime commodities, Bunye said.

Oil prices in the world market hit record levels this week because Russian oil giant Yukos is in deep financial trouble with its government and the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) said it cannot immediately hike its production.

GMA orders PNP to get killers of Batangas newsman

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the Philippine National Police (PNP) to go after the assailants of DZRH and Bulgar correspondent Arnel Manalo who was slain in an ambush in Bauan, Batangas Thursday.

In a radio interview this morning, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the President has also instructed the PNP to give protection to those seeking the help of the police especially those who think their lives are in grave danger.

“The President wants a thorough probe of the ambush and other past incidents involving journalists,” Bunye said.

Manalo was shot three times in the head and neck after dropping off his children at school. He was the second journalist slain in five days.

Last Saturday, a radio broadcaster known for his hard-hitting commentaries was gunned down in Ilocos Norte. A total of 56 newsmen has been slain since the restoration of democracy in 1986.

Bunye said the P1 million reward offered by President Macapagal-Arroyo for those who can give information that could lead to the arrest of perpetrators of crimes against journalists still stands.

“Iyang offer na iyan ay mananatili. Kaya kung mayroong makakatulong sa pag-solve sa mga pagpaslang sa members ng media, iyan ay pasasalamat at gagawaran ng kaukulang pabuya (That offer still stands. That’s why if there is anybody who could help solve the cases of slain journalists, there is a corresponding reward waiting),” he said.

Bunye cited the importance of everybody’s cooperation in the resolution of crimes, particularly those who were near the site of the ambush. “We will need the cooperation of the community to be able to solve these kinds of incidents,” he said.

Last June, the President ordered the creation of a task force to solve the killings of media men in the country who, according to her, are the champions of democracy.

The task force is composed of members of the PNP under Director General Hermogenes Ebdane and the National Press Club of the Philippines (NPC).

Appointed by the President as liaison for the NPC with the PNP was NPC Director Cris Maralit, a retired police general.

The President’s directive was made in the light of the killing then of Ely Binoya, the 49 year-old manager and commentator of the community radio station *Radyo Natin* in Malongon, Sarangani.

Community press rallies behind GMA’s 10-point agenda

The Publishers Association of the Philippines, Inc. (PAPI) has exhorted members of the community press to reach out to all sectors to enlist citizen participation and responsibility in rallying behind President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s 10-point economic agenda as their share in building a strong Republic.

PAPI President Juan P. Dayang, in a conference with mediemen from various parts of the country, solicited the help of the community press, including editors, columnists, correspondents, publishers and broadcasters, to support the five key reform packages presented by the President in her State of the Nation Address (SONA).

Members of the working press from print and broadcast have vowed the cooperation of their respective media offices in the realization of the President’s five reform programs aimed at producing more jobs through economic development, curbing graft and corruption by trimming the bureaucracy, providing social justice and basic needs, providing education and opportunities for the youth, and achieving energy independence and savings.

PAPI, Dayang said, is pledging its decisive support to the administration and the President's call for unity of purpose and patriotism for a common goal and self-sacrifice.

Dayang said members of the Fourth Estate should now unite and rally behind the President as a matter of patriotism and national interest. "The role of the community press in catalyzing the Filipino nation towards a better country cannot be overemphasized in the face of a ballooning budget deficit, growing unemployment rate, and the sluggish economy, among others," he said.

"Our country," Dayang said, "has just gone through a divisive electoral exercise and it is just incumbent upon us to stand four-square behind the President in her efforts to heal the wounds and forge a stronger bond of national unity."

GMA bares 5-point framework in achieving energy independence and savings

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today bared a five-point framework on the energy independence and savings reform package she promised in her July 26 State of the Nation Address (SONA).

The overall objective is to reduce energy importation to achieve a 60 percent self-sufficiency by 2010, the President said in her address at the general membership meeting and silver anniversary celebration of the Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association, Inc. (PHILRECA) at the Philippine Trade Training Center in Pasay City.

This can be achieved, the President said, by:

- increasing reserves of indigenous oil and gas through exploration and becoming the world's top producer of geothermal energy in the world;
- developing renewable energy potential such as biomass, solar, wind and ocean resources;
- increasing use of alternative fuels like natural gas;
- firming up strategic alliances with other countries, particularly long time energy partners like Saudi Arabia, ASEAN neighbors, China and Russia; and
- saving on energy through strong efficiency and conservation programs.

"We need a reform package industry-wide of energy savings and independence because we have always been dependent on imported energy and therefore, vulnerable to the vagaries of global politics and economics, particularly events bearing on oil supply such as war, terrorism, and currency fluctuations," the President emphasized.

The Philippine National Oil Corp. (PNOC) will be upgraded to improve success rates in discovering new oil and gas reserves, she said.

The government has launched the first ever international geothermal bid round to invite private sector investment in 10 geothermal fields throughout the country and several major Japanese companies have already indicated interest, the President added.

There are opportunities for the development, utilization and commercialization of 16 wind power areas in the country, she pointed out.

The use of natural gas in public transport was introduced early this year and government will ensure that natural gas powered-buses will start plying the major routes in Metro Manila up to Calamba by 2005.

Inactive power plants such as Sucat, Limay, Malaya and the Bataan Nuclear Plant will be converted to gas-fired plants in 2005.

The program for coco-diesel as an alternative fuel will be accelerated.

In strategic alliances, the Philippines and Thailand are arranging for the use of the former US-Naval fuel storage facility in the Subic Freeport to make it a regional facility.

The President has directed the Department of Energy to spearhead a nationwide energy efficiency and conservation program.

“All these initiatives will significantly reduce our energy importation that will lead to 60 percent energy self-sufficiency for the Philippines by 2010,” the President said.

“I have laid down these frameworks upon which future leaders can build. We must brace for more work ahead of us. But I can tell the whole Philippines before our pioneering electric coops, our electric cooperatives have been able to do it. Now the rest of the country can do it in the future,” the President concluded.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: August 6, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026142731/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/aug06.htm>

The President's Day: August 7, 2004

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- **Selling PEA's reclaimed lands to raise funds — GMA**
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- **GMA cites DOF's 'oversight' function over PAGCOR**
- **GMA says China, one of RP's most important neighbors**

The Good News: Electronic products lead seven-month export surge

For the seventh consecutive month, exports grew in June, posting an 8.2 percent increase over the same period last year.

According to the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), total export revenues surged 17.7 percent to \$2.275 billion led by electronic products which accounted for as much as 68.7 percent.

NEDA Director General and Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said electronics components and devices accounted for 47.3 percent of the country's total exports, followed by semiconductors with 12.5 percent, or \$1.567 billion in revenue.

"The 8.5 percent year-to-date growth of electronic products strengthens hopes that the country will achieve its 10 percent exports target for the year," Neri said.

Other electronic products that showed significant gains were electronic data processing, which increased by 40.3 percent and registered a 16.7 percent share in total exports; communication radar by 56.8 percent and a 1.68 percent share; and office equipment at 15.7 percent and a 0.54 percent share.

"The strong demand for electronic products is understandable because the US is projected to grow 4.6 percent (gross domestic product) this year, Japan by 4.4 percent," said Bienvenido Oplas Jr., economist at Think Tank, Inc.

Other top exports were apparel and clothing accessories, which continued to be the second highest earner for June with a combined share of six percent of total exports, or \$199.92 million in revenues.

The third and fourth top exports were ignition wiring sets used in vehicles, aircraft and ships, up 10.9 percent or contributing a total \$46.3 million revenue; and coconut oil, up 7.1 percent or contributing \$36.64 million.

The fifth top export were other products manufactured from materials imported on consignment basis, registering a one percent share in June exports, or \$33.05 million in revenues.

Export earnings from January to June increased by 8.52 percent to \$18.734 billion last year.

The first semester's top five growth gainers were led by manufactured fertilizers with a 79.68 percent growth from the first six months of 2003; followed by a 56.49 percent increase in iron ore agglomerates, a 27.33 percent growth in seaweeds and carageenan, a 26.83 percent increase in processed tropical fruits and a 21.53 percent growth in metal components.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Energy independence

The President's energy team is already moving to get the five-point energy independence plan fully in place.

We have to turn our vulnerabilities to the international oil situation into opportunities for self-reliance.

We have to rely on our vision, our own hands and our own resources.

The road to energy independence and stability will not be easy but we must be ready to pay a price to achieve a better future for our children.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Ibon survey

There is no sense in beating a dead horse.

This is a recycled story and everybody knows that the entity that conducted the survey has a history of being biased against the government.

The fuss about the fraud is already in the hands of the electoral tribunal and our lawyers are handling it.

U.S. will continue to be a dominant factor in RP's foreign policy, says GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo reiterated Friday night that the United States would continue to be a dominant factor in the country's foreign policy and that no single leader can break the strong partnership between the two countries because of their shared history and common democratic traditions.

In her speech last night at the President's Night of the Manila Overseas Press Club (MOPC) at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati City, the President said Filipinos have enduring historical, cultural and economic ties with America personified by the three million Filipinos who now live in the US.

"No President can break those bonds because they are held together by permanent history," the President said, alluding to reports that there is now a crack in Philippine-American relations because of the President's decision to withdraw the Filipino humanitarian mission to Iraq ahead of schedule.

The President told some 500 top corporate leaders, government and military officials, media men, and members of the diplomatic corps that Philippine-American relations have been held together by a century-old bond and further tightened by common political tradition, by world wars fought together, by tens of thousands of brave soldiers who died in the battlefield of freedom.

After 9/11, the President said, RP-US ties became even stronger after she committed the Philippines to join the US-led fight against global terrorism with the full support of the Filipino people.

The President said that the decision to withdraw the Philippine contingent from Iraq was reached after the turnover of sovereignty to the Iraqi people on June 28.

The abduction of Angelo dela Cruz merely accelerated the timetable for the withdrawal that has been decided beforehand, the President explained.

"I have no apologies, and I stuck to my oath. But let me emphasize that our people and our nation remain committed to our friends and allies abroad even as we remain true to our conviction here at home," the President stressed.

The President said she ordered Filipino troops back home from Iraq trusting that allies will come to understand that the Philippines is in a special circumstance unlike the US, Australia, Bulgaria and other countries because eight

million Filipinos live and work abroad, including 1.5 million in the Middle East, with 4,000 of them presently working in Iraq.

She said the anguish brought about by the death of Flor Contemplacion among the Filipinos and the fact that the Philippines gets one-tenth of its GNP (gross national product) from overseas workers, indeed, is one of the eight realities of our foreign policy.

“Many of these workers, in fact, are in the Middle East, so that resonates throughout our foreign policy,” the President said.

The President said the Filipinos in Iraq are the largest contingent of private foreign workers who are highly vulnerable to terrorists’ attacks, unlike combat troops of other coalition members who are armed and who stayed mainly in well-guarded camps.

She said she sought to reduce that vulnerability by authorizing the departure of Philippine troops after the turnover of sovereignty to the Iraqi people.

The President said that the Philippines enjoys a strong relationship with the Bush administration and values its role in helping the Philippines. “We share the same goal even if we will not always walk in the same path,” she said.

The President said there are other, even more meaningful, ways to strengthen the Philippines’ strategic relationship with the United States and both shall always work to keep the relationship firm in propelling the common commitment to fight terrorism, domestically, regionally, and worldwide.

In her speech, the President reiterated that her foreign policy consists in protecting the interest of the Philippines by responding to eight realities in the global and regional environment, namely:

- The United States, China and Japan, have a determining influence in the security situation and economic evolution of East Asia;
- More and more Philippine foreign policy decisions have to be made in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN);
- The international Islamic community becomes more and more important to the Philippines;
- The coming years will see the re-definition of multilateral and inter-regional organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO) in promoting common interests;
- The defense of the nation’s sovereignty and the protection of its environment and natural resources can be carried out to the extent possible while it gets others to respect its rights over maritime territory;
- The country’s economic growth will continue to require a lot of direct foreign investments;
- The Philippines can benefit most quickly from international tourism; and
- Overseas Filipinos will continue to play a critical role in the country’s economic and social stability.

Selling PEA’s reclaimed lands to raise funds — GMA

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo plans to use the Public Estates Authority (PEA), to be renamed Philippine Reclamation Authority, to raise much-needed funds for the government as part of the overall plan to privatize 70 percent of the government’s generating assets.

This will be through the PEA bidding out reclamation rights along Roxas Blvd. in full transparency with the Bishop Business Conference which has agreed to help the government in its bidding committees, the President said last night in the open forum after her main speech at the Manila Overseas Press Club’s (MOPC) “President’s Night” at the Intercontinental Hotel in Makati City.

The President’s comments came in answer to suggestions that government privatize assets and sell reclaimed lands to meet its fiscal problems other than sourcing revenues.

She made clear it is “in addition to” rather than “other than” raising revenues through taxes.

The idea for the PEA will be part of plan to privatize government assets like the National Transmission Company (TRANSCO).

The President recalled saying the government is also prepared to save or raise a hundred billion pesos during her July 26 State of the Nation Address (SONA) when she asked Congress to raise P80 billion through eight tax measures she proposed.

“I think what I will do is to let the authority (PEA) bid out the reclamation rights in full transparency,” the President said, adding that her economic managers agree with the idea.

The President had asked Congress to abolish the PEA but since it has not, she intends to bring it back to its original mandate, which was to administer the bidding out of reclamation rights.

There are ways and means of raising revenues in addition to the revenue measures she has asked Congress to pass and the plan for the PEA is part of the government’s way of saving or raising a hundred billion pesos, the President said.

RP-US joint efforts in fight vs. terrorism crucial to peace and stability in Mindanao

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said Friday night the partnership of the Philippines and the United States in fighting terrorism in Mindanao is crucial in achieving economic growth and job creation in the country.

The President disclosed this Friday night during the “President’s Night” hosted by the Manila Overseas Press Club (MOPC) at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati City.

“My highest priority for our country is economic growth and job creation. That drives our foreign policy. And to achieve economic growth and job creation, we need to come to terms with the Mindanao problem,” the President said.

The President said the importance of the fight against terrorism in Mindanao overshadows whatever the Philippines could contribute to the “Coalition of the Willing” in Iraq itself.

“Anything distracting our administration from getting its act together for the struggle for Mindanao needs to be put aside. And if our country is divided over the issue of Angelo dela Cruz, we will not be able to effectively address the Mindanao problem. I took that into consideration,” the President said.

To combat terrorism in Mindanao, the President said, the Philippines and the US have conducted the Balikatan exercises where Filipino and American troops share fighting skills and intelligence as well as humanitarian services.

“Even as I speak now, American troops are in joint training with our own troops in Carmen, North Cotabato. They are also conducting medical services among the poorest communities in Mindanao where the recruits of terrorism are bred,” the President said.

The President said humanitarian aid from the United States has also provided livelihood opportunities for former rebels of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which the Philippine government has forged a peace agreement in 1996.

The President thanked US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, who was among those present, for being instrumental in these endeavors.

“Thank you, Frank for your passion. I have been witness to that passion. Ambassador Ricciardone grabs the chance to go with me whenever I go to those difficult places in Mindanao,” the President said.

The President said the Philippines is also sharing intelligence and operational information with Indonesia and Malaysia to curtail the movements of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Al-Qaeda cells that are suspected to be building up in Southeast Asia.

She said the Philippines has crippled the Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group and JI cells “are falling one-by-one” with the neutralization of their operatives Fathur Roman Al-Ghozi and Muklis Yunos and the recovery of deadly explosives.

“Yes, we are committed to the war against terrorism and it’s neither lip service nor posturing. Filipino soldiers and Filipino civilians had given up their lives beside Americans in this fight. And this fight will last as long as our shared democratic traditions and love for freedom hold. This fight is true for the Philippines, it is true for the rest of the world,” the President said.

GMA cites DoF’s ‘oversight’ function over PAGCOR

Although the Philippine Gaming and Amusements Corp. (PAGCOR) has been moved from the Office of the President to the Department of Finance (DoF), the latter will not run the former, President Gloria Macapagal said.

The decision she made with her economic managers was for the DoF to exercise oversight functions over PAGCOR, the President cleared this last night during the open forum of the Manila Overseas Press Club’s (MOPC) “President’s Night.”

“The meaning of this is not with the DoF to run the day-to-day affairs of PAGCOR,” she said. “Rather, the DoF will provide financial benchmarks comparable to the performance of the gaining corporations that are listed in the United States Tax Exchange. And PAGCOR must comply with these benchmarks.”

This means DoF will set targets for PAGCOR to realize.

The President placed PAGCOR under DoF through Executive Order No. 330 to facilitate coordination of policies and programs in the revenue-earning agency.

Several agencies under the Office of the President have been moved to other departments for tighter supervision.

In a related development, Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong said they have alternative administrative measures to meet the fiscal deficiency of the government.

“We are doing this by implementing our tax laws properly. Enforcement is very important. We have to tell the BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenue) that they have to look after the stores and other establishments that are not paying taxes,” Amatong said.

The BIR has been doing that lately through the so-called “tax mapping.” They went to stores not issuing receipts and asked them to pay more taxes, Amatong added.

GMA says China, one of RP’s most important neighbors

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo cited Friday night the close historical and cultural ties that bond the Chinese and the Filipinos as well as the fruitful economic relations between the two countries.

“China represents one of the most important neighbors for the Philippines aside from its being an economic power in the world or globally,” the President said during the open forum that followed her speech at the Manila Overseas Press Club’s “President’s Night” at the Intercontinental Hotel in Makati City Friday night.

China, she said, will continue to play a determining factor in the regional stability and economic security of Asia, along with the United States and Japan.

“I just want to say that we appreciate our very good relationship with China,” the President said when asked about her expectations of the trip to Beijing, which she claimed has yet to be confirmed.

Should the China visit push through, the Chief Executive will attend the International Conference of Asian Political Parties slated Sept. 3-5 in Beijing.

It would be her first trip abroad since her new term began last June 30.

Since China joined the world trade, the Chief Executive said, the Philippines has enjoyed a very robust increase in its exports, a surplus in its balance of trade with the mainland and a tremendous amount of assistance, particularly in the country’s agricultural development.

She said that hybrid rice, which has doubled the income of many Filipino farmers, comes from China. China, she added, is also financing the North Rail project, one of the many important undertakings of her administration in the next six years to decongest Metro Manila.

“So indeed, our relationship with China is very, very fruitful economically in addition to the old historical and cultural ties that we have been enjoying together,” the President said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: August 7, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071025212055/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/aug07.htm>

The President's Day: August 8, 2004

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- **The Good News: ADB forecasts 4.8 percent GDP growth for RP this year**
- **GMA minimizing impact of oil price rise on food and transportation**
- **Malacañang brushes off Ibon survey**

The Good News: ADB forecasts 4.8 percent GDP growth for RP this year

The Philippines would most likely post a 4.8 percent growth in gross domestic product (GDP) this year, about 0.8 per cent higher than expected, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In its semi-annual Asia Economic Monitor report, the ADB said the Philippines was among the “positive surprises” among East Asian economies along with Singapore, Malaysia and the People’s Republic of China.

The report said the Philippines was benefiting from the turnaround in global electronics demand, driven by strong growth in US capital spending.

“This trend is likely to continue in the months ahead,” the report said. “Remittances from overseas workers are also likely to remain strong, given the global economic rebound.”

Coupled with the end of political uncertainties tied to this year’s presidential election, the ADB report said these factors should support domestic demand and growth.

Even with the revised forecast, however, the Philippines is seen as posting one of the slowest growths in the region, outpacing only Brunei’s 4 percent and Indonesia’s 4.6 percent.

China is seen to post the strongest growth at 8.7 percent, while Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand are projected to expand by 6.5 percent, 6.9 percent and 6.6 percent respectively.

Overall, the 2004 growth projection for East Asia was upgraded to 7.3 percent from earlier forecast of 6.6 percent, taking into account healthier economies in the United States and Japan, buoyant intra-regional trade and continued strength of domestic demand in most countries.

The robust growth of East Asia, considered the fastest growing region in the world, is expected to peak in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian currency crisis, the ADB said.

East Asia covers the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries plus the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Korea.

But the region’s synchronized economic growth is expected to peak this year close to its post-crisis high of 7.5 percent in 2000 and moderate somewhat next year to 6.5 percent as growth in the major industrial countries and China slows to more sustainable levels.

The Philippines’ growth is also seen to soften to 4.3 percent in 2005.

GMA minimizing impact of oil price rise on food and transportation

The soaring price of oil worldwide is a problem the nation has to face squarely, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo admitted.

“The most important thing is how to minimize the translation of the oil price increase into very rapid and big increases in the prices of our basic commodities, especially our food and transportation,” the President said in the open forum of the Manila Overseas Press Club’s (MOPC) “President’s Night” Friday.

Thus the government has embarked on a concerted thrust for the country to become less dependent on imports for energy, the President said, referring to the five-point framework to achieve this objective which she presented to the Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association Friday on its silver anniversary celebration.

Explaining the immediate and long-term efforts geared to this objective, Energy Secretary Vince Perez said the country has reduced oil importation for a power mix.

From 50 percent when the President took over, oil importation has been reduced to only 13 percent today, thanks to the Malampaya natural gas, Perez said.

The country was 48 percent self-sufficient in energy when the President took over and today it’s up to 52 percent and the President intends to bring it further up to 60 percent by the end of the decade, Perez furthered.

For the moment, government is trying to help transport groups, the bus and jeepney operators who are caught in the squeeze between the deregulated oil market and a regulated fare market and thus minimize the effect of imported oil on the prices of basic commodities, Perez said.

“What we are trying to do is using the power of persuasion, asking the oil companies to give assistance and even encouraging these bus and jeepney cooperatives to own and operate their own gasoline stations where they can avail of wholesale prices,” Perez explained.

“That is the initiative of the President over the last few months,” Perez said.

Malacañang brushes off Ibon survey

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye has questioned the integrity of Ibon Foundation, saying the survey firm has not been fair and has a history, in fact, of being biased against the government.

Bunye disputed the survey results supposedly undertaken by the firm that claim most of Filipinos do not believe President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo won the May 10 elections.

“Alam ninyo ito ay recycled na istorya at alam naman natin ang katayuan ng survey firm na nagsagawa ng survey na ito. Talagang may history itong grupong sa pagiging biased laban sa gobyerno (This is a recycled story and we all know the reputation of this firm that conducted this survey. This entity has a history of being biased against the government),” Bunye said.

Nevertheless, Bunye said the fuss about the supposed fraud is already in the hands of the electoral tribunal and the lawyers of the President and the opposition are tackling it.

“Kaya hintayin na lang natin kung ano ang magiging resulta (That is why what we should do is wait for the results),” Bunye said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President’s Day: August 8, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071028192234/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/aug08.htm>

The President's Day: August 9, 2004

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- **Statement of the President: UN Aid**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Towards Energy Independence**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Economic Outlook**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: 9/11 Report**
- **Fate of Bataan Nuclear facility still subject to technical review – Palace**
- **Peso closes stronger today – BSP**
- **RP committed to ASEAN's goals and vision – DFA**
- **Foreign investments in RP's E-services sector continue to rise – DOLE**
- **OSG challenges CA ruling before the Supreme Court**
- **Palace calls on gov't info officers to attend VISCOMNET meet in Cebu City**
- **DTI chief supports bill on hiked excise taxes on fuel**
- **RP-U.S. ties would transcend disagreements over Iraq, says Albert**

Statement of the President: UN Aid

We appreciate the UN's development agenda for the country.

It is a close companion of our ten-point agenda and five reform packages.

We have always adhered to the human development principles of the UN and the holistic approach combining good governance and equitable economic programs.

Our quest for human progress extends beyond our borders, enveloping eight million Filipinos abroad and their host nations.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Towards Energy Independence

The fate of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant is subject to technical feasibility.

Meanwhile, we will push ahead with the essential items in the President's energy independence package such as the more extensive use of natural gas, developing coco-diesel and enlisting alternative sources of energy to stabilize prices and supply in the long term.

We have to with the reality of a global oil crunch in the future.

We must exhaust all options to secure our economic future.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: Economic Outlook

The positive view on our economy despite the series of oil price hikes indicates that both our crisis management efforts and our macroeconomic management are sound.

Rising oil prices will have a dampening effect on the economy but we must seek all opportunities to gain ground by being more productive and cost-effective in our development programs.

We have made a strong start over the recent years and we must keep to our targets despite deepening constraints.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: 9/11 Report

The report is outdated and there is no sense on inflicting this label on the Philippines when we have already neutralized terror in various fronts.

We have been up against terrorism even before 9/11 and that is why we were the first to join the global fight against terror.

Since then we have successfully mounted offensives that have virtually crippled the Abu Sayyaf and pushed the JI deep underground.

We acknowledge that there is still work to be done and we are doing it in close cooperation with our allies.

Fate of Bataan Nuclear facility still subject to technical review – Palace

It's still an idea subject to a thorough checking out, Malacañang said today of the conversion of the mothballed Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) into a natural gas-fired facility.

“The fate of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant is subject to technical feasibility,” Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in a statement this morning.

“Meanwhile, we will push ahead with the essential items in President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s energy independence package such as the more extensive use of natural gas, developing coco-diesel and enlisting alternative sources of energy to stabilize prices and supply in the long term,” Bunye continued.

Bunye said the country must live with the reality of a global oil crunch and must exhaust all options to secure its economic future.

“The road to energy independence and stability will not be easy but we must be ready to pay a price to achieve a better future for our children,” Bunye said.

The President expressed a desire to have the BNPP converted to use natural gas facility when she initially bared a five-point framework on her energy independence and savings reform package Friday to the Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association.

The Department of Energy (DOE) has been looking into the feasibility of the conversion as part of the total effort to help lower electricity rates and ease the country’s dependence on imported oil which has been hitting record price levels in the world market.

The DOE will make the final recommendation since it has all the information on the expenses government will incur in the conversion and is aware of all the reasons for and against it, Presidential Deputy Spokesman Ricardo Saludo said Sunday.

DOE Secretary Vince Perez said the BNPP is ripe for privatization and may be auctioned off after 70 percent of the generating assets of the National Power Corporation has been sold so the private sector can undertake the conversion.

Peso closes stronger today – BSP

The peso today opened firmer at P55.66 compared to last Friday’s close of P55.715, as the US dollar weakened following the lower-than-expected US non-farm payroll data for July.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said some banks' dollar short-selling and remittances from the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) also buoyed the peso.

These allowed the peso to post gains up to a high of P55.60 in early trade, the BSP said.

The peso's gains, however, were capped by other players' dollar buying to cover their short positions and maturing obligations.

The emergence of dollar demand from the oil, manufacturing and power sectors also weighed on the local currency, the BSP said. These caused the peso to weaken slightly to P55.695 in late morning trade.

But for the morning session, the peso moved within the range of P55.60 – P55.695, with the last transaction dealt at P55.69, still stronger than its performance last week, the BSP said. Volume of transactions amounted to \$110.10 million.

Year-to-date, the peso has depreciated by about 0.34 percent, P55.69 as of 12:00 noon today versus P55.50 at close of trading December 2003, the BSP said.

RP committed to ASEAN's goals and vision – DFA

The Philippines will continue to honor its commitment for a strong Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) climaxes its weeklong celebration of the grouping's founding 37 years ago with a diplomatic high tea reception August 12 at the DFA.

The diplomatic reception is a joint activity of ASEAN-Philippines, the embassies of ASEAN member countries and Dialogue/Sectoral Partners, said DFA Secretary Delia Albert who will be guest of honor and speaker.

It will focus on the continuing ASEAN efforts to promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries in the region as well as in adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The ASEAN was established August 8, 1967 in Bangkok by the five original members – Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. Brunei Darussalam joined it in 1984 followed by Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997 and Cambodia in 1999.

The ASEAN Declaration states the aims of the association is to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development through joint endeavors in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to solidify and strengthen the foundation of a prosperous and peaceful community of Southeast Asian nations.

In 1997, a presidential proclamation declared August 7-13 annually as ASEAN Week in the Philippine.

In commemoration of ASEAN's 37th anniversary, the DFA is flying the national flags of its member states during the whole month of August.

Foreign investments in RP's E-services sector continue to rise – DOLE

Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said opportunities and investments in the Philippines' e-services sector continue to strengthen due to the country's human capital and other strengths.

Sto. Tomas said that Nu Comm International, one of Canada's 50 best managed companies, has chosen to bring its call center business to the Philippines in recognition of its qualified human resources and the rapid development of its information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure.

“Overseas, ICT-skilled Filipino workers are preferred in countries like Ireland and other European states, Canada, Korea, Singapore, Japan and similar emerging labor markets for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs),” Sto. Tomas said.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), through its Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), she said, will strengthen skills training and upgrading efforts in response to the call of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to focus on technical education and English, technology and science so as to optimize the opportunity.

The fact that e-services investors are able to provide round the clock and world-class ICT services efficiently and effectively to worldwide clients is a clear proof of the country’s strategic advantages that have ensured its position as a valuable e-services hub, according to a TESDA Labor Market Intelligence Report (LMIR).

Such advantages include the country’s affordable, quality human resources, its well-developed ICT infrastructure, friendly and hospitable lifestyle and affinity with Western culture.

“Experts agree that the demand for e-services from the Philippines will continue to grow,” the LMIR said, stressing that the Information and Technology and E-Commerce Council chaired by the President had identified customer contact, or call centers, medical transcription services, and construction-related engineering design as some of the country’s ICT priorities.

Contact centers in the country, according to the LMIR, are projected to reach an aggregate growth rate of 50 percent this year, citing data provided by the Department of Trade and Industry.

From a state of infancy two or three years ago, ICT member companies now employ some 30,000 to 40,000 workers, a figure that is expected to grow four-fold due to their increasing client base.

OSG challenges CA ruling before the Supreme Court

The Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) has asked the Supreme Court (SC) to reverse a decision of the Court of Appeals (CA) declaring that the Office of the Ombudsman has no authority to impose administrative sanctions against erring government officials and employees.

In filing the case, the OSG asserted that the CA ruling would weaken the Ombudsman’s powers necessary in pursuing its lifestyle checks on ranking officials suspected of having illegally enriched themselves while in government service, notably those in the Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Over the past several months, the Ombudsman has been imposing administrative punishments on officials who have flunked the lifestyle check.

The OSG, in its petition, emphasized that the CA decision may have unwittingly amended the Ombudsman Act of 1989.

The ruling might have also abrogated existing jurisprudence upholding the Ombudsman’s administrative disciplinary powers over erring government officials and personnel.

The case stemmed from a complaint for alleged violation of the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards filed against Ana Marie Madriaga of the San Juan Elementary School and the canteen manager of the school.

After conducting administrative adjudication proceedings, the Ombudsman held the two respondents liable for grave misconduct and ordered their suspension for six months without pay.

The respondents filed a motion for reconsideration, but the Ombudsman denied it, prompting them to elevate the case to the Appellate Court.

The CA ruled that the findings of the Ombudsman in administrative cases are merely recommendatory in nature, and that the decision to impose penalty belongs to the proper disciplinary authority. In the case of Madriaga and her co-accused, the Department of Education has the power to punish them.

The OSG argued that the CA ruling has set a “dangerous precedent” which, if left unchallenged, could negate efforts of the Ombudsman to stem the tide of graft and corruption in the bureaucracy.

According to the OSG, the Constitution and the laws have given the Ombudsman ample authority not only to prosecute criminal offenders in the government service, but also to impose administrative sanctions, including preventive suspensions, during the pendency of the administrative case.

Palace calls on gov’t info officers to attend VISCOMNET meet in Cebu City

Malacañang today called on all information officers of agencies at the regional and local government level in the Visayas to attend the annual general assembly of the Visayas Communicators Network (VISCOMNET) to be held next week in Cebu City.

In Memorandum Circular No. 62, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo said all heads of government departments, bureaus and local government units in the Visayas are enjoined to authorize their information officers to participate in the VISCOMNET convention on August 18 to 20 at the Cebu Grand Hotel.

Romulo stressed that such attendance would be on official time and with expenses, such as transportation, per diems, registration fees, and other necessary fees and expenses at rates prescribed in accordance with existing policies of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the Commission on Audit (CoA) and the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

Romulo said that the expenses would be chargeable against the funds of their respective agencies/offices, subject to the availability of funds and the usual accounting and auditing rules and regulations.

In his memorandum, Romulo cited VISCOMNET as a network of government information officers in the Visayas that was organized through the efforts of the regional directors of the Philippine Information Agency-Visayas Cluster and aims to enhance the professional growth of government information officers in the Visayas.

He said the convention seeks to consolidate government information in the Visayas for the enhancement of good governance, promote and advocate the ten-point agenda spelled out by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and tap the private and non-government sectors and share the best practices in communication.

DTI chief supports bill on hiked excise taxes on fuel

Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima today expressed support to a bill imposing additional taxes on petroleum products, saying it is needed to “squarely address our budget deficit problem.”

“The additional excise taxes on petroleum products is one of our most viable alternatives considering that it is easy to collect, monitor and, when necessary, adjust,” Purisima said.

He pointed out that notwithstanding the projected increase in fuel prices due to the new measure, the country would still have the lowest prices of petroleum products in the ASEAN.

Rep. Danilo Suarez (LP, Quezon) filed House Bill 1323 imposing P2 per liter increase in taxes on petroleum products. The measure is expected to generate an additional P29.7 billion in revenues for the government.

Purisima noted that these additional taxes could be structured to be “as progressive as possible” so that the effect of the increase in fuel prices may be mitigated for the great majority of the consumers.

“I support the exemption of highly sensitive fuel products such as LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) from this additional tax. I also believe that diesel should be spared, or at the very least, have a much lower tax rate,” Purisima said.

The secretary assured the people that the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) would exhaust all avenues to ensure that traders would not take advantage of the surges in fuel prices.

“With or without these tax measures, the DTI will continue to monitor the prices of goods and bring to task those unscrupulous sellers who impose unwarranted burdens on consumers,” Purisima stressed.

RP-U.S. ties would transcend disagreements over Iraq, says Albert

Relations between the Philippines and the United States would go beyond disagreements over the issues of Iraq, Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert said today.

“Our relationship continues to be strong because of our deep respect for each other,” Albert issued this statement after meeting today with US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone.

She assured the nation that joint military training exercises, particularly in counter-terrorism, peace-building efforts in Mindanao, and trade and investments missions would continue. “Cooperation will also continue over the next five years on the Philippine Defense Reform Program,” Albert said.

Albert said interest in the Philippines remains high and is reflected in the investment mission organized by the US-ASEAN Business Council for September.

Ambassador Ricciardone, meanwhile, said he agrees that the two countries did have a very serious disagreement. “Nonetheless, we are going to work as hard as we can on all things that are important to both our countries,” he said.

Ricciardone said the US welcomes the remarks made by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last Friday at the Manila Overseas Press Club where she reaffirmed the Philippine government’s resolve in fighting terrorism and rebuilding Iraq.

“She was very clear about the firm commitment of her government in rebuilding Iraq with the contributions of the Filipino workers over there and her own commitment to continue working with the country’s allies on the global war against terrorism. These are things that are important to both our countries,” Ricciardone said.

The President has repeatedly said that U.S. would continue to be a dominant factor in the country’s foreign policy and that no single leader can break the strong partnership between the two countries because of their shared history and common democratic traditions.

“No President can break those bonds because they are held together by permanent history,” the President said, alluding to reports that there is now a crack in Philippine-American relations because of the President’s decision to withdraw the Filipino humanitarian mission to Iraq ahead of schedule.

The President also noted that Philippine-American relations have been held together by a century-old bond and further tightened by common political tradition, by world wars fought together, by tens of thousands of brave soldiers who died in the battlefield of freedom.

She said the decision to withdraw the Philippine contingent from Iraq was reached after the turnover of sovereignty to the Iraqi people on June 28.

“I have no apologies, and I stuck to my oath. But let me emphasize that our people and our nation remain committed to our friends and allies abroad even as we remain true to our conviction here at home,” the President said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: August 9, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071026144227/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/aug09.htm>

The President's Day: August 10, 2004

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- **Loans to SMEs to triple to P9 billion for the next 6 years**
- **GMA declares September as Social Security month**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: RP-US Relations**
- **Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: New Revenue Measures**
- **Palace: U.S. remains as RP's strongest ally**
- **Malacañang not keen on revival of OPSF**
- **Gov't-NDF peace talks to resume August 24 in Oslo, Norway**
- **'Patubig' will continue — Palace**
- **LEDAC tackles GMA's proposed tax measures**
- **GMA thanks civilians for help in arresting wanted kidnappers**
- **GMA's third post-election 'pulong bayan' to tackle economic reform package**
- **Palace thumbs down four-day work week plan**

Loans to SMEs to triple to P9 billion for the next 6 years

In line with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's 10-point agenda, the Small Business Guarantee and Finance Corporation (SB Corp.) will triple its lending to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from the present P3 billion to P9 billion within the next six years.

SB Corp., a government financial institution (GFI), would also set up an SME Exchange within 6 years to mobilize equity funds for SMEs similar to what the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) does for publicly listed companies, SB Corp. Chairperson Zorayda Amelia C. Alonzo said.

Alonzo added that the SB Corp. would also expand its fund base from local and foreign sources and increase its presence in the countryside through the accreditation of rural and thrift banks.

Meanwhile, SB Corp. President Benel P. Laguna said they consider rural and thrift banks as main delivery units in the provinces. He added that SB Corp.'s approach towards lending is through active partnerships.

SB Corp. released a total of P1.4 billion to 924 firms in various industry sectors nationwide in the first semester of this year, up by 57 percent from a year-ago level.

Laguna said the increase in lending was due to SB Corp.'s active participation in the SME Unified Lending Opportunities for National Growth (SULONG) Program. Apart from SB Corp., other GFIs that issue loans under the "Sulong" program are the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), and Philexim.

"We also attribute the increase in our lending portfolio to our aggressive marketing efforts, more liberalized accreditation process for our bank partners, and our competitive interest rates," he said.

SB Corp. lent some P962.2 million under its wholesale lending program, P339.2 million under its retail lending program, and certified a total of P124.8 million worth of loans under its guarantee program.

The other priority thrusts of SB Corp. within the next six years are:

- Advocacy for policy measures to facilitate easier lending to SMEs by banks;
- Review and strengthening of the implementation of the provisions of the Magna Carta for SMEs on mandatory lending to SMEs, thereby improving their access to formal private sector credit sources;

- Setting up a stable framework for improvement and implementation of SME development policies, programs, and strategies consistent with the SME Development Agenda; and
- Funding of the SME Development (SMED) Council to improve its ability to link with and mobilize private sector organizations in efforts to improve SMEs' credit absorption capacities.

GMA declares September as Social Security month

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has declared the month of September, and every year thereafter, as Social Security month as part of the 47th anniversary of the Social Security System on September 1.

In Proclamation No. 682, which she signed last August 4, the President said it is in the national interest to stimulate public awareness on the matters and issues involving social security protection and “to encourage every citizen to take personal responsibility in uplifting their economic and social conditions through their active membership in the SSS.”

The same proclamation said there is a need to highlight the role of the SSS in developing and promoting a viable, universal and equitable social security protection scheme through world class service.

The SSS, established Sept. 1, 1957 through the Social Security Act of 1954, marks a significant milestone in the efforts of the Philippine government to institute a mechanism for providing social security to the Filipino people.

The one-month period covered by the proclamation is intended to mark the celebration of the milestones achieved by the agency in realization of its mandate, to promote the importance of membership in the SSS and to publicize the programs and benefits available to SSS members and the role of SSS in nation-building.

The President enjoined all departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of government, local government units, and government owned or controlled corporations, as well as the mass media and the entire citizenry, to extend their whole-hearted support and cooperation by conducting specific programs in coordination with the SSS.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: RP-US Relations

We appreciate the position of the US government, as well as the candor of the US Ambassador.

The strains brought about by recent events are part of a maturing and mellowing partnership that recognizes the uniqueness of each other's interests within a larger strategic universe.

The US is still the Philippines' strongest ally in the world, considering our long history of friendship and sacrifice for freedom.

It may take some time to patch things up but time will do the healing as we strive to resolve our principled disagreements.

Statement of Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye: New Revenue Measures

This is a matter of national survival and we have always emphasized that we have to endure the pain now if we expect to enjoy any future gains.

Government will take the hit, too, and the cutdowns have already begun.

We will not impose anything upon the people that we are not willing to impose upon ourselves.

We are willing to listen to the opposition and all well-meaning sectors but they must present alternatives to ensure our national survival and not means to delay the pain.

We are all in this together and let us not make this another stage for national division and political strife.

Palace: U.S. remains as RP's strongest ally

Malacañang said today that the current strains in US-Philippine relations notwithstanding, the United States remains as the Philippines' strongest ally in the world.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in a statement that the "strains brought about by recent events are part of a maturing and mellowing partnership that recognizes the uniqueness of each other's interests within a larger strategic universe."

Relations between the two countries have cooled following the Philippine government's decision to advance the pullout of its 51-humanitarian contingent from Iraq to secure the release of kidnapped Filipino truck driver Angelo dela Cruz.

Malacañang had called for understanding by its allies of the special circumstance the Philippines is in. There are 1.5 million Filipinos working in the Middle East, 4,000 of them deployed in Iraq.

Bunye said that the US and the Philippines were bound by a "long history of friendship and sacrifice for freedom" and while it "may take some time to patch things up . . . time will do the healing as we strive to resolve our principled disagreements."

He said the Philippine government understands Washington's position on the issue, which was conveyed to the government by US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone through Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert.

Asked about Albert's statement on the Philippine commitment to continue working with its allies in rebuilding Iraq, Bunye said the foreign secretary emphasized two things: first, that the government is prepared to help to the extent that it is in a position to do so, and second, that national interest will be of highest priority.

Malacañang not keen on revival of OPSF

Malacañang said today it is not so keen on reviving the Oil Price Stabilization Fund (OPSF), claiming that such a step would not help stop increases in oil prices in the world market.

In a radio interview this morning, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said even if local measures were adopted in an effort to put the breaks on oil price surges, such steps would have no effect on world oil market prices which are dictated by such factors as supply and demand and other global developments.

"How do you address attack on pipelines," he asked, referring to the bombing of Iraq's oil infrastructures by insurgents. "How do you address the economic difficulty being faced by the biggest Russian oil supplier?"

Last week oil prices in the world market hit record highs because of the deep financial problems of Yokos, Russia's oil giant.

Bunye was reacting to clamors from the transport sector for a possible scrapping of, or introducing amendments to, the oil deregulation law.

The OPSF was imposed in the 1980s when oil prices were still regulated. The fund served as a buffer against wild swings in world crude oil prices.

“Itong mga ganitong panukala ay napag-aralan na rin noon (These kind of proposals have already been studied before),” Bunye said. “But this time, sa palagay ko ay hindi naman makaka-solve yan, hindi naman makakapigil iyan sa pagtaas ng presyo sa world market (I don’t think it would help solve the problem. It cannot stop the rise in world crude prices).”

The government is invoking its strong ties with Kuwait and Indonesia in its quest for alternative ways to arrest spiraling fuel prices in the local market. The Philippines has also started buying crude from Kazakhstan.

In an earlier interview, Bunye said the Philippines is also eyeing the use of compressed natural gas (CNG) to ease the country’s dependence on imported oil.

The rich Malampaya natural gas deposits off Palawan are expected to dramatically reduce the country’s fuel import.

Bunye disclosed that CNG, which costs practically half the price of diesel, is now being experimented as an alternative fuel for motor vehicles.

Gov’t-NDF peace talks to resume August 24 in Oslo, Norway

Notwithstanding the continued captivity of two Army soldiers by the communist New People’s Army and fresh encounters between government troops and the insurgents, peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) will continue, according to lead negotiator Silvestre Bello III.

Bello said the second of seven substantive reforms agreed previously by both the government and NDF peace panels would be discussed when the talks resume Aug. 24 to 30 in Oslo, Norway.

“It would not affect the resumption of the next round of talks,” said Bello who was also chairman of the panel that held previous negotiations with the NDF headed by Luis Jalandoni.

“But I’m sure this would be brought out during the formal table negotiations,” he said, referring to the two soldiers held captive by the rebels in Bicol.

Previous rounds of formal peace talks were held Feb. 10-14 and Mar. 30-Apr. 3 this year with Oslo as the third party facilitator.

Bello said that previous members of the peace panel are also set to sit down with him at the negotiating table including Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Teresita Deles, Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel, Chito Gascon and Tarlac Governor Jose Yap.

He said the forthcoming talks is crucial in that the two panels will discuss the nitty gritty, including land reform and economic sovereignty, among others.

The two panels have previously agreed to finally set in motion the full operationalization of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), which is the principal mechanism tasked to monitor the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Right and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

They have also agreed to work for the indemnification of human rights victims of the Marcos regime.

‘Patubig’ will continue — Palace

Malacañang today belied reports that the “Patubig” program of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been scuttled.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye dismissed reports that “Patubig” was only good for the duration of the electoral campaign last May, saying the President is determined that people, especially in the waterless barangays covered by the program, are assured of adequate supply of safe drinking water.

Launched in December 2003, *Patubig* seeks to provide piped-in water to 956,541 waterless households in Metro Manila and the provinces of Rizal, Cavite, Bulacan and Laguna.

The President has also ordered the expansion and improvement of the water distribution service in Metro Manila by Manila Water Company and Maynilad Water Services, Inc.

From 8.84 million in 2000, the number of Metro Manila residents provided with potable water rose to 10.8 million in June 2004.

The government has also completed several major foreign-assisted water supply projects in various parts of the country, including the Cotabato City Water Supply Improvement Program, Gen. Santos Water Supply Improvement Program and the Pili Water Supply Improvement Program.

A total of 24 water supply expansion projects were also completed in various cities nationwide, while 138 water supply projects were rehabilitated at a total cost of P981 million.

LEDAC tackles GMA’s proposed tax measures

The Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) today focused on the country’s fiscal situation with Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong presenting several Malacañang-proposed revenue generating measures for consideration of the lawmakers.

In a press briefing following the four-and-a-half hours LEDAC meeting, Cabinet members and Congress leaders agreed to work together to turn around the country’s finances.

Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima said the measures included accelerated development of infrastructure, promotion of the small and medium enterprises to generate more job and livelihood opportunities, expansion of basic services and upgrading of educational facilities.

“One thing that was raised is that if we send a signal to the international business and financial community that (we have put) our act together, there is a chance we can get upgraded in terms of our credit ranking,” Purisima told reporters.

He said a one-notch improvement in the country’s credit ranking would mean a P20-billion savings in interest alone.

The LEDAC meeting, the third under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s new mandate, also explored avenues to bring down the country’s consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD), currently placed at P317 billion, or 6.7 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

The President wants to trim down the CPSD to only three percent of the GDP at the end of her term, along with the national government deficit estimated at P198 billion, or 4.2 percent to zero percent by 2010.

“The important point here is this is a joint agenda (on which) we will work together to make sure that we consider the needs of our economy and our people,” Purisima said.

The financial measures tackled by the LEDAC were:

- Gross income tax system for corporations and the self-employed;

- Indexation of the excise tax on sin products;
- Increased excise tax on petroleum products;
- General tax amnesty with submission of statement of assets and liabilities;
- Lateral attrition system;
- Franchise tax on telecommunications to replace the value added tax (VAT); and
- Two-step increase in the VAT rate.

Purissima pointed out, however, that a joint LEDAC task force would still have to work on the prioritization scheme and the details of each measure.

He added that the LEDAC members have initially agreed to raise P100 billion in administrative and expense savings.

Among those who attended today's LEDAC meeting held at the State Dining Room of Malacañang were Vice President Noli de Castro, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Senators Aquilino Pimentel, Juan Flavio, Ralph Recto, Francisco Pangilinan, Manuel Roxas II, and Representatives Jesli Lapus, Benigno Aquino III, Junie Cua, Herminigildo Mandanas, Agapito "Butz" Aquino and Rolando Andaya, business leader Donald Dee and former Prime Minister Cesar Virata.

GMA thanks civilians for help in arresting wanted kidnapers

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo today thanked the civilians who helped in the apprehension of the most wanted kidnapers in the country even as she asked victims and their families to cooperate with the government in solving kidnapping cases and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

"I would like to thank our citizens who cooperated with our law enforcers. Now that we have made several spectacular arrests of the most wanted kidnapers, the next step is the prosecution," the President said.

The President made the statement when she handed over P2.5 million in cash rewards to three civilian informants in simple rites held this afternoon at the Heroes' Hall in Malacañang.

The three informants provided information that led to the arrest of Arnel Suellen, one of the most wanted kidnapers; and Waray-Waray kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) group leaders Zosimo Lauzon and Alexander Aldas, who both carry P1 million bounty on their heads.

Suellen was involved in the 2002 kidnapping of Martin Angelo Guevarra in Balibago, Angeles City; Lauzon was involved in at least eight KFR cases; while Aldas was involved in the Betty Chua Sy kidnap-slay and 10 other kidnapping cases.

Present during the ceremony were National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTAF) chief and Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes, Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, and NAKTAF Board of Advisers Teresita Ang-See, Julio Tan, Emily delos Santos, and Francis Chua.

The President said that as in previous awarding of rewards, the three informants were wearing masks to protect their identities.

The President said she is hoping that victims of kidnapping cases would persist in pursuing cases against their kidnapers until they are put behind bars.

"We hope the victims will cooperate in seeing their cases through. They should follow the example of Jackie Rowena Chiu who, despite her case dragging on for two years now, and despite difficulties, prosecution and harassment, she has persisted in seeing her case through to the end," the President said.

The President said the government continues to support the efforts of the prosecution.

She also congratulated the Department of Justice (DOJ), Senior State Prosecutors Richard Fadullon and Perfecto Lawrence Chua Cheng, and the others involved in the resolution of the Chiu case.

For his part, Reyes said the informants recognized the suspects through their various infomercials and posters.

So far, Reyes said they have neutralized 14 of the 25 most wanted kidnappers listed in their Order Of Battle, and captured 125 kidnapping suspects in the past nine months.

GMA's third post-electin 'pulong bayan' to tackle economic reform package

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's "*Pulong Bayan*" that would tackle her economic reform package will be held tomorrow, Wednesday, at the Ford Philippines plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

Expected to be discussed are the President's 10-point agenda and five reform packages that she presented during her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July.

The President would hold her third "*Pulong Bayan*" with Vice President Noli de Castro, and program hosts Secretary Ricardo Saludo and Giselle Sanchez.

Also expected to answer the queries of participants are Cabinet secretaries and officers of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Finance (DOF), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC).

The President would also meet with officials of Ford Philippines, before having lunch with the "pulong bayan" participants and the rest of the Ford employees at the automotive plant's canteen.

Palace thumbs down four-day work week plan

Malacañang today frowned on the proposed four-day work week in a bid to generate savings for the national government.

In his regular press briefing at the Palace, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye described the proposal raised by certain pro-administration members of the House of Representatives as "counter-productive" and does not sit well with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's desire of enhancing efficiency of the government service.

"I think this deserves further study because what we are trying to promote is more efficiency in government, and we would like to improve the work ethics among government workers," Bunye said.

Source: **Office of the Press Secretary**

Office of the Press Secretary. (2004). [The President's Day: August 10, 2004]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029041119/http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2004/aug10.htm>

